

# *Philosophy and the Environment*

*Philosophy 215*

*TTh 9:40–11:10pm*

*Howard 260*

*Fall 2023*

## *My Information*

Here is my information:

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Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/6081570530>



## *Course Introduction*

In this course, we consider several philosophical questions concerning our environment and our relationships to it.

- Who matters morally and why? Are non-human primates, birds, reptiles, or insects morally considerable in addition to humans?
- Many environmentalists think non-sentient living things like plants matter morally because they are alive. But what about species and ecosystems, which are not? Should we treat invasive species differently from native species?
- How should we manage ecosystems especially in light of megafires made worse in intensity and frequency by climate change? What moral and political issues are raised by our fire policies?
- We often think certain things have *intrinsic value*. But what exactly is this kind of value and how do things come to have it, if they do? Aren't things valuable *because* they are valued?
- Many environmentalists think our problems are due to larger, deeper structural issues. Deep ecologists think they are due to anthropocentrism. Ecofeminists think they are due to domination by a patriarchal society. Eco-socialists think it is capitalism. Is there an overarching explanation for why we have the environmental problems we do? What do we do about it?

- American environmental history is deeply intertwined with notions of wilderness and wildness. What are they and how might they differ? To what extent is wilderness associated with environmental injustices committed against Native Americans? How might we practice restorative justice with regard to First Nations people?
- Many environmental problems concerns the distribution of benefits and burdens on already vulnerable communities. How should we address the problem of environmental justice?
- You may heard that 97% of climate scientists accept that anthropogenic climate change is occurring. However, science does not consist in an opinion poll (or does it?). Haven't scientists commonly believed theories that were false? (Can you think of an example?) Isn't science about argument and evidence and not "groupthink"?
- Many environmentalists claim we should engage in direct activism. For example, we should "monkeywrench" (e.g., spike trees). Should we destroy property to protect our environment?
- The richest 500 million people found in China, Europe, India, Japan, and the United States (8% of humans) emit half of the greenhouse gases with the poorest 3 billion emitting next to nothing. What should we be doing about anthropogenic climate change given that the US has historically been one of the largest GHG emitters per capita?

### *Course Materials*

All materials will be electronically distributed on Google Classroom.

### *Class Structure*

Generally speaking, we will have two readings per week. The first reading will be discussed on Tuesday, and the second will be discussed on Thursday. Readings for each class will be between 10 – 20 pages. Our daily class will involve lecture and discussion and sometimes small group activities.

## *Course Requirements*

In this course, your grade will consist in three exams homework, and participation. Your final grade is determined as follows:

- Three exams ( $3 \times 20\% = 60\%$ )
- Homework (30%)
- Participation (10%)

## *Exams*

You will write three exams for this course. On each exam, you will answer three questions. Your answers should be no more one page per question. Before our first exam, I will explain what I am looking for along with my grading rubric.

## *Homework*

Each week I will give you two questions (one per reading). You will answer these questions by the assigned date. Late answers receive no credit.

## *Participation*

Unless you have a COVID-19 or otherwise excused absence, you should be in class. You are allowed four absences without an excuse with no penalty. If you have COVID-19 symptoms, send me an email before class, and your absence will be excused. For participation, I expect you to be prepared each day, which includes doing the reading, completing the homework, and contributing to class discussions.

## *Grade Scale*

The course grading scale is as follows:

A = 93 – 100, A- = 90 – 92, B+ = 86 – 89, B = 83 – 85, B- = 80 – 82, C+ = 76 – 79, C = 73 – 75, C- = 70 – 72, D+ = 66 – 69, D = 60 – 65, F = 0 – 59

### *Late Work*

All assignments are due on the scheduled dates. However, if you are unable to complete an assignment and you let me know at least one fully day in advance, you may have a one week extension. Otherwise, for each day an assignment is late, your grade is reduced. Your Google Classroom questions are excluded from this policy.

### *ChatGPT*

We all use technology for writing which includes autocorrect, spell and grammar checks, tutors, proofreaders, etc. ChatGPT is another such technologies. However, current versions of ChatGPT have limitations.

*Errors* AI generators make mistakes. Assume the output is incorrect unless you doublecheck them with reliable sources.

*Bias* Their output may reflect bias because the data they are trained on may reflect bias or be unrepresentative.

*Citation* These tools use existing sources without citation. They also make up citations.

*Environmental impact* Each ChatGPT search uses non-trivial amounts of electricity and water. According to estimates, ChatGPT emits 8.4 tons of carbon dioxide per year, more than twice the amount that is emitted by an individual, which is 4 tons per year.

If you decide to use ChatGPT on an assignment, you must cite how it was used. For example, citations may include you used it to generate ideas, turns of phrase, elements of text, long stretches of text, lines of argument, pieces of evidence, maps of the conceptual territory, illustrations of key concepts, etc. If you use chatGPT without citation, then I will treat it as an uncited source, which could be plagiarism.

### *Academic Integrity*

I expect you to understand and abide by the College's Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures. If you have any questions about the policy, I encourage you to come and talk with me. Failure to cite sources on written assignments is plagiarism, for which

students have been dismissed from LC. If you have doubts about how to make proper citations, ask me or consult the writing center.

### *Learning Differences*

If you have been diagnosed with a learning difference and are seeking an accommodation, please provide me, as soon as possible, with a “Notice of Disability and Statement of Accommodation” from Student Support Services.

### *Schedule*

Here is our schedule which is of course revisable (and probably will be revised).

#### *Week 1 Introduction & Animal Ethics*

- 9/5 Course Introduction
- 9/7 “All Animals are Equal” Peter Singer

#### *Week 2 Wild Animal Suffering & Compassionate Conservation*

- 9/12 “Against the View That We Are Normally Required to Assist Wild Animals” Clare Palmer; “Disentangling Obligations of Assistance” Catia Faria
- 9/14 “Gene Drives, Species, and Compassion for Individuals in Conservation Biology” Yasha Rohwer

#### *Week 3 Biocentrism & Species*

- 9/19 “The Ethics of Respect for Nature” Paul Taylor
- 9/21 “Appreciating the Forest from the Trees” Jay Odenbaugh & Levi Tenen

#### *Week 4 Northern Spotted Owls vs. Barred Owls*

- 9/26 “Owl vs Owl: Examining an Environmental Moral Tragedy” Jay Odenbaugh
- 9/28 “Strangers in a Strange Land: The Problem of Exotic Species” Mark Woods and Paul Veach Moriarty

*Week 5 Ecocentrism & Wildfire*

FIRST EXAM

- 10/3 “The Ethics of Ecosystem Management” Marion Hourd-  
equin; ‘What Ethical Issues Are Involved in Wildfires?’ Brian  
Patrick Green
- 10/5 FIRST EXAM

*Week 6 Intrinsic Value*

- 10/10 “The Varieties of Intrinsic Value,” John O’Neill
- 10/12 “Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn’t Give Up on In-  
trinsic Value” Katie McShane

FALL BREAK

*Week 7 Ecofeminism*

- 10/17 “The Power and the Promise of Ecofeminism Revisited”  
Karen J. Warren.
- 10/19 “Climate Change, Vulnerability, and Responsibility”  
Chris Cuomo

*Week 8 Eco-Socialism*

- 10/24 “Ecological Politics for the Working Class” Matthew T.  
Huber
- 10/26 “A Responsibility to Revolt?” Dan Boscov-Ellen

*Week 9 Wildness & Wilderness*

- 10/31 “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the  
Wrong Nature” William Cronon
- 11/2 “Wildness and the Defense of Nature” Jack Turner

*Week 10 Environmental Justice*

SECOND EXAM

- 11/7 “Trammeling People 2: The Environmental Justice Argu-  
ment” Mark Woods
- 11/9 SECOND EXAM

*Week 11 Environmental Justice*

- 11/14 “The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice,  
and U.S. Colonialism,” Kyle Powys Whyte
- 11/16 Watch [Cooperation Jackson](#)

*Week 12 Monkeywrenching & Ecosabotage*

- 11/21 Watch *If a Tree Falls*
- 11/23 Thanksgiving Break

THANKSGIVING BREAK (11/23–11/26)

*Week 13 Climate Science & Epistemology*

- 11/28 “The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We’re Not Wrong?” Naomi Oreskes
- 11/30 “Who Needs Consensus Anyway?” Kristen Intemann

*Week 14 Climate Ethics*

- 12/5 “Greenhouse Development Rights” Paul Baer et. al.
- 12/7 “Now This! Indigenous Sovereignty, Political Obliviousness and Governance Models for SRM Research” Kyle Powys White

*Week 15 Finale*

- 12/12 THIRD EXAM

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