

Philosophy and the Environment

Philosophy 215
TTH 9:40–11:10am
Miller 104

Spring 2017



My Information

Here is my information:

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Department of Philosophy

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Office hours: TTh 11:30-1:30pm or by appointment

Course Introduction

In this course, we ask four questions concerning our environment and our relationships to it and consider a variety of answers.

- Do non-human animals have moral standing? For example, is it morally permissible to be an omnivore or should we be vegetarians or vegans? What should we eat?
- Has non-human nature come to an end? Have we humans fundamentally made it into an artifact? What makes something wild or natural?
- 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. Are our environmental problems largely due to capitalism? Would ecosocialism solve these problems?
- What should we – as a nation and as individuals – be doing about anthropogenic climate change given that the US has historically been one of the largest GHG emitters per capita? How can we live sustainably and solve this problem?

Course Materials

There are four books for this course. Any other reading will be electronically distributed to you.

- Gruen, Lori (2014) *Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for Our Relationships with Animals*, Lantern Books
- Jamieson, Dale (2014) *Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed – and What It Means for Our Future*, Oxford University Press
- Vogel, Steven (2016) *Thinking like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature* MIT Press

- Williams, Chris (2010) *Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis* Haymarket Books

Course Requirements

In this course, your grade will be determined by 4 exams (or 3 exams and 1 paper) and 10 short one-page writing assignments. The four exams represent 60% of your grade and the 10 short writing assignments represent 40% of your grade.

Exams

You will be given 4 exams ($4 \times 25\%$). The final exam will be cumulative. I will circulate questions a week in advance (e.g. eight questions) and will pick a subset (e.g. four questions) to answer.

Papers

If you prefer, you can *replace your final exam* with one 6-8 page paper that should have a well-defined thesis that is clearly argued. The essay should be without spelling and grammatical errors. What follows is a rough indication of what I look for in grading papers.

A, 90+, Excellent – Papers receiving a grade in this range clearly demonstrate advanced understanding of the basic concepts and issues in the text(s). In addition, these papers provide a sustained argument and critique of the text or provide substantial and interesting questions concerning the interpretation of the text. The paper as a whole is tightly focused and well-organized. Errors in grammar or spelling are nonexistent.

B, 80-89, Good – Papers receiving a grade in this range demonstrate a basic, but thorough, understanding of basic concepts and issues. Where understanding is lacking, an earnest attempt at interpreting the author is evident. In addition, these responses show a somewhat successful attempt at critical examination, argument, or questioning of the text. The paper as a whole is mostly focused and well-organized. Errors in grammar and spelling are minimal.

C, 2, 70-79, Satisfactory – Papers receiving a grade in this range demonstrate some (possibly incomplete) understanding of basic concepts and issues. In addition, these responses show little or no earnest attempt at interpretation, critical examination, or questioning of the text. Paper lacks focus and is poorly organized. Errors in grammar or spelling are frequent.

D - F, Unsatisfactory – Papers receiving a grade in this range have failed to demonstrate any degree of real understanding of basic concepts and issues, and lack evidence of an earnest attempt to do so.

Short writing assignment

I will ask you one question pertaining to the week's readings, and you will provide a one page answer at most. The writing tests your reading comprehension and your attention in class. We will have 10 such short writing assignments.

Late work

All assignments are due on the scheduled dates. However, if you come to me at least *one full day in advance* you may have one week's extension, no excuse required. If you do not have an extension, for every day your assignment is not turned in, your assignment is lowered one letter grade (i.e. 10 points). Be aware that turning in a paper by extension will delay feedback and that you may not have the time you need to improve and develop before the next assignment.

Attendance

Philosophy can be difficult. To prevent this, you should attend class regularly. Thus, I will allow you to miss a maximum of five classes unpenalized but for each class thereafter you will lose 1% of your final grade.

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

It is impossible to do well in this course without reading and studying. I suggest that you *carefully* read the assigned material taking notes on what you read. You are strongly encouraged to discuss the course material with others outside of class. I am happy to help you outside of class. That is why I keep office hours.

Plagiarism

All students are expected to follow Lewis & Clark College's Academic Integrity Policy. This is stated in Lewis Clark College's College Catalog. Generally, plagiarizers and cheaters will be given an F for the entire course (they will not be allowed to drop or withdraw from the course). Also, your case will be given to the Honor Board where in addition to a failing grade you will receive disciplinary action.

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 Dale Hollaway, Coordinator of Student Support Services.

Tentative Schedule

Here is our schedule which is of course revisable.

Week 1 *Entangled Empathy*

- Ch. 1 Seeking an Alternative Ethics
- Ch. 2 What is Empathy?

Week 2 *Entangled Empathy*

- Ch. 3 Entanglements
- Ch. 4 Improving Empathy

Week 3 *Thinking Like a Mall*

- Ch. 1 Against Nature
- Ch. 2 The Social Construction of Nature

Week 4 *Thinking Like a Mall*

- Ch. 3 Alienation, Nature, and the Environment
- Ch. 4 The Nature of Artifacts

Week 5 *Thinking Like a Mall*

- Ch. 5 Thinking Like a Mall

FIRST EXAM

Week 6 *Thinking Like a Mall & Ecology and Socialism*

- Ch. 6 The Silence of Nature
- Ch. 7 Democracy and the Commons
- Introduction

Week 7 *Ecology and Socialism*

- Ch. 1 The Science of Climate Change
- Ch. 2 Is Population the Problem?

Week 8 *Ecology and Socialism*

- Ch. 3 Why Capitalism Cannot Solve the Problem
- Ch. 4 False Solutions Favored by the System

Week 9 *Ecology and Socialism*

- Ch. 5 Real Solutions Right Now: What We Need to Fight For
- Ch. 6 Marxism and the Environment

Week 10 *Ecology and Socialism*

- Ch. 7 From Capitalist Crisis to Socialist Sustainability

SECOND EXAM

Week 11 *Ecology and Socialism*

- Ch. 8 What Would a Sustainable Society Look Like?
- Conclusion

Week 13 *Reason in a Dark Time*

- Ch. 2 The Nature of the Problem
- Ch. 3 Obstacles to Action

Week 14 *Reason in a Dark Time*

- Ch. 4 The Limits of Economics
- Ch. 5 The Frontiers of Ethics

Week 15 *Reason in a Dark Time*

- Ch. 6 Living with Climate Change
- Ch. 7 Politics, Policy, and the Road Ahead

THIRD EXAM

FOURTH EXAM/PAPER