

## Environmental Political Theory: POLS 456-W

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**Course Description:** In this course we investigate competing answers to the following question: how should human beings interact with their environment?

We shall examine a number of different points of view, which divide roughly on two axes: theories of the good, and theories of the right. Among the theories of the good addressed in this course are ecocentric, human welfare, conservationist, wilderness preservationist, and skeptical points of view. These theories investigate the value of the environment. They answer the “why” question: why value the environment? Along the other axis dividing environmental political theories from each other, we shall examine liberal, libertarian, technocratic, communitarian, democratic, radical, and realist theories of the right. This second type of theory attempts to answer the question of the proper political means to address environmental issues. They answer the “how” question: how should we pursue environmental concerns? In investigating these types of questions, we shall read a number of different kinds of text, each of which uses a variety of rhetorical and argumentative strategies. We shall examine the connections between rhetorical strategies and theoretical success, applying the results of this work to our own writings on environmental political theory.

**Prerequisite:** POLS 206 or approval of instructor.

**Course Requirements.** The course consists of readings, lectures, writing workshops, and student contributions. Each class day will include some lecture, some writing workshop, and some discussion paper defense. As participation is an essential element of the learning experience in this course, only university-excused absences will be accepted. However, each student may miss two days without penalty (these will account for ordinary illnesses and university activities). Every course activity is required; students must submit papers, participate in discussion, and take the final exam, in order to pass the course.

<b>Grading:</b>	1000 points total.	900-1000 = A 800-899 = B 700-799 = C 600-699 = D below 500 = F
Discussion Papers (five, two-page papers):		100 points each.
Final Examination (blue-book format):		400 points.
Participation (attendance and engagement):		100 points.

**Required Reading** is available at the MSC bookstore. All four paperback texts, *and the assigned electronic readings*, are required. Students should bring the relevant text to class.

McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun* (Norton)  
Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings* (Modern Library)  
Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford)  
Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (Crown)  
Assigned electronic readings (see schedule)

### **Writing Workshops**

Workshops early in the course address various topics including but not limited to critical reading skills, rhetorical devices, argument construction, and revising for clarity. During the later writing workshops, students bring drafts of their papers to class, evaluate them according to a checklist of standards, and share suggestions for problem-solving.

### **Discussion Papers**

Each student is responsible for preparing **five** two-page discussion papers throughout the course of the semester, with no more than one paper per week. Discussion paper topics will be posted on WebCT at least one week in advance. Alternate topics are acceptable **only with the advance permission of the instructor**. The papers are prepared for discussion in class; students not defending papers are responsible for asking interesting questions of the paper presenters. **No credit can be given for papers that are not defended in class on the assigned discussion day.** Papers will be graded for addressing the topic, arguing well, understanding the material, and presenting it well (25% each). This last category includes spelling and grammar.

Students are expected to incorporate feedback from each paper into their next papers, demonstrating increasing facility with the construction of political argument over the course of five discussion papers. All the work in the course is to be submitted electronically, via WebCT, by 9 a.m. on the day of class. Please bring a hard copy of your paper to class.

### **Course Success**

There is a lot of quite difficult reading in this course. Students will want to set aside blocks of time to spend in a quiet, pleasant place while they read. Since all of the material consists of arguments about the environment, one very good way to learn it is to engage in such arguments yourselves. Students are encouraged to form study groups that meet regularly in some pleasant locale to discuss the material.

Students are also encouraged to become engaged consumers of news on environmental politics. Some good sources of environmental news include the *New York Times* (nytimes.com), the environmental news network (enn.com), *Science News* (sciencenews.org), and National Public Radio (npr.org), among many others.

**Students With Disabilities.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 126 of the Koldus Building, or call 845-1637.

**Course Materials/Copyright Statements** The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By “handouts,” I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

**Plagiarism Statement** As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one’s own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section “Scholastic Dishonesty.”

**Aggie Honor Code** “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honore System. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the TAMU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System. For additional information, please visit: <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/>.

**Course Schedule:**  
**(electronic texts available through WebCT)**

*Each course meeting will consist of lecture, reading, writing workshop, and discussion paper defense. Therefore, it is essential that you come prepared, with your text read, with a copy of the text in hand (free print-outs of e-texts are available in the Political Science computer labs on the second floor of the Allen Building), with drafts of your next discussion paper, and with an inclination toward sometimes spirited, but always civil, political argument.*

Week	Date	Assignment
1		Course introduction.
2		Read: <b>McNeill</b> , xxi-266.
3		Read: <b>McNeill</b> , 267-362..
4		Read <b>Locke</b> , <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , chapters 1-9 and 19.
5		Read Garrett <b>Hardin</b> , "The Tragedy of the Commons," <i>Science</i> , New Series, Vol. 162, No. 3859. (Dec. 13, 1968), pp. 1243-1248.  Read: Kenneth <b>Arrow</b> , et al., "Economic Growth, Carrying Capacity, and the Environment," <i>Science</i> , New Series, Vol. 268, No. 5210. (Apr. 28, 1995), pp. 520-521.
6		Read <b>Thoreau</b> , <i>Walden</i> , through "The Bean Field" (pp. 1-157, Modern Library edition).
7		Read <i>Walden</i> , second half (pp. 158-312), Modern Library edition)
8		Read Peter <b>Singer</b> , "Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism," <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> , Vol. 9, No. 4. (Summer, 1980), pp. 325-337.
9		Read <b>Leopold</b> , <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> , xv-94, and "The Upshot," from <i>Sketches Here and There</i> , 165-226.

10		<p>Read Paul R. <b>Ehrlich</b>, Edward O. <b>Wilson</b>, Biodiversity Studies: Science and Policy  <i>Science</i>, New Series, Vol. 253, No. 5021. (Aug. 16, 1991), pp. 758-762.</p> <p>Read Michael E. <b>Soulé</b>, “Conservation: Tactics for a Constant Crisis,”  <i>Science</i>, New Series, Vol. 253, No. 5021. (Aug. 16, 1991), pp. 744-750.</p>
11		Read <b>Foreman</b> , <i>Confessions of an Eco-Warrior</i> , entire.
12		<p>Read <b>Dryzek</b>, “Strategies of Ecological Democratization,” in <i>Democracy and the Environment</i> (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 1996).</p> <p>Read <b>Dobson</b>, “Representative Democracy and the Environment,” in <i>ibid.</i></p>
13		<p>Read Paul <b>Ehrlich</b>, et al., “No Middle Way on the Environment”  <i>The Atlantic</i>, December 1997</p> <p>Read Rodger A. <b>Payne</b>, “Deliberating Global Environmental Politics,”  <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> 33:2 (1996)</p>
14		Read “The Climate of Man,” by Elizabeth Kolbert, Parts I-III, in the <i>New Yorker</i> , 2005.
		<b>Comprehensive Final Exam</b>