

Syllabus, PHIL*2070
Philosophy of the Environment
Winter 2014

Instructor

Dr. Stefan Linquist
Office: MacKinnon (MACK) 358
Hours: Mon. & Wed. 10:00-11:00 (or by appointment)
Email: linquist@uoguelph.ca

Lecture

Monday & Wednesday
12:30- 1:20
Macdonald Hall 149

Teaching Assistants

Orsolya (Orsi) Csaszar	ocsaszar@uoguelph.ca
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Sections

1 & 2
3 & 4
5 & 6
7 & 8
9 & 10

office / hrs

Mack 360 / Monday 1:30-2:30
Mack 366/ Monday 11:30-12:30
MACK 324 / Thursday 5:30-6:30
MACK 366/ Wednesday 1:30-2:30
MACK 325/ Friday, 3:30-4:30

Course Description

This course critically examines popular beliefs about the environment and humanity's relationship to it. We begin with the foundations of modern environmentalism. This movement was grounded on an image of Mother Nature as an interconnected whole whose components hang together in delicate balance. Human progress and development supposedly threaten the balance of Nature. We will consider whether this picture withstands philosophical and scientific scrutiny. The second part of the course investigates recent debates over climate change. Often, people or governments who are reluctant to take action to prevent climate change are disparaged as irresponsible or unscientific. What do these accusations say about public perceptions of science and policy? How accurate is the public understanding of climate change? Does it matter? The third part will investigate economic approaches to environmental decision making. For example, is it possible to quantify the value of biodiversity or the cost of pollution in economic terms? Does an economic framework overlook important ethical and aesthetic reasons for valuing nature?

Learning Objectives

- By engaging with readings and other course materials, students will develop skills in philosophical analysis and critical thinking.
- By completing weekly reflections, students will develop generally applicable research skills.
- By completing weekly reflections and the final paper, students will develop skills in clear, argumentative writing.
- Through attending lectures and tutorials, students will become conversant in the central concepts and theories of environmental philosophy.

Course Website

All course materials (assignments, readings, notes, etc.) are available on the course webpage: www.biophilosophy.ca/Teaching/Philosophy2070.html . You also easily find the site by going to my homepage: www.biophilosophy.ca.

Assessment

Weekly assignments	20%	Midterm 1	15%	Participation	10%
Group projects	15%	Midterm 2	20%	Final paper	20%

Final paper (no sit-down final exam)

The final paper serves as a take home (final) exam. It is due on **April 14th at noon**. There will be a second midterm on the last day of class (**April 02**). But no sit-down final exam on **April 21**. Students receive a set of writing guidelines for the final paper, it is essential that they are followed.

Learning expectations

Students are expected to take responsibility for what they learn in this course. As the instructor I present you with materials (online, in tutorial, and in lecture) that I hope will inspire, challenge and inform you. But ultimately you must take charge of your own intellectual growth and development.

Conduct

Many of the topics discussed in this class have deep personal significance for students. Some of those convictions will be challenged as we explore their rational justification. Some people sometimes find this process uncomfortable, viewing scrutiny of their ideas as a personal attack. We must all therefore make an effort to treat one another with respect. We must separate our assessment of ideas and arguments from our assessment of the individuals who might hold them.

Readings

Students are expected to show up to each class having read the material and completed the assignment for that day (if there is one). All readings are available on the course website.

Lectures

Lectures are designed to complement readings by providing background, emphasizing key concepts and arguments. We should take these opportunities to explore questions together, even if they deviate sometimes from the lecture plan. Any question you have is fair game and I will do my best to answer it.

Class Notes online

For each weekly topic notes are posted on the course website. These are designed to assist with comprehension of the readings and in the development of philosophical skills. They are not a substitute for lecture. In lecture, we cover some topics in greater depth than in the notes.

Reflection essays

There will be eight short (1-2 page) reflection essays. Their aim is to focus attention on certain aspects of the reading, to provide a venue for students to test ideas, and to help students develop philosophical skills. Some exam questions are also drawn from reflections. All reflections are submitted using the Dropbox system in Courselink.

Participation

Students receive participation marks for completing the **two online surveys**. They may also receive points for joining the **arboretum visit**, or by raising thoughtful criticism on the **Courselink discussion board**. However, most of the participation grade comes from **engagement in class and during tutorial**.

Lateness Policy

Reflections and the final paper must be submitted via Dropbox before class on the due date. No assignments will be accepted late without documentation or otherwise legitimate justification.

Plagiarism

Students are therefore directed to this online tutorial on plagiarism, and are responsible for having completed it (<http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/tutorials/plagiarism-tutorial>). Evidence of plagiarism will be taken extremely seriously, resulting in the submission of an academic misconduct report to the Assistant Dean of Arts. For additional information about student rights and responsibilities, as outlined by UofG College of Arts, please visit the Course Info section of the webpage:

www.biophilosophy.ca/Teaching/phil2070courseinfo.html

Course Outline

Week 1 – Introduction to environmental philosophy.

Jan. 06 *Introduction to course themes and expectations.*

Jan. 08 *Philosophical methods: Argument reconstruction and analysis*
Submit: online survey (due before Week 2)

Tutorial: Form research groups, discuss projects.

Assignment : Skeptical Environmentalist group projects (due Week 3 tutorial).

Week 2 – The Land Ethic: Is it justified by the Moral Expansion argument?

Jan. 13 *What is the Land Ethic?*

Read: Aldo Leopold, Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic (p. 163- 172).

Submit: Reflection 1.

Jan. 15 *Critique of the Moral Expansion argument.*

Read: Callicott, B. Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic (sections i-ix; p. 173-181)

Tutorial: Discuss Leopold's Moral Expansion argument.

Week 3 – Other arguments for and against the Land Ethic.

Jan. 20 *Is the Land Ethic in conflict with human and animal welfare?*

Read: Sagoff Animal Liberation & Env. Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce (p. 38-44).

Submit: Reflection 2

Jan. 22 *Can the Land Ethic survive the death of ecocriticism?*

Read: J. Kricher, Nothing endures except change (p. 165-174).

Tutorial: Present/submit Skeptical Environmentalism projects.

Assignment: Bottled water group projects (due Week 5 Tutorial).

Week 4 – Deep Ecology and its critics.

Jan. 27 Environmentalism's rejection of science

Read: Arne Naess The World of Concrete Contents (p. 43-55).

Submit: Reflection 3

Jan. 29 Is there anything deeper to Deep Ecology than its name?

Read: Dobson Deep Ecology: Ethics as a code of conduct (p. 271-276).

Tutorial: Discuss the arguments of Deep Ecology

Week 5 – Should nature be conserved for its aesthetic value?

Feb. 03 Guest Lecture Nate Perkins (Landscape Arch.) *The health of landscape aesthetics.*

Read: Class notes on environmental aesthetics.

Feb. 05 *Read:* Yuirko Saito, The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature (p. 101- 111).

Submit: Reflection 4.

Tutorial: Present/submit group projects on bottled water.

Week 6 – Review and exam.

Feb. 10 Review class

Feb. 12 ****First Exam**** No Tutorials this week.

Week 7 – Sense and nonsense in the climate change controversy.

Feb. 24 *Read:* G. Monbiot, Introduction (p. ix-xiii) & Chapter 1, A Faustian pact (p. 1-19).
Submit: Reflection 5

Feb. 26 *Read:* G. Monbiot, The denial industry (p. 20-42).

Tutorial: Discuss Reflection 5.

Week 8 – How accurate is the public understanding of climate science?

Mar. 03 *Read:* Woodward & Goodstein, Conduct, misconduct and the structure of science
Submit: Reflection 6.

Mar. 05 *Guest Lecture Dr. Nudds (Biology) How should science inform environmental decisions?*

Tutorial: Discuss of public understanding of climate change science.

Assignment: Group projects on cost/benefit analysis.

Week 9- How justified are concerns over climate change?

Mar. 10 *Read:* Jameson, D. Ethics, Public Policy and Global Warming (p. 371-379).
Submit: Reflection 7.

Mar. 12 *Guest lecture Ross McKittrick (Economics) on the climate change debate.*

Tutorial: Final Paper topics assigned (Due April 14). Discuss climate change.

Week 10 – The economic approach to environmental decision making

Mar. 17 *Read:* Baxter, W.F. . Economics and Ecology- People or Penguins? (p. 108-118)
Submit: Reflection 8

Mar. 19 *Read:* M. Sagoff, Why Political questions are not all economic. (p. 24-45)

Tutorial: Discuss how to write a philosophical paper.

Week 11 – The economic approach to valuing nature.

Mar. 24 *Read:* Sagoff, Can we put a Price on nature's services? (p. 87-109)

Mar. 26 *Read:* Sagoff, The concept of place in environmental ethics. (p. 157-174)

Tutorial: Arboretum visit

Week 12 – Review of Parts 2 & 3 and exam.

Mar. 31 Review Class.

Apr. 02 – ****Second Exam****

Tutorial: Question and answer session for final papers.

April 16 – Term paper (take home exam) due at 12:30 pm. Submit to prof by email in Ms word or .rtf format.
Make sure to follow paper writing guidelines (as specified on handout , available on course website).