

# **ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY (Phl 422)**

**Spring 2021**

Professor: Christopher J. Preston

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## **Class Meetings:**

Tues, Thurs, 12.30 p.m. – 1.50 p.m.: <https://umontana.zoom.us/j/99210244644>

## **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>

## **1. Course Introduction**

This course looks in some depth at discussions that have been prominent in the first forty-five years of professional environmental philosophy. These include the *intrinsic value debates*, *ecological feminism*, *environmental virtue ethics*, *environmental justice*, *the wilderness debates*, and *climate ethics*. The goal is for students with some background in environmental ethics to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the existing work in this part of the field.

The work we will read appeared in English language journals and came out of university systems, professional associations, and a particular understanding of what philosophy looks like. We should be aware this gives it a very distinctive bias. We will give regular consideration to this bias and consider what environmental ethics might look like without it.

Although environmental philosophy is clearly connected to the practical goal of living justly within a healthy and sustainable environment, the discipline is also a serious theoretical endeavor in its own right. Be prepared to delve deeply into the theoretical aspects while staying alert to how you might tie these discussions back into practical matters.

## **2. Key Logistics**

We will meet live every Tuesday and Thursday at 12.30 a.m. using [this Zoom link](#). Meeting live allows us to keep the semblance and tempo of a face-to-face class. Please keep your video cameras on and use ‘gallery view’ on Zoom. Reading materials, weblinks, and information essential to class will be posted on 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 if these 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.

### **3. Learning Outcomes**

- Students will become familiar with several major topic areas from the early years of professional environmental philosophy
- Students will increase their skill level at reading complicated texts and arguments
- Students will recognize the theoretical underpinnings of environmental decision-making frameworks
- Students will recognize some of the shortcomings and biases of these frameworks
- Students will learn how to set their own ideas in relation to those of professional environmental philosophers in a term paper

### **4. Reading Materials**

All of the semester's reading will be posted on *Moodle*. Materials found there are required reading for the course unless stated otherwise. Please check in with *Moodle* regularly to stay abreast of any updates or changes.

I request that you come to class having carefully read the material assigned for that day prior to your arrival. Usually, the first article (or two) will be for Tuesday and the second (or third) for Thursday.

This will be a small class with a seminar-type feel. For this to be effective, we need video cameras on throughout class. I will seek opinions on various topics and will call upon individuals to answer questions relevant to the reading and lecture. Please be prepared to discuss the positions articulated in the reading and to bring your own questions and concerns to everyone's attention.

### **5. Provisional Reading Assignments**

(Articles with an asterisk \* are optional for undergraduates. I would like you to read them but recognize the burden of reading journal articles when you have less experience with philosophy. All articles are required for graduate students)

**Week 1** (Jan 12, 14): BIRTH OF A FIELD: "Is there a Need?" – Routley,\* "The Shallow and the Deep" – Naess, "Roaring" – Griffin.

**Week 2** (Jan 19, 21): INTRINSIC VALUE: "Challenges" – Rolston, "Don't Give up" – McShane.

**Short Paper on Intrinsic Value due by 8 pm on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup>**

**Week 3** (Jan 26, 28): BLINDSPOTS: "Third World Critique" – Guha, "Urban Blindspot" – Light.\*

**Week 4** (Feb 2, 4): THE WILDERNESS DEBATES: “Wilderness and Erasure” – Deluca and Demo, “Trouble” – Cronon.\*

**Short Paper on Wilderness and Blindspots due by 8 pm on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 5** (Feb 9, 11): THE WILDERNESS DEBATES: “Cabal” – Irvine, “Reaffirmed” – Rolston.

**Week 6** (Feb 16, 18): AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTS: “Wildland Memories” – Johnson and Bowker, “Blacks and the Environment” – Bullard and Wright.

**Short Paper on Race, Wilderness, and Environment due by 8 pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 7** (Feb 23, 25): ECOFEMINISM: “Origins” – Sturgeon,\* “Survey” – Warren.

**Week 8** (Mar 2): ECOFEMINISM: “Rationalism” – Plumwood,\* “Being Prey” – Plumwood.

**Short Paper on Ecofeminism due by 8 pm on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Week 9** (Mar 9, 11): INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: “Caring” – Whyte and Cuomo, “Returning the Gift” – Kimmerer.

**Week 10** (Mar 18): INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: “Indigenous Environmental Justice”- McGregor.

**Short Paper on Indigenous Perspectives due by 8 pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 11** (Mar 23, 25): ENVIRONMENTAL VIRTUE ETHICS: “Towards Virtue Ethics” – Cafaro, “Virtue and Animals” – Hursthouse.

**Week 12** (Mar 30, Apr 1): CLIMATE ETHICS: “Perfect Storm” – Gardiner,\* “Responsibility” – Hourdequin.

**Week 13** (Apr 6, 8): CLIMATE ETHICS: “Vulnerability” – Cuomo, “Climate and Animals” – McShane.

**Short Paper on Virtue and Climate Ethics due by 8 pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 14** (Apr 13, 15): THE ANTHROPOCENE: “Multiple Anthropocenes” – Preston. TBA.

**One page term paper outline due by Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 15** (Apr 20, 22): ENVIRONMENTAL PRAGMATISM: “Rejecting Pragmatism” – Samuelsson.

**Extra Credit office visits must be completed by Wednesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>**

**Extra Credit event write-ups should be submitted by Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Week 16** (Apr 26-30) FINALS WEEK.

**Term paper due at 5 p.m on Tuesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>**

## 6. Course Requirements

a) Attendance, participation, and scholarly attitude will account for 15% of your grade (15 points). I will be taking note of timeliness, attendance, your use of Moodle, and your verbal contributions during the class. If you need to miss class at some point in the semester, please let me know by e-mail ahead of time if possible. If you cannot let me know before class, please e-mail me as soon as you can afterwards. **Graduate students** will be expected to remain aware of the audience and to maintain clarity about how the philosophical terms matter outside of their discipline.

b) Short papers (18 points). At the end of each topic section, **undergraduate students** must turn in a one page reaction paper detailing one strength and one weakness of a thinker or an approach we have just covered (there will be 6 short papers in all). Think of these as an extended couple of paragraphs in which you react - both positively and negatively - to a theorist or a topic. **Graduate students** should turn in two pages and must show a more contextual and sophisticated understanding of the topic at hand. Papers will be graded **Great** (3 points), **Okay** (2 points), **Sketchy** (1 point).

c) Discussion board (25 points). Every reading will have a discussion question posted on Moodle the weekend before class. The question is designed to draw attention to what I consider a key section of the article. After you complete each reading, you should jump on the discussion board and post a quick answer to the question. Please be concise and resist the temptation to write a long essay. Students are encouraged to read what others are saying and reply to their peers when they have time and interest. Please post your discussion question by midnight the day before class so that others have the time to read it.

d) In-class discussion question (2 points). Each student will be assigned one reading for which they are expected to bring a discussion question to share in class. (Graduate students will be assigned two). This can be an extension of what you post on the discussion board or it can be a different topic entirely. This question should identify any piece of the reading that you find particularly contentious or interesting. It should be a prompt for where you want us to take our class discussion. **Graduate students** will be expected to use their question to carry the discussion in a little more depth and to connect with more areas of environmental ethics than undergraduates.

e) Term paper outline (5 points). Please share with me a term paper outline by Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup>. We should discuss this in an office hour or after class. The outline does not need to be detailed. It just needs to contain a topic described in a single paragraph and about 3 or 4 'moves' you plan to make in the paper. Please feel encouraged to meet with me well before April 15<sup>th</sup> if you can.

f) Final Assignment (35 points). **Undergraduates** must write an 8-10 page term paper on an environmental topic that draws from any part of the semester. Papers should show a good understanding of two or more theorists/positions, the ability to spot problems in a position, and the creativity to provide solutions. **Graduate** students must write 12-13 pages and demonstrate a

more synoptic understanding of the topics in environmental ethics as well as a deeper level of critique. The paper will be due on Tuesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m. as an attachment to an e-mail.

## **7. Extra Credit**

i) Non-curricular event (Up to 4 points). You have the option of attending up to two non-curricular events (on or off campus) on topics related to our course material. The event could be a lecture, a debate, a public forum, a webinar, etc. etc. (Your event may not be a movie unless there is a focused discussion following it in which you take part. It also cannot be an event you are required to attend for another class). After attending the event, you should turn in to me within a week a two-page summary of the experience. Your summary should include a) a description of the event content, b) a solid connection to the topics we are discussing, and c) some critical analysis. The deadline for any non-curricular event extra credit is Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

ii) Office visits (Up to 3 points). I encourage everyone to come to office hours during the semester as much as you wish. One visit is required for the term paper outline. Additional visits are worth an extra credit point each (up to a maximum of 3).

## **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) (243-2243). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact their office in Lommasson 154. 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.

I encourage you to use my office hours. I am paid to help you with this class! Use e-mail to stay in touch. If you find interesting material throughout the semester that you would like to share with your classmates, I would be happy to post it on Moodle for you.

Finally, I expect you to contribute **positively** to our small community of learning. This means being respectful of those around you in the class at all times, including myself. I require that you consistently engage with our topics. In other words, no 'checking out' for half an hour during class. Class is too short and the topics too intense for you to lose the plot even for 5 minutes. The semester will provide challenges, no doubt, but together we can make this class stimulating and fun. I look forward to working with you.