

# **INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

## **PHIL 112E, Spring 2021**

Professor: Christopher J. Preston  
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### **Class Meeting:**

Tues, Thurs, 9.30 a.m. – 10.50 a.m. <https://umontana.zoom.us/j/95249118685>

### **Office hrs:**

Tues, 3.30 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.: <https://umontana.zoom.us/j/96389367581>

Wed, 10.30 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.: <https://umontana.zoom.us/j/92997851010>

### **TA Office hrs:**

Mon, noon – 1.00 p.m.: <https://umontana.zoom.us/j/97923525832>

## **1. Course Introduction**

This class is an introduction to ethics in the western tradition and, in particular, the consideration this tradition gives to animals and the natural environment. We will be approaching our study by mixing one author's quest to understand "wildness" with a collection of classic articles in environmental ethics. We will also pay attention to places where the perspective of an author is limited, drawing attention to where it ignores important issues of race, class, and gender, all of which are essential to good environmentalism.

While learning the main ideas in animal and environmental ethics, we will also familiarize ourselves with some important traditions in western ethical thought (e.g. Utilitarianism, Kantianism, Care Ethics).

Philosophy involves reading, thinking, and talking about ideas. Typically, I will be talking about *ideas* and *concepts* during our time together. You will find some of the ideas and concepts 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 includes people, dates, a few long words, and the grasp of a whole range of different views. It requires concentration and learning! Some of the theorists are complex. Prepare yourself for this. Do not get demoralized when you work 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 check in and resolve confusions.

## **2. Key Logistics**

We will meet live every Tuesday and Thursday at 9.30 a.m. using [this Zoom link](#) (repeated above). Meeting live allows us to keep the tempo of a face-to-face class. There is one textbook you are all required to buy. Other reading materials, weblinks, and videos essential to class will be posted on Moodle. Your assignments will also be

completed through Moodle. If you are unfamiliar with Moodle, please check out [Moodle 101 for Students](#). Reach out to me if you need additional help. I will have office hours twice a week. Drop in with these links ([Tuesday link](#), [Wednesday link](#)). You can also email me to set up a different time to connect, if the posted office hours don't work. The office hours have a waiting room in case someone is already in there. I will see your arrival and let you in when I become available. Our TA, Ali Brill, also has office hours on Monday at noon ([Ali's link](#)).

### 3. Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, we plan to have fulfilled several course objectives.

- Students will understand some of the major figures and theories in environmental ethics
- Students will be familiar with some important ethical frameworks
- Students will recognize some shortcomings of these frameworks
- Students will know how to look at an environmental or conservation issue and see clearly its ethical dimensions
- Students will have gained skills in reading difficult texts, expressing their views clearly, and sharing different viewpoints with their peers

### 4. Reading Material

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**)

### 5. Reading Assignments (subject to change)

**Week 1** (Jan 12, 14). INTRODUCTION, THE MORAL BACKPACK, AND ETHICAL RELATIVISM: (**M**: Churchill, Ethical Relativism link, Why Relativism Won't Work)

**Week 2** (Jan 19, 21). WILD VS. DOMESTICATED : (**J**: Into the Wild, **M**: Problems with Wilderness, **J**: Bewildered)

**\*\*\* Ethical autobiography due in Thursday class, January 21<sup>st</sup> \*\*\***

**Week 3** (Jan 26, 28). ANIMAL WELFARE: (**M**: Singer, Animal Welfare Crash Course)  
**\*\*\*Quiz 1 in class on Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

**Week 4** (Feb 2, 4). ANIMAL RIGHTS: (**M:** Kant Non-humans, Animal Rights Outline, Animal Activist TedTalk)

**Week 5** (Feb 9, 11). EARLY WHITE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY: (**J:** The Mountains of California, **M:** Leopold)

**Week 6** (Feb 16, 18). SCRUTINIZING THAT HISTORY  
(**M:** Pulling Down Our Monuments, Interview with Shelton Johnson, Global Conservation and Racism, Conservation Refugees)

**\*\*\*Quiz 2 in class on Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

**Week 7** (Feb 23, 25). NATURAL RIGHTS AND NATURAL VALUES: (**J:** The Forest Primeval, **M:** Zartner link, Smith link, Colorado River news segment)

**Week 8** (Mar 2). AN ECOFEMINIST ALTERNATIVE: (**M:** Warren, Ecofeminism link)

**Week 9** (Mar 9, 11). ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: (**M:** Environmental Justice Explained video link, Robert Bullard Interview)

**\*\*\*Quiz 3 in class on Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

**Week 10** (Mar 18). ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (ctd.): (**M:** Benedict, EPA Resources)

**Week 11** (Mar 23, 25). CULTURAL REVIVAL AND SURVIVAL: (**J:** The Heart of Everything That Is, **M:** Immodest Proposal, Response)

**Week 12** (Mar 30, Apr 1). PREDATORS: (**J:** The Ecology of Fear, Island Wolves)

**\*\*\*Quiz 4 in class on Thursday April 1<sup>st</sup>\*\*\***

**Week 13** (Apr 6, 8). THE ETHICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: (**M:** World Scientists' Warning, Gardiner, Tragedy of Commons clip, Prisoner's Dilemma clip)

**Week 14** (Apr 13, 15). CLIMATE JUSTICE: (**M:** What is Climate Justice?, How to Save a Planet Podcast, Climate and Gender)

**Week 15** (Apr 20, 22). THE END OF NATURE: (**J:** Fall of the Wild, Colbert Link, Marris)

**\*\*\*Deadline for office hour visit, Wednesday April 21<sup>st</sup> \*\*\***

**\*\*\*Deadline for all extra credit points, Thursday class, April 22<sup>nd</sup> \*\*\***

**Week 16** (Apr 26). **\*\*\*Final exam, Monday April 26<sup>th</sup> at 8 a.m.\*\***

## 6. Course Requirements:

a) Attendance and Engagement (25 points). Attendance and engagement are required in this class. Attendance means being at our meetings. Engagement means participating enthusiastically and regularly! I will be tracking these by looking at the Zoom log, checking the participant list at lecture, jumping into the breakout rooms, and looking at your responses to discussion questions and short assignments on Moodle. Remote learning creates challenges but I'm eager for you to stay continuously involved in our learning process. Five (5) of these attendance and engagement points are for an office hour visit I would like you to make at some point during the semester with me or the TA. If you are forced to miss class for legitimate reasons, let me know ahead of time if possible. **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.**

b) Ethical autobiography (15 points). On Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup> you are required to submit through Moodle a **3 page** (typed, double-spaced) ethical autobiography detailing the main sources of your current views on right and wrong. Think back to your early influences and identify the roots 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) Quizzes (32 points). Every three weeks we will have a short answer and multiple choice quiz based on the reading and lecture in the previous weeks. Eight (8) points are available in each quiz.

d) Final Exam (28 points). There will be a final exam on Monday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at 8 a.m. to 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 end the semester early etc.) **will not be allowed** to retake or reschedule it.

### Extra Credit:

i) Office visit: I encourage you to use office hours as much as you can. We are paid to help you with this class! You will get one extra credit point (up to a limit of 3) for coming to additional office hours beyond the 5 point visit specified in 'attendance and engagement.' You can visit with me or Ali (the TA) for extra credit to discuss issues related to our studies before April 21<sup>st</sup>.

ii) Extra-Curricular Events: On any given day there are a wide range of extra-curricular lectures, conferences, and talks touching on ethics and/or the environment held at UM or

beyond. There is enormous value in listening to some of these 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 your attendance of 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 an event 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) **ethical analysis** connected to something we have been studying. Your write-up must also include the title and link for the event. Suitable events are regularly announced in the *Kaimen*, the *Missoulian*, on flyers around campus, at <http://www.umt.edu/events>, at <http://www.missoulaevents.net>, and in the UMToday daily email update. The last date to turn in an event write-up is Thursday, April 22<sup>th</sup> during class.

## **7. General Expectations:**

I expect you to come to each class having carefully read the material assigned for that week. If there is more than one reading listed, we will tend to discuss the first one or two on Tuesday and the remainder on Thursday. Please be prepared to discuss the issues and to bring your own questions and concerns to everyone's attention in the chat. I will be using Jamboard to give you a chance to post some of your opinions and views.

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 9.30 a.m. start and to **stay for the duration of each class period.**

I also expect complete academic integrity at every point of the course. Any academic dishonesty will lead to an 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.

There will likely be a range of different challenges this semester due to the pandemic. As these challenges arrive, do your best to keep me posted. I'll try to be flexible, but this is easier when I am not surprised by things at the last minute. Communicate with me by email well in advance of any problems if at all possible. Let me know if particular aspects of the class are especially challenging for you and I'll do what I can to help. Remember, I want you to succeed with this class. I genuinely believe this material is helpful to you.

## **8. 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 Lomasson 271 (243-2266). This is an important resource to keep in mind.

Finally, I ask you to contribute to the best learning environment possible as we share time together this semester. A class in ethics and the environment can be really fun. It is both intellectually challenging and highly relevant to everyday life. Please do your part to make our time together as productive and enjoyable as possible. I guarantee you that I will be doing mine.