Spring 2-1-2019

PHL 422.01: Environmental Philosophy

Christopher J. Preston
University of Montana, Missoula, christopher.preston@umontana.edu

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ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY (PHL 422)
Professor: Christopher J. Preston Class time: Tu, Th: 2.00-3.20 p.m.
Classroom: LA 308 Office: LA 157
E-mail: christopher.preston@umontana.edu Office hours: Tu: 11-12, Wed: 1.30-3.30

1. Course Introduction
This course looks in some depth at discussions that have been prominent in the first forty-five years of professional environmental philosophy. These include the intrinsic value debates, ecological feminism, environmental virtue ethics, eco-phenomenology, environmental pragmatism, the wilderness debates, climate ethics, and the Anthropocene. The goal is for students with some background in environmental ethics to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the most significant work in the field. Though environmental philosophy is clearly connected to the practical goal of living justly within a healthy and sustainable environment, the discipline is also a serious theoretical endeavor in its own right. Be prepared to delve deeply into the theoretical aspects while remaining ready to tie these discussions back into the practical questions.

2. Learning Outcomes
- Students will become familiar with several major topic areas from the early years of professional environmental philosophy
- Students will increase their skill level at reading complicated texts and arguments
- Students will explore the theoretical underpinnings of decision-making frameworks
- Students will learn how to set their own ideas in relation to those of professional environmental philosophers in a term paper
- Students will gain experience at articulating and debating complicated ideas with their peers

3. Reading Materials
All of the semester’s reading will be available on Moodle (umonline.umt.edu). Materials posted there are required reading for the course. Please check in with Moodle regularly in order to stay abreast of any updates or changes.

I request that you come to class having carefully read the material assigned for that day prior to your arrival. Usually, the first article (or two) will be for Tuesday and the second for Thursday.

This will be a small class with a seminar-type feel. As we talk about the reading, I will seek opinions on various topics and will call upon individuals to answer questions relevant to the reading and lecture. Please be prepared to discuss the positions articulated in the reading and to bring your own questions and concerns to everyone’s attention.

4. Provisional Reading Assignments
Class Introduction (Jan 10): Student introductions and some context-setting
Week 1 (Jan 15, 17):

Week 2 (Jan 22, 24):

Week 3 (Jan 29, 31):
Short paper on intrinsic value due in class on Jan 31st

Week 4 (Feb 5, 7):

Week 5 (Feb 12, 14):
Short paper on ecofeminism due in class on Feb 14th

Week 7 (Feb 26, 28):
Short paper on environmental virtue ethics due in class on Feb 28th

Week 8 (Mar 5, 7):

Week 9 (Mar 12, 14):
Short paper on the wilderness debates due in class on Mar 14th

Week 10 (March 19, 21):
ENVIRONMENTAL PRAGMATISM: “Public Philosophy” –Light.

***Take-Home Mid-term Due in Class (March 21st)***

SPRING BREAK

Week 11 (Apr 2, 4):
Short paper on environmental pragmatism or ecophenomenology due in class on April 4th

Week 12 (Apr 9, 11):

Week 13 (Apr 16, 18):
CLIMATE ETHICS: “Vulnerability” –Cuomo. “Climate and Animals” –McShane.
Short paper on climate ethics due in class on April 18th
Extra Credit non-curricular events also due on April 18th
Week 14 (Apr 23, 25):
THE ANTHROPOCENE: “Multiple Anthropocenes” – Preston.
Extra Credit office visits much be completed by April 25th

***Term paper due at noon on Monday, April 29th, at 5 p.m.***

5. Course Requirements
a) Attendance, participation, and scholarly attitude will account for 15% of your grade (15 points). I will be taking note of timeliness, attendance, your use of Moodle, and your verbal contributions during the class. If you need to miss class at some point in the semester, please let me know by e-mail ahead of time if possible. If you cannot let me know before class, please e-mail me as soon as you can afterwards. Graduate students will be expected to maintain clarity about how the philosophical terms matter outside of their discipline.

b) Short papers (18 points). At the end of each topic section, a student must turn in a one page reaction paper detailing one strength and one weakness of a thinker or an approach we have just covered (there will be 6 short papers in all). Think of these as an extended couple of paragraphs in which you react - both positively and negatively - to a theorist or a topic. Graduate students must show a more contextual and sophisticated understanding of the topic at hand and are encouraged to use up to a page and a half.

c) Discussion question (2 points). Each student will be assigned one reading for which they must bring to class a typed discussion question. This question should identify any piece of the reading that they find particularly contentious or interesting. The assignment provides an opportunity to explain to your colleagues why this piece grabbed you. You must hand in the typed question to me at the end of class. Graduate students will be expected to use their question to carry the discussion in a little more depth and a little deeper into more areas of environmental ethics than undergraduates.

d) There will a take-home reading test before spring break (30 points). The test is designed to examine your knowledge and comprehension of the reading and lecture so far. I will provide the questions for the take-home test on March 12th. Answers may not exceed 8 pages for undergraduates and 10 pages for graduate students.

e) Final Assignment (35 points). Undergraduates must write an 8-10 page term paper on an environmental topic that draws on material presented after the spring break. Graduate students must also write 12-13 pages on one of these areas and demonstrate a more synoptic understanding of the topics in environmental ethics as well as a deeper level of critique. A paper centered on ecophenomenology, climate ethics, or the anthropocene must weave in topics from earlier in the semester. The paper will be due on Monday, April 29th at 5 p.m. as an attachment to an e-mail.

Extra Credit
i) Non-curricular event (Up to 4 points). You have the option of attending up to two non-curricular events (on or off campus) on topics related to our course material. The event could be a lecture, a debate, a public forum, a city council meeting, etc. etc. (Your event may not be a movie unless there is a focused discussion following it in which you take part. It also cannot be an event you are required to attend for another class). After attending the event, you should turn in to me within a week a two-page
summary of the experience. Your summary should include a) a description of the event content, b) a solid connection to the topics we are discussing, and c) some critical analysis. The deadline for any non-curricular event extra credit is Thursday, April 18th.

ii) Office visits (Up to 3 points). I encourage everyone to come to office hours during the semester. These visits are worth an extra credit point each (up to a maximum of 3).

6. Additional remarks
The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS) (243-2243). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact their office in Lommasson 154. Let me know as soon as possible about any assistance I might be able to offer. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

I encourage you to use my office hours. I am paid to help you with this class! Use e-mail to stay in touch. If you find interesting material throughout the semester that you would like to share with your classmates, I would be happy to post it on Moodle.

Finally I also expect you to contribute positively to our small community of learning. This means being respectful of those around you in the class at all times, including myself. Use of electronic devices to text, travel the internet, do other work, etc. is not permitted in this class. I require that you are engaged with our topics at all times. Class is too short and the topics too intense for you to lose the plot even for 5 minutes.

You are also expected to attend class, to not disrupt those around you unnecessarily, and to stay for the duration of each class period. I also expect complete academic integrity with every assignment. Dishonestly will result in a meeting with your academic dean and an F in the class. With your help and everybody’s mutual support, this class will be challenging, stimulating, and – I hope – a valuable contribution to your education.