

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
PHIL 112E

Professor: Christopher J. Preston

Office: LA 157

Office hrs: Tues 11 a.m.-12.15 p.m., Wed 1.15-3.15 p.m.

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Classroom: ISB 110

Class: T, R, 12.30-1.50 p.m.

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## **1. Course Introduction:**

This class is an introduction to ethics in the western tradition and, in particular, the consideration this tradition has given to animals and the natural environment. We will be approaching our study in part through the work of Holmes Rolston, III, a thinker widely regarded as one of the founders of modern environmental ethics and other leading women and men in environmental thought. While familiarizing ourselves with the main ideas in animal and environmental ethics, we will also take time to understand two of the main traditions in western ethical thought; Kantianism and Utilitarianism. We will apply our reading to contemporary ethical issues of importance such as animal rights, endangered species, wildland preservation, conservation refuges, and climate change.

You will find some of the ideas and concepts discussed in this course to be intuitive and straightforward. Others you will find extremely challenging! Philosophy is not just about 'having an opinion.' It is a difficult subject that requires concentration and learning. Some of the theorists we will read are quite complex. Do not get demoralized when you are working through a difficult reading! We will use the class time to highlight the most important points and to discuss their significance. Office hours are available to help go over the difficult material.

In addition to the purchase of two textbooks, please note that the course requires the use of Moodle. A significant portion of the reading will be posted there, in addition to reminders about assignments and other important administrative materials. Please familiarize yourself with the use of this digital service. (Note that I am not wanting you to submit assignments through Moodle. You should bring assignments to class in hard copy).

## **2. Course Objectives:**

By the end of the semester, we should have achieved several goals.

- Students should be familiar with some of the major theories in environmental ethics
- Students should understand the basic ethical frameworks of Kant and Mill
- Students should be able to look at an environmental or conservation issue and see clearly its ethical dimensions

- Students should have gained skills in reading difficult texts, expressing their views clearly, and arguing complicated points with their peers

### 3. Reading Material:

Holmes Rolston, III. (2012) *A New Environment Ethics: The Next Millennium for Life on Earth* (New York: Routledge) (**R**)

Jason Mark. (2015) *Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man* (Washington DC: Island Press) (**J**)

*Materials on Moodle* (**M**)

### 4. Reading Assignments (subject to possible changes):

**Week 1** (Jan 23-25). ETHICS BASICS: (**M**: Churchill, Rachels).

**Week 2** (Jan 30-Feb 1). HUMAN CENTERED ETHICS: (**R**: 1-2, 32-36), (**M**: Kant 1).

**\*\*\*Ethical autobiography due in Thursday class (Feb 1<sup>st</sup>)\*\*\***

**Week 3** (Feb 6-8). HUMAN CENTERED ETHICS: (**R**: 36-44), (**R**: 8-10), (**M**: Kant 2).

**Week 4** (Feb 13-15). ANIMALS: (**R**: 21-22 [Carson sections], 18-19, 63-68), (**M**: Carson), (**M**: Mill), (**M**: Singer).

**Week 5** (Feb 20-22). ANIMALS: (**M**: Plumwood), (**R**: 68-75), (**M**: Fields) (**R**: 75-78).

**\*\*\*First in-class quiz during Thursday class (Feb 22<sup>th</sup>)\*\*\***

**Week 6** (Feb 27-Mar 1). ANIMALS, PLANTS AND INSECTS: (**M**: Zimmerman), (**M**: Slicer), (**M**: Lockwood), (**R**: 93-97).

**Week 7** (Mar 6-8). PLANTS AND INSECTS: (**R**: 97-103), (**M**: Taylor), (**R**: 110-113).

**Week 8** (Mar 13-15). SPECIES: (**R**: 126-135, 135-143, 107-110).

**Week 9** (Mar 20-22). ECOSYSTEMS: (**R**: 19-24), (**M**: Leopold).

**\*\*\*Second in-class quiz in Thursday's class (March 22<sup>th</sup>)\*\*\***

-----**SPRING BREAK**-----

**Week 10** (Apr 3-5). ECOSYSTEMS: (**R**: 158-168), (**M**: Dowie), (**M**: Kheel).

**Week 11** (Apr 10-12). WILDNESS: (**J:** 1-91), (**R:** 173-178).

**Week 12** (Apr 17-19). WILDNESS: (**J:** 93-197), (**R:** 210-217).

**Week 13** (Apr 24-26). THE ANTHROPOCENE: (**M:** McKibben), (**J:** 233-249).

**\*\*\*Three page essay on the question “Should Wilderness be a Place where Humans visit, but do not remain?” Due in class on Thursday (April 26<sup>th</sup>)\*\*\***

**Week 14** (May 1-3). THE ANTHROPOCENE: (**M:** Solnit) (**R:** graphs 204-207, 217-222).

**\*\*\*Deadline for any extra credit points, Thursday class (May 3rd)\*\*\***

**\*\*\* Final Exam: Friday May 11<sup>th</sup> at 8 a.m. \*\*\***

## **5. Course Requirements:**

Please note that for each assignment you will be given points (not a grade). Your goal this semester will be to score as many points as possible. Some points (e.g. the ethical autobiography, attendance, extra credits) are very easy to get. You should plan to capture all these points. Others (e.g. the quizzes, the essay, and the final) are harder. From time to time during the semester, I will give you an idea of how your points are looking for your grade. However, this will only be an estimate until points for the final exam, class attendance, and extra credit are included. **Instead of worrying about your grade, concentrate on accumulating as many points as you can during the semester. Take advantage of the extra credit opportunities.**

(For written assignments, please use 12 point font, one inch margins all round, and double spacing. Do not put extra spaces between paragraphs or headings.)

a) Attendance and participation (15 points). Attendance and participation are required in this class. Attendance will be measured in part by unannounced in-class assignments that cannot be made up. **Two classes can be missed without any penalty. Your next two missed classes cost one point each. From the fifth miss onwards, you will lose two points for each absence.** (If you need to miss class for a legitimate reason, please e-mail or talk to me directly ahead of time (if possible) so that I know what is going on).

b) Ethical autobiography (5 points). On Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup> you are required to turn in a **3** page (typed, double-spaced) ethical autobiography detailing *the source* of your current views on matters of right and wrong. Think back to your early influences and identify all the main sources of the values, principles, and ethical considerations you have incorporated into your “ethical backpack.” Points will be lost for turning in less than 2.5 pages and for completing only a superficial examination of your influences.

c) Two In-Class Quizzes (20 points each). These quizzes will contain a mixture of short and longer answers on questions relevant to the reading and lecture so far. Prior to the first quiz, I will post some examples of quiz questions on Moodle designed to give you an idea of what to expect.

d) One three page essay (15 points). The essay question is: “Should wilderness be a place where humans visit, but do not remain?” (Read the Pryor guidelines on essay writing posted on Moodle to assist you in writing your paper). You can use material from any point of the semester to support your position. Weeks 9 to 12 should be particularly helpful. The due date is Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. Credit will be assigned for a) clear expression of your thoughts, b) understanding the philosophical issues at work, c) making connections to theorists from class, and d) anticipating complexities and counter-arguments. You all have the option to resubmit your essay based on the comments you receive. You must turn in both the original essay and your rewrite at the final exam to have a chance of gaining any points.

e) Final Exam (25 points). There will be a final exam on Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 8 a.m. that will test your knowledge of the readings and the lectures throughout the semester. This exam may only be taken on the date and time specified. A student who misses the exam for a trivial reason (e.g. slept late, thought the exam was at a different time, decided to buy a plane ticket and end your semester early etc.) **will not be allowed** to retake or reschedule it.

### **Extra Credit:**

i) Office visit: It is always a good thing to check in with the professor or the TA from time to time. I encourage you to use office hours as much as you can. We are being paid to help you with this class! You will get one extra credit point (up to a limit of 3) for coming to an office hour (either mine or the TA’s) to discuss issues related to the ethical theory we study this semester.

ii) Extra-Curricular Events: UM offers a wide range of extra-curricular lectures, conferences, and talks touching on ethics and/or the environment. There is enormous value in taking yourself to some of these extra-curricular events. The speakers are often highly motivated and interesting people. After you graduate from college, it is unlikely you will have access to such people on a regular basis again. You will get 2 extra credit points (up to a maximum of 6) for events on subjects related to ethics and/or the environment that you attend during the semester. To get this credit, you must turn in a two-page summary of the event within a week of attendance of the talk. You may not use any event that you are required to attend for another class. The two-page summary must include something about the (1) **content** and (2) **quality** of the talk. You should also include some (3) **analysis that reflects the ethics** we have been studying. Suitable events are regularly announced in the *Kaimen*, the *Missoulian*, the *Independent*, posted on flyers around campus, at <http://events.umt.edu>, and at <http://www.missoulaevents.net>. The last date to turn in any event write-up is Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> during class.

## 6. General Expectations:

I expect you to come to class having carefully read the material assigned for that week. If there are three (or four) readings, we will tend to discuss the first two on Tuesday and the third (and fourth) on Thursday. It will usually be helpful, however, to have them all read before the Tuesday class. As we talk about the reading, I will seek opinions on various topics and may call upon individuals to answer questions relevant to the reading and lecture. Please be prepared to discuss the issues and to bring your own questions and concerns to everyone's attention. We will have as much discussion in this class as we can.

I expect everyone to contribute **positively** to a community of learning. This means being respectful of those around you in the class at all times, including myself. You are expected to attend every class, to arrive on time for a 12.30 p.m. start, to not disrupt those around you unnecessarily, and to **stay for the duration of each class period**. If you think you will need the bathroom, please go before class. Ideally our 80 minutes together is focused, challenging, and uninterrupted.

**No electronic devices can be used in this class** (with the exception of a recording device). This means no laptops, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, etc. This is to avoid the temptation of web-surfing, texting, and doing other things during our brief time together. Such use is always a distraction to your neighbor and a big distraction to me. A student found using such a device during class will be ejected and have the class count as "unattended." (Please come and see me if there is a legitimate reason why I should grant an exception to you).

I also expect complete academic integrity at every point of the course. Any academic dishonesty will lead to an automatic F for your semester grade (and that of any collaborators) and a meeting with the appropriate academic authorities. There will be no exceptions to this zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty.

## 7. Additional remarks:

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability with the potential to adversely affect your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154 (phone: 243-2243). Please let me know as soon as possible about any assistance I might be able to offer. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

The [University Writing Center](#) is located in Lommasson 271 (243-2266). This is an important resource to keep in mind, especially when it comes to writing your essay due in Week 13.

Finally, I ask you to contribute to the best learning environment possible as we share time together this semester. Please do your part to make our time together as productive and enjoyable as possible. I guarantee you that I will be working hard to do the same.