

## PHIL 3390: Environmental Ethics

UNC Charlotte, Spring 2016

Mondays & Wednesdays, 11:00-12:15, McEniry 118

**Instructor:** Trevor Pearce                      Office Hours: M/W 1:00-2:00pm or by appt  
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### Description

This course is designed to encourage critical reflection on the relationship between humans and the natural world through a survey of philosophical perspectives on the environment. We will start with the 1960s, a decade when Americans became more conscious of a burgeoning “ecologic crisis.” Philosophers took note, producing a series of important early works in animal ethics and environmental ethics in the 1970s. After discussing the moral status of animals, we will explore the topic of *deep ecology*, or the claim that living beings have value independent of human needs. Next, we will read a variety of economic and ethical analyses of two important political issues: sustainability and climate change. What is sustainability? What should we do to slow climate change? Why do people say that climate change isn’t happening? We will end the class with the question of what we should eat, and how our eating affects the natural world.

### Required Texts

All texts are available on the course website at <http://moodle2.uncc.edu/>.

### Evaluation

5%	Participation	
10%	Attendance	
25%	Summaries	<b>Beginning January 13</b>
30%	Paper 1 (1200 ± 200 words)	<b>February 28</b>
30%	Paper 2 (1200 ± 200 words)	<b>May 9</b>

Your attendance grade is calculated by dividing attended classes by total classes. I automatically excuse two absences. Requests for additional excused absences due to medical emergencies, family emergencies, military orders, or court orders should be made to the Dean of Students Office ([http://unccdsso.uncc.edu/academic\\_accommodations](http://unccdsso.uncc.edu/academic_accommodations)), and not to me directly.

‘Participation’ means making comments and asking questions that reflect your having read and thought about the text under discussion. I will call on individual students following the small-group

discussion or the summary write-up. **You must bring a copy of the relevant text to each class**, or you will not be able to effectively participate.

For the summaries, at the beginning of each class you will spend five minutes writing a paragraph that includes (a) the main claim or thesis of the reading for that day and (b) the arguments or evidence the author gives to support this claim or thesis. You may use books and notes. **I will collect and grade these summaries throughout the semester**, though not every class. If you arrive late, you must still hand in your summary at the same time as everyone else. Late summaries will not be accepted. Summaries submitted via e-mail will not be accepted. **Absence from class is not a valid excuse for not turning in a summary** unless you receive accommodation from the Dean of Students office (see below). The lowest summary grade will be dropped.

Topics for Papers 1 & 2 will be circulated by e-mail on **February 17 and April 25**, respectively. I am happy to provide feedback on introductions or outlines if you allow me enough time. **Both papers must be submitted by 7pm on the due date at the Moodle 2 site via turnitin.com.** Papers that are too long or too short will be penalized a minimum of half a grade point. Late papers will be penalized half a grade point per day.

The use of cell phones, smart phones, or other mobile communication devices is disruptive, and is therefore prohibited during class except in emergencies. Students are permitted to use computers during class for note-taking and other class-related work only.

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by written or e-mail notice.

## University Policies

All students are required to read and abide by the Code of Student Academic Integrity. Violations of the Code of Student Academic Integrity, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code. The Code is available from the Dean of Students Office or at <http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-407>.

As a condition of taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. No student papers will be submitted to Turnitin.com without a student's written consent and permission. If a student does not provide such written consent and permission, the instructor may: (i) require a short reflection paper on research methodology; (ii) require a draft bibliography prior to submission of the final paper; or (iii) require the cover page and first cited page of each reference source to be photocopied and submitted with the final paper.

Students who miss classes, examinations or other assignments because of a religious practice or belief must provide reasonable notice of the dates of religious observances on which they will be absent by submitting a Request for Religious Accommodation Form (<http://goo.gl/I1Ncv0>) to the instructor prior to January 25, 2014.

Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the Office of Disability Services (<http://ds.uncc.edu/>) and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

## Reading Schedule

### INTRODUCTION

Jan. 11  
No reading

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jan. 13  
Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow," pp. 1-3 of *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).  
United States Congress, "Wilderness Act" (1964), online at <http://goo.gl/Sg8IY5>.

Jan. 20  
Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," pp. 201-226 of *A Sand County Almanac, with Other Essays on Conservation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968 [1949]).

Jan. 25  
Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

Jan. 27  
Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): 1243-1248.

### VALUING ANIMALS

Feb. 1  
Peter Singer, "All Animals are Equal," pp. 1-26 of *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York: New York Review, 1975).

Feb. 3 – NO CLASS

Feb. 8  
Tom Regan, "Utilitarianism, Vegetarianism, and Animal Rights," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 9 (1980): 305-324.

Feb. 10  
Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People," *Philosophy* 53 (1978): 465-479.

## VALUING NATURE

Feb. 15

### **Snow Day**

Feb. 17

Richard Routley, "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?" pp. 205-210 of *Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy* (Varna: Sofia, 1973).

William Baxter, "A 'Good' Environment: Just One of the Set of Human Objectives," pp. 1-13 of *People or Penguins: The Case for Optimal Pollution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

Feb. 22

Paul Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," *Environmental Ethics* 3 (1981): 197-218.

Feb. 24

Bill Devall & George Sessions, "The Reformist Response" & "Deep Ecology," pp. 51-78 of *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1985).

Feb. 29

Val Plumwood, "Nature, Self, and Gender," *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 3-27.

Mar. 2

Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989): 71-83.

Mar. 14

Karla Adam, "Cat War Breaks Out in New Zealand," *Washington Post*, 3 May 2013. Online at <https://goo.gl/neHAJk>.

Radiolab, "To the Brink," 17 July 2014. Online at <http://www.radiolab.org/story/brink/>.

Mar. 16

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," pp. 69-90 of *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

## SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Mar. 21

Robert Solow, "Sustainability: An Economist's Perspective," pp. 179-187 of *Economics of the Environment: Selected Readings*, ed. Robert Dorfman and Nancy S. Dorfman (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

Mar. 23

Bryan Norton, "Sustainability, Human Welfare, and Ecosystem Health," *Environmental Values* 1 (1992): 97-111.

Mar. 28

Naomi Oreskes & Erik Conway, "The Denial of Global Warming," pp. 169-215 of *Merchants of*

*Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010).

Mar. 30

Henry Shue, "Global Environment and International Inequality," *International Affairs* 75 (1999): 531-545.

Apr. 4

Marion Hourdequin, "Climate, Collective Action and Individual Ethical Obligations," *Environmental Values* 19 (2010): 443-464.

Apr. 6

Stephen Gardiner, "The Desperation Argument for Geoengineering," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46 (2013): 28-33.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Apr. 11

Eileen McGurty, *Transforming Environmentalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), Chapters 1-2.

Apr. 13

Eileen McGurty, *Transforming Environmentalism*, Chapters 3-4.

Apr. 18

Eileen McGurty, *Transforming Environmentalism*, Chapters 5-7.

Apr. 20

Kristin Shrader-Frechette, "Developing Nations, Equal Protection, and the Limits of Moral Heroism," pp. 163-184 of *Environmental Justice: Creating Equity, Reclaiming Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

## FOOD

Apr. 25

Wendell Berry, "The Ecological Crisis as a Crisis of Agriculture" & "The Agricultural Crisis as a Crisis of Culture," pp. 27-48 of *The Unsettling of America* (New York: Avon, 1977).

Apr. 27

Evelyn Pluhar, "Meat and Morality: Alternatives to Factory Farming," *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 23 (2010): 455-468.

May 2

Tyler Cowen, "Eating Your Way to a Greener Planet," pp. 167-186 of *An Economist Gets Lunch* (New York: Dutton, 2012).