



PHIL*2070 Philosophy of the Environment

Winter 2019

Section(s): C01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - January 07, 2019

1 Course Details

1.1 Calendar Description

Environmental Philosophy asks questions such as: How has 'nature' been conceptualized in the Western philosophical tradition, in aesthetics, science, and ethics? What arguments have been offered for the view that humans are superior among creatures? What connections might there be between the ways that nature, humankind, and animals have been conceptualized and the ways that humans have tended to act toward the non-human natural environment? This course may cover such topics as: climate change, resource extraction and justice, biotechnology, obligations to future generations, risk assessment and discount rates, species lost, conservation vs. preservation.

Pre-Requisite(s): 2.00 credits or (1 of PHIL*1000, PHIL*1010, PHIL*1050)

1.2 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?

1.3 Timetable

Lecture:

Monday & Wednesday, 10:30 - 11:20. McLachlan 102

Seminars:

01 Wednesday, 2:30-3:20. MacKinnon 119A.

02 Wednesday, 3:30-4:20. MacKinnon 119A.

03 Thursday, 9:30 -10:20. MacKinnon 119.

04 Thursday, 10:30-11:20. MacKinnon 119.

05 Friday, 9:30-10:20. MacKinnon 119.

06 Friday, 10:30-11:20. MacKinnon 119A.

07 Friday, 11:30-12:20. MacKinnon 307.

08 Friday, 12:30-1:20. MacKinnon 315.

1.4 Final Exam

7:00 - 9:00 pm April 13, 2019.

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructional Support Team

Instructor:	Stefan Linquist
Email:	linquist@uoguelph.ca
Office:	MCKN 358 - 3rd floor of McKinnon in Philosophy dpt
Office Hours:	Please contact by email or in person during office hours, which are held on Mondays 3:30-4:30 (or by appointment).

2.2 Teaching Assistant(s)

Teaching Assistant:	Brady Fullerton
Email:	bfullert@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours:	TA for Sections 01 & 02

Teaching Assistant:	Bryan Richard
Email:	bricha09@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours:	TA for Sections 03 & 04
Teaching Assistant:	Joshua Grant-Young
Email:	jgrantyo@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours:	TA for Sections 05 & 06
Teaching Assistant:	Richard Valliere
Email:	rvallier@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours:	TA for Sections 07 & 08

3 Learning Resources

3.1 Recommended Resource(s)

Philosophy 2070 - Philosophy of the Environment (Library Course Guides)

This hard copy of the course readings is strongly recommended. However, the same readings are also available online, via Courselink.

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Logically reconstruct and analyze the underlying argument(s) in any piece of communication (written or verbal) that is designed to convince an audience of some claim. This includes identifying the logical structure of an argument, as well as revealing hidden assumptions, and raising cogent objections to specific premises.
 2. Research and write an informed critical reflection about any controversial topic.
 3. Communicate effectively about abstract ideas (both verbally and in writing).
 4. Defend an informed, personal position on any of the dominant theories in environmental philosophy.
-

5 Teaching and Learning Activities

5.1 Lecture

Week 1

Topic(s): The first part of the week begins with a brief

introduction to the course and a crash course in reading /writing like a philosopher.

The second part of the week introduces students to the Principle of Rational Depletion in environmental ethics (also sometimes called the Tragedy of the Commons).

Reference(s):

Video Documentary about the depletion of local forests in Businga

Part 1:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmIEESAHD4A&feature=related>

Part 2:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvCbNlz6pyl&feature=related>

Part 3:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1uQnqtZV2g&feature=related

Week 2

Topic(s):

Aldo Leopold and the Land Ethic

This week in lecture, students will reconstruct and analyze two of Aldo Leopold's arguments for his famous Land Ethic. A background to Leopold and his thinking is provided by Michael P. Nelson's article. Leopold's arguments are to be extracted from the two assigned pieces of his writing (see below).

Reference(s):

Michael P. Nelson's (1998), "Aldo Leopold, Environmental Ethics, and The Land Ethic."

Leopold, A. (1933) "The conservation ethic."

Leopold, A. (circa 1920), "Some fundamentals of

Conservation in the Southwest." (focus just on pages 138-141, "Conservation as a moral issue.").

Week 3

Topic(s):

Social construction of the wilderness ideal

This week, students will consider whether the very idea of pristine wilderness is a recent social construction, and whether this would undermine the value often placed on wilderness in our culture. We will reconstruct and analyze arguments by William Cronon and Miles Alexander Powell, who argue that there is a "dark side" to the wilderness ideal.

Reference(s):

Cronon, W. (1996) "The trouble with wilderness, or, getting back to the wrong ideal."

Powell, Miles A. (2015), "'Pestered with inhabitants': Aldo Leopold, William Vogt, and more trouble with wilderness."

Week 4

Topic(s):

The tension between animal welfare and environmental ethics

This week, we consider whether the conservation of ecosystems is compatible with the promotion of animal welfare. Students will reconstruct Mark Sagoff's arguments suggesting that these two objectives are incompatible.

Reference(s):

Sagoff, M. (1984), "Animal liberation and environmental ethics: bad marriage, quick divorce."

Week 5

Topic(s):

Ecological science and the (alleged) balance of nature

This week, we consider why the scientific discipline of ecology has largely rejected the "balance of nature" and the related idea that ecological communities are highly interconnected wholes. Students are expected to draw the relevant implications for Leopold's arguments for the Land Ethic.

Reference(s):

Kricher, J. (1998), "Nothing endures except change: Ecology's newly emerging paradigm."

Simberloff, D. (2014), "The 'balance of nature' - evolution of a Panchesteron."

Week 6**Topic(s):**

Deep ecology and the phenomenological turn in environmental ethics

This week, we consider how so called "Deep Ecologists" rejected scientific ecology when it no longer served their ethical objectives, turning instead to the philosophical doctrine of phenomenology.

Reference(s):

A. Ness (1973), "The shallow and the deep, long range ecology movement: A summary."

L. Valera (2018), "From spontaneous experience to the cosmos: Arne Naess' phenomenology."

Week 7**Topic(s):**

Midterm preparation

No lectures scheduled during reading week. Students will receive a set of questions in preparation for the midterm exam, based on readings and lectures to date.

Week 8

Topic(s): **Review and midterm**

February 25th will be a review lecture, followed by an **in-class midterm exam on February 27th.**

Week 9

Topic(s): **Climate change and the public consumption of science**

This week, we consider debates over climate change from the perspective of the philosophy of science. First, we consider whether climate change science should be understood as a case of "post normal science," and what this might mean for our understanding of the debates. Then, we consider whether undue emphasis has been placed on the importance of scientific consensus in debates over climate change.

Reference(s): J.R. Turnpenny, (2012), "Lessons from post-normal science for climate change skeptic debates."

D.R. Legates, (2013), "Learning and teaching climate science: the perils of consensus knowledge using agnotology."

Week 10

Topic(s): **Climate change and the ideal of "value-free" science.**

This week, students will consider whether it is possible or desirable for climate science to develop independently from our social and ethical values.

Reference(s): H. Douglas (2009), "Rejecting the ideal of value-free science."

G. Betz (2013), "In defence of the value-free ideal."

Week 11

Topic(s): **The economic approaches to valuing nature and environmental decision-making**

This week, students are introduced to the ambitions and foundational assumptions of environmental economics. First, we consider the economists' method for placing a dollar value on so called "ecosystem services." Second, we explore the basic strategy of economic decision making known as cost-benefit analysis.

Reference(s): H.B. Leonard & R.J. Zeckhauser (1983), "Cost-benefit analysis defended." (Available on Courouselink only- not in physical copy of the Coursepack.)

Week 12

Topic(s): **A foundational critique of environmental economics**

This week, students will critically examine the assumptions behind the the economic approach to valuing nature and cost benefit analysis.

Reference(s): D.M. Hausman & M.S. McPherson (1997), "Beware of economists bearing advice."

D.M. Hausman & M.S. McPherson (2009), "Preference satisfaction and welfare economics."

Week 13

Topic(s): **Place-based environmental ethics and its importance for First Nations environmentalists**

This week, we close the course by returning to the ethical question of whether (morally speaking) we ought to conserve nature. Students will critically analyze the "place based" approach to valuing nature, and consider its importance in some First Nations

philosophical frameworks.

Reference(s): B.G. Norton & B. Hannon (1997), "Environmental values: a place-based theory."

G. Coulthard (2010), "Place against empire: Understanding indigenous anti-colonialism."

5.2 Seminar

Week 1

Topic(s): Tutorial: Meet your TA, receive first research-group assignment, and form student research groups. (If you absolutely cannot attend in person, notify your TA in advance to be placed in a group).

Week 2

Topic(s): Discuss first reflection essay assignment (Due Monday, January 28). Practice the skill of argument reconstruction and analysis.

Week 3

Topic(s): Present first group-assignment to seminar members: Effectively contacting your political leaders.

Week 4

Topic(s): TA leads discussion of the conflict between animal welfare vs environmentalism.

Week 5

Topic(s): Receive feedback on first reflection essay and discuss second reflection essay (due Friday, February 15).

Week 6

Topic(s): Seminar discussion of the "third world critique" of Deep Ecology.

Reference(s): R. Guha (1989), "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness preservation: A Third World Criique."

Week 7

Topic(s): Reading break - no seminar

Week 8

Topic(s): Receive feedback on second reflection essay, organize into groups for second group project (on environmental whistle blowing).

Week 9

Topic(s): Discuss third reflection essay assignment.

Week 10

Topic(s): Present group projects on environmental whistle blowing.

Week 11

Topic(s): TA leads discussion on environmental economics.

Week 12

Topic(s): Receive feedback on third reflection essay.

Week 13

Topic(s): Course review for final exam.

6 Assessments

6.1 Marking Schemes & Distributions

Reflections	30%	Midterm	20%	Participation	10%
-------------	-----	---------	-----	---------------	-----

Group projects 10% Final 30%

Reflection Essays

There will be three reflection essays. Their purpose is to help guide you through the course material and promote the development of your critical thinking and writing skills. All reflections must be submitted on time using [Dropbox in Courselink](#).

Group Projects

There will be two group projects. They involve a short written component and a presentation in seminar. These assignments help students to get to know one another, they assist in the development of research and writing skills, and they provide practice in discussing abstract concepts.

Midterm and Final

There are two exams in this course. Their purpose is to help students get a “big picture” understanding of the topics covered in this course. The final exam is cumulative, but will mostly cover material from the second half of the course.

Participation

A participation mark will be assigned by your TA at the end of the semester to reward students for engaging in tutorial discussions and for speaking up in class.

Student Centered Learning

Students are expected to take responsibility for what they learn in this course. The instructor

and TAs will present you with materials (online, in tutorial, and in lecture) that are designed to 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. We must all therefore make an effort to treat one another with respect, *separating our assessment of ideas and arguments from our opinions about 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. We will typically cover material that is related to the readings but not simply a review of their content. So you should plan to attend all of the lectures to be exposed to the entire course content. Lectures are also an opportunity 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.

Plagiarism

Evidence of plagiarism will result in submission of an academic misconduct report to the Associate Dean and a potential blemish on your academic record. Just don't risk it. If you are having trouble with an assignment, please see the instructor or TA for assistance. If you absolutely cannot submit an assignment before the deadline, contact the instructor to discuss your situation.

6.2 Assessment Details

First Group Assignment: Effectively contacting your political leaders (5%)**Due:** Week 3, In seminar

Students will present to other members of the seminar their first group project: Effectively Contacting your Political Leader. See CourseLink for details of the assignment.

First Reflection Essay (10%)**Date:** Sun, Jan 27, 11:59 PM, Submitted electronically by courseLink

See CourseLink for assignment details.

Second reflection essay (10%)**Date:** Fri, Feb 15, 11:59 PM, Submit electronically via CourseLink**Midterm exam (20%)****Date:** Wed, Feb 27, In class**Second group project: Environmental whistle blowing (5%)****Date:** Week 10, In seminar

Students will present to fellow seminar members the results of second group project: Environmental whistle blowing. See CourseLink for assignment details.

Third Reflection Essay (10%)**Date:** Sun, Mar 24, 11:59 PM, Submit electronically via CourseLink**Final exam (30%)****Date:** Sat, Apr 13, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM, TBA - check Webadvisor**Participation in class and tutorial over entire semester (10%)**

7 University Statements

7.1 Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

7.2 When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

7.3 Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the fortieth class day; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of the add period in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

7.4 Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

7.5 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance and not later than the 40th Class Day.

More information can be found on the SAS website

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

7.6 Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community—faculty, staff, and students—to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that encourages academic integrity. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse

students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

7.7 Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

7.8 Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs.

Academic Calendars

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>
