

Phil 340: Environmental Philosophy
Summer 2015
University of Oregon

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Introduction:

This course will be run as a murder trial. The victims: the Tasmanian Tiger, the Passenger Pigeon, The Golden Toad and 95% of the American redwood forests. The accused: Mr. Plato, Monsieur Descartes, Mr. Capitalism, etc. Obviously, no single person or institution is responsible, but we want to ask ourselves what ideas, what ways of relating to the nature and each other have contributed to these murders.

We will examine the assumptions of modern industrial society and how they relate to nature. We will contrast this with indigenous thought, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and bioregionalism. These alternatives are not unproblematic, but they will help us to begin to articulate what is at stake and what needs to change. Students should leave the class with a greater understanding of the philosophical assumptions of industrial society with regard to the environment and alternatives to them.

Course Objectives:

1. To approach environmental issues through a philosophical lens
2. To gain exposure to different philosophical responses to environmental issues
3. To develop critical thinking skills
4. To improve writing ability

Expectations:

Most of our reading will be available on blackboard. We will also read sections from the following two books:

The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution by Carolyn Merchant
The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property by Lewis Hyde

Students will be expected to have read the assigned reading each day. Because this is a condensed term, groups of students will be asked to write summaries of one of the articles or chapters in the reading and bring these with them to class. Although students will be responsible for all of the reading, they will also narrow in on specific chapters or articles and be prepared to discuss them with the rest of the class. The summaries need not be long, between ½ -1 page double spaced. These daily summaries take the place of quizzes, which are more cumbersome.

Grade Breakdown:

100 pts summaries
100 pts midterm

100 pts final
50 pts attendance and participation

Schedule:

Week 1: Philosophy and the Environment

- 6.22 Introduction
Callicott, Environmental Philosophy is Environmental Activism
- 6.23 Plato & Techne (Nussbaum)
- 6.24 Plato & the Cosmos (Brague)
- 6.25 Ecology of Magic (David Abram)
The World an Organism (Carolyn Merchant)
- 6.26 selections from The Principles of Philosophy (Descartes)
Nature as Disorder, Dominion over Nature, The Mechanical Order (Merchant)

Week 2: Critique of Modernity, Indigenous Thought, Deep Ecology

- 6.29 Ontology of Death, Modern Math (Hans Jonas)
Memorial Address (Heidegger)
- 6.30 The Men of Reason (Lloyd)
Legitimation Crisis? (Charles Taylor)
- 7.1 Power and Place Equal Personality (Vine Deloria Jr.)
Technological Homelessness (Daniel Wildcat)
- 7.2 Deep Ecology: A New Paradigm (Capra)
The Deep Ecological Movement (Naess)
Ecocentrism, Wilderness and Global Ecosystem Protection (Sessions)
- 7.3 Independence day holiday

Week 3: EcoFeminism, Race and Class

- 7.6 *Midterm* bring a Green Book
- 7.7 Radical American Environmentalism (Guha)
The Wilderness Narrative and the Cultural Logic of Capitalism (Talbot)
- 7.8 The Incarceration of Wilderness (Birch)
The Wilderness Idea Revisited (Callicott)
The Pristine Myth (Deneven)
- 7.9 Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health (Gaard and Gruen)
Recognizing Women's Environmental Expertise (Curtin)
- 7.10 Naturalizing Race: Indigenous Women and White Goddesses (Sturgeon)
Ecofeminism and Environmental Ethics (Mellor)

Week 4: Bioregionalism, Economics, Sustainability; Our Relation to Nature

- 7.15 Dwellers in the Land (Sale)
Revaluing Home (Plant)
Living by Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice (Dodge)
- 7.16 What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism (Magdoff and Foster)

The Ecology of Consumption (Foster, Clark and York)

- 7.17 The Industrialization of Eating (Pollan)
A Defense of the Family Farm (Berry)
Vegetarianism and Treading Lightly on the Earth (Michael Allen Fox)
- 7.18 The Gift (Hyde)
- 7.19 The Gift (Hyde)
Final prep

Final Exam due during Finals Week

Notice that the schedule is intended to be fairly loose. I want to be flexible with the pace. If discussion moves quickly, we will move quickly. If students find a particular reading interesting or difficult, I want to take time to work through it. I will also insert smaller articles into the readings if and when they become relevant.

Official Stuff

1.) Note on Sexual Harassment

The University of Oregon is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which students, faculty and staff can work and study together in an atmosphere free from all forms of prohibited discrimination, and discriminatory harassment. The Office of Affirmative Action & Equal Opportunity (OAA&EO) is available to assist members of the university community in seeking to prevent and correct any prohibited discrimination on campus.

Let me know if you see it happen, don't put up with it from me or anyone else.

2.) What kind of paper deserves an "A," "B," etc.? The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Please note: what counts as "excellent" or "OK," for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

Exam/Paper Grading Scale:

92% or above A

90-92% A- 73-76% C

87-89% B+ 70-72% C-

83-86% B 67-69% D+

80-82% B- 63-66% D
77-79% C+ 60-62% D-
0-59% F

Students registered with the P/NP grading option must receive at least 70% in order to receive a P.

3.) Academic Honesty

If you are caught in an act of academic dishonesty, you will receive an “F” for the course. Such acts include:

Plagiarism: *Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else’s product, words, ideas, or data as one’s own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. By placing one’s name on work submitted for credit, one certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. Verbatim statements by others must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from the regular text as indented extracts. Students will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:*

- 1) one quotes another person’s actual words or replicates all or part of another’s product;
- 2) one uses another person’s ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one’s own words;
- 3) one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material—unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise prepared totally or in part by another person, even if that person is acting as a tutor or editor (and ends up substantially producing part of the work).

Fabrication: *Fabrication is the intentional use of information that the author has invented when he or she states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples include, but are not limited to:*

- 1) citing information not taken from the source indicated;
- 2) listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise;
- 3) inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.

Cheating: *Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise.*

Examples include but are not limited to: 1) copying from another student’s work; 2) collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one’s work in a test situation; 3) using the course textbook or other material not authorized for use during a test; 4) using unauthorized material during a test; for example, notes, formula lists, cues on a computer, photographs, symbolic representations, and notes written on clothing; 5) resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor; 6) taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.