



PHIL*2070 Philosophy of the Environment

Winter 2021

Section(s): C01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - January 11, 2021

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-Requisites: 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

There will be no synchronous lectures this semester. Course materials will be presented in the form of notes, short videos, and readings. Students will attend synchronous tutorial/discussion meetings each week.

1.4 Final Exam

Students submit a final paper during the exam period in lieu of an exam.

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 Assistants

Teaching Assistant:	Camille Irvine
Email:	irvinec@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours:	TA for Sections 01 & 02
Teaching Assistant:	Lukas Nicholson
Email:	lnicho03@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours:	TA for Sections 03 & 04
Teaching Assistant:	Brian Gilmour
Email:	bgilmo01@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours:	TA for Sections 07 & 08

3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required Resources

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

All readings and other materials are available as pdfs or links on Courselink.

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

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

1. Describe how environmental problems arise and grow, often due to a failure of

coordinated action.

2. • Critically evaluate ethical arguments for the conservation of species and ecosystems.
 3. • Distinguish a scientific/factual claim from value claim and apply the appropriate scrutiny to each.
 4. Understand the reasons that certain scientific claims are trustworthy and develop strategies for assessing the reliability of scientific experts.
 5. Make informed judgments about the use and limits of economic tools for evaluating environmental “goods and services” and for making environmental decisions.
 6. Describe some of the approaches to environmental decision-making developed by some Canadian First Nations and contrast them with western/settler approaches.
 7. Write a clear argumentative paper on a topic that they have selected.
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5 Teaching and Learning Activities

5.1 Lecture

Week 1

Topics:

(Jan. 11-15): Environmental problems at local, regional, and global scales.

Reading: Guelph Mercury Tribune article “Almost a sense of panic” March 7, 2020.

Switzer, D. (2019) “Getting off the (water) Bottle.” *Ethics, Policy & Env.* 22: p. 331-48.

Week 2

Topics:

(Jan. 18– 22): Why humans knowingly destroy their

environment: the principle of rational depletion.

Reading: Hardin, G. (1968) "The Tragedy of the commons."

Watch: documentary on deforestation in Businga.

Week 3

Topics: (Jan.25-29): The appeal of a Land Ethic.

Quiz 1: January 25.

Reading: Leopold, A. (1949), "The land ethic." Excerpt from A Sand County Almanac.

Week 4

Topics: (Feb. 1-5): Extending moral standing to animals.

Reading: Singer, P. (2009), "Speciesism and moral status." *Metaphilosophy* 40:567-81.

First writing assignment: Due on February 7.

Week 5

Topics: (Feb 8-12): Should moral standing be extended to species and ecosystems?

Reading: Callicott, B. (1980), "Animal liberation: a triangular affair."

Quiz 2: February 12.

Week 6

Topics: Winter Break

Week 7

Topics: **(Feb. 22-27): Questioning the wilderness ideal.**

Reading: Cronon, W. (1995), "The trouble with wilderness," from *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. Norton & co.

Second writing assignment: Due on February 27

Week 8

Topics: **(Mar. 1-5): Is there a balance of nature?**

Reading: Kricher, J. (1998), "Nothing Endures but Change: Ecology's Newly Emerging Paradigm."

Northeastern Naturalist 5: 165-74.

Watch: *Adam Curtis - All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace. Part 2: The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts.*

Quiz 3: March 5.

Week 9

Topics: **(Mar. 8-12): Can conservation be justified on aesthetic grounds?**

Reading: Newman, Varner and Linqvist (2017), "Should biodiversity be conserved for its aesthetic value?"

Defending Biodiversity, Cambridge University Pres.

Third writing assignment: Due March 12.

Week 10

Topics:

(Mar. 15-20): A Canadian First Nations view on human/nature relations.

Reading: Atleo, E. Richard (2004), "Heshook-sh Tsawalk: Everything is One," in *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*, UBC Press.

Cote, Charlotte (2010), "The Makah harvest a whale," in *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*, UBC Press.

Quiz 4: March 20.

Week 11

Topics:

(Mar. 22-27): The role of trust in science.

Reading: Whyte, K.P. and Crease, R.P. (2010), "Trust, expertise, and the philosophy of science." *Synthese* 177: 411-425.

Tutorial: Discuss strategies for choosing a final paper topic.

Week 12

Topics:

(Mar. 29-Apr.2): Economic approaches to valuing our environment.

Reading: Sagoff, M. (1994), "Four dogmas of environmental economics" *Environmental Values* 3: 285- 310.

Fourth writing assignment: Due April 2nd.

Week 13

Topics: **Week 13 (Apr.5-9): Place-based environmental value.**

Reading: Sagoff, M. (2008), "Settling America: The concept of place in environmental ethics," in

The Economy of the Earth : Philosophy, Law, and the Env. Cambridge U. Press.

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

Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action, 4(2): 79-83.

Quiz 5: April 9

5.2 Seminar

Week 1

Topics: Tutorial: Meet TA and classmates, discuss protocols.

Week 2

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss the phenomenon of rational depletion and possible solutions.

Week 3

Topics: Tutorial: Introduction to argument reconstruction.

Week 4

Topics: Tutorial: Review argument reconstruction/ discuss

Singer article.

Week 5

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss readings.

Week 6

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss readings.

Week 7

Topics: Reading break - no seminar

Week 8

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss third writing assignment.

Week 9

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss readings/ writing assignments.

Week 10

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss readings before quiz.

Week 11

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss strategies for choosing a final paper topic.

Week 12

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss readings.

Week 13

Topics: Tutorial: Discuss readings.

6 Assessments

6.1 Marking Schemes & Distributions

Quizzes (25%). There will be five quizzes taken online using the lockdown browser (without video). The aim of these quizzes is to encourage you to carefully read and the required readings and to test your comprehension.

Paper writing assignments (60%). Students will submit five paper-writing assignments covering different stages of the writing process:

Assignment 1: identifying and reconstructing an argument (5%).

Assignment 2: argument reconstruction plus rationalizing premises (10%).

Assignment 3: argument reconstruction, premise rationalization, plus generating a response (15%).

Assignment 4: find a research topic (5%).

Assignment 5: write an entire philosophical essay of approximately 1,500 words (25%).

Participation (15%). Students are expected to attend at least 10 weekly Teams meetings with their TA and fellow discussion group members. The best policy is to have your camera on and actively participate, for example asking and responding to questions. Students receive approximately 1.5% of their grade for each meeting in which they attend and participate. It is not expected that you participate in every

meeting, but nor can you “free ride” on the contributions of other students.

6.2 Assessment Details

Participation in class and tutorial over entire semester (10%)

Paper writing assignment 1 (5%)

Due: Sun, Feb 7

Assignment 1: identifying and reconstructing an argument (5%).

Paper writing assignment 2 (10%)

Due: Wed, Jan 27

Assignment 2: argument reconstruction plus rationalizing premises (10%).

Paper writing assignment 3 (15%)

Date: Fri, Mar 12

Assignment 3: argument reconstruction, premise rationalization, plus generating a response (15%).

Paper writing assignment 4 (5%)

Due: Fri, Apr 2

Assignment 4: find a research topic (5%).

Final writing assignment (25%)

Due: Fri, Apr 16

Assignment 5: write an entire philosophical essay of approximately 1,500 words (25%).

Quiz 1 (5%)

Date: Mon, Jan 25

Quiz 2 (5%)

Date: Fri, Feb 12

Quiz 3 (5%)

Date: Fri, Mar 5

Quiz 4 (5%)

Date: Sat, Mar 20

Quiz 5 (5%)Date: Fri, Apr 9

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>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions

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

7.3 Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic 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>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/c08/c08-drop.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.

For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website
<https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm>

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>

7.9 Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

7.10 Illness

The University will not normally require verification of illness (doctor's notes) for fall 2020 or winter 2021 semester courses. However, requests for Academic Consideration may still require medical documentation as appropriate.
