

## Political Theory & the Environment      revised 9-8-06

**PO 729.001, Fall 2006 12:10-3 Thursday, Clark C-349 (small conference room)**

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“It’s natural to deny our nature.... It’s the whole point of being different from animals.”

Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

This is a research seminar in environmental political theory, satisfying the field requirement in political theory. The objective of the course is to provide an overview of the emerging field of environmental political theory, including the aspects of environmental thought that interacts with the political theory tradition. The political theory tradition is broad and difficult to precisely define, but it probably can be best represented by its canonical concepts and works, including contemporary interactions with that canon. Issues that characteristically emerge in the political theory approach include the fundamental character of human social interaction, the legitimacy of institutions, and the patterns of political change. Although political theory definitely involves empirical data of many types, the primary vehicle for this discussion is typically conceptual argument, at least one level of abstraction up from the empirical level.

Many of the questions central to the political arenas in which environmental issues are addressed are closely related to political theory, including democracy and authoritarianism; community and individual concepts of property; revolution and reform; ethics and citizenship; and the relation to future generations. Although tracing these arguments inevitably involves a historical dimension, we will be most concerned with contemporary approaches.

Political theory is even more thoroughly defined by its discursive shape than are other fields in political science. Accordingly, both written and classroom participation are crucial in this class. The specific objective of the course is for students to engage directly in professional research and writing on a specific research question involving environmental political theory. Each student is expected to initiate an original research project, developing it through several stages of a proposal. The end result is a completed research paper, which should be at least suitable for presentation at an academic conference. The goal of the paper, as with any professional writing, is to develop the skills that will lead to potential contributions to the field of environmental political theory. The paper will be presented to the seminar at the end of the term, in a fashion consistent with a conference presentation. The written exam will parallel the style of the comprehensive examination in the PhD program.

**Required Reading:** (CSU Bookstore)

Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

Frank Fischer, *Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2000).

Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Catriona Sandilands, *The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1995).

John M. Meyer, *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001).

Other readings as assigned (see weekly listings, below ("CSU e-journals" refers to articles available online through the CSU library)

**Requirements:**

**I. Writing Assignment:**

The major research paper assignment could well be a projected component of a dissertation proposal or chapter. (It is acceptable to work on something relevant to another class, but this needs to be discussed with the instructors of each class.) Late papers (i.e., missed deadlines) can be made up within the constraints announced in class, but there will be a penalty. Electronic submissions are always welcome and can be sent to the email address at the top of this syllabus. All written assignments should be double spaced, using 10-12 point type, leaving one-inch margins. Pages should be numbered. Electronic submissions should typically be Word, RTF, or WordPerfect files.

The research proposal (due in two stages; see weekly listing, below) is worth 15% of the final grade. The research paper is worth 35% of the final grade.

**II. Participation:**

Students are required to attend classes, do the readings, and engage in discussions. Students will also be responsible for the introduction of readings to the class for critical discussion. These presentations will entail a brief summary of the main points of the reading, its relation to previous readings and ideas discussed in class, and the leading of discussion of the reading. The number and scheduling of these presentations will be determined once the class meets.

In addition, near the end of the term, each student will present their research. In aggregate, participation and discussion count for 25% of your grade (15% for participation throughout the term, 10% for the research presentation).

**III. Written exam:**

The written midterm exam will count for 25% of your grade. It will be modeled on the comprehensive qualifying exam in our PhD program.

**Course Outline and Readings:**

**Aug. 24 (Week 1): no readings**

**Introduction: Contemporary Environmental Political Theory and Politics.**

**Aug. 31: no class (APSA conference)**

For students who have not read these before:

Stephen K. White, "Pluralism, Platitudes, and Paradoxes: Fifty Years of Western Political Thought," *Political Theory* 30:4 (August 2002): 472-481. CSU e-journals.

Wendy Brown, "The Time of the Political," *Theory & Event* 1:1 (1997): CSU e-journals.

**Sep. 7 (Week 2):**

**The setting for Environmental Political Theory (EPT)**

Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory* (assigned text): through chapter 6.

**Sep. 14 (Week 3): First draft of paper proposal due (at start of class)**

**Chris leads discussion**

**EPT and the western tradition**

Eckersley, finish.

Douglas Torgerson, *The Promise of Green Politics: Environmentalism and the Public Sphere* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), Preface and chapters 1 and 2 (distributed via email as PDF).

**Sep. 21 (Week 4): George leads discussion**

Meyer, *Political Nature* (assigned text).

Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger, "The Death of Environmentalism," available online at [grist.org](http://grist.org) and distributed via email as PDF

**Sep. 28 (Week 5): Jim F. leads discussion**

**The critique of ethics in EPT**

Ferry, *The New Ecological Order* (assigned text).

John Clark, "How Wide Is Deep Ecology?" from Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg, eds., *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 3-15. Distributed via e-mail as PDF.

Eric Katz, "Against the Inevitability of Anthropocentrism," from Katz, Light, and Rothenberg, op. cit., pp. 17-42. Distributed via e-mail as PDF.

Andrew Light, "Callicott and Naess on Pluralism," from Katz, Light, and Rothenberg, op. cit., pp. 125-148. Distributed via e-mail as PDF.

**Oct. 5 (Week 6): Work week, no class (tentative).**

**Oct. 12 (Week 7): Second draft of paper proposal due (at start of class).**

**Keith leads discussion**

**The Nature Problem, part 1.**

Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (assigned text).

**Oct. 19 (Week 8): Felicia leads discussion  
The Nature Problem, part 2.**

Frank Fischer, *Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge* (assigned text).

Wendy Brown and Janet Halley, "Introduction," in Brown and Halley, eds., *Left Legalism/Left Critique* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2002). Distributed in class.

**Oct. 26 (Week 9): Jim M. leads discussion  
Truth and Strategy**

Andrew Dobson, "Strategies for Green Change," from *Green Political Thought: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Routledge, 1995), 124-165. Reprinted in John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 539-555. (distributed as PDF by email)

William Chaloupka, "There Must Be Some Way Out of Here: Strategy, Ethics, and Environmental Politics," in Warren Magnusson and Kara Shaw, eds., *A Political Space: Reading the Global through Clayoquot Sound* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 67-90. (distributed via email)

**Nov. 2 (Week 10): Alex leads discussion  
Green identity**

Catriona Sandilands, *The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy* (assigned text).

**Nov. 9 (Week 11): in-class written exam**

**Nov. 16: (Week 12): Jana leads discussion  
Moralism**

Mark Sagoff, "The Allocation and Distribution of Resources," from his *The Economy of the Earth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 50-73. Reprinted in John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 131-146. (distributed as PDF by email)

William Chaloupka, "The Tragedy of the Ethical Commons: Demoralizing Environmentalism," in Jane Bennett and Michael J. Shapiro, eds., *The Politics of Moralizing* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 113-140.

David Naguib Pellow and Robert J. Brulle, "Power, Justice, and the Environment: Toward Critical Environmental Justice Studies," in Pellow and Brulle, eds., *Power, Justice, and the Environment: A Critical Appraisal of the Environmental Justice Movement* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2005), 1-19.

**Nov. 23; no class (Fall Break)**

**Nov. 28, Tuesday: Research paper due (by 4:30 p.m., hardcopy delivered or electronic copy emailed; late papers are accepted, but will incur a penalty)**

**Nov. 30 (Week 13): Student presentations**

**Dec. 7 (Week 14): Student presentations**

**Dec. 14 (Week 15): Student presentations (only if necessary)**