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PHL 112E.01: Introduction to Ethics and the Environment

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INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

PHIL 112E, Spring 2022

Professor: Christopher J. Preston
Office: LA 157
Email: christopher.preston@umontana.edu
Office hrs: Tues, 4 – 5.30 p.m.

Classroom: LA 011
Class: T, R, 11 a.m. – 12.20 p.m.
Phone: 243-2937

<https://umontana.zoom.us/j/97386287475>

Wed, 10.30 – noon.

<https://umontana.zoom.us/j/99121438009>

TA's hrs: Mon 9-10, Thurs 12.45-1.45 (see Moodle for links)

1. Course Introduction:

This class is an introduction to ethics in the western tradition and, in particular, the consideration this tradition gives to animals and the natural environment. We will be approaching our study by mixing one author's quest to understand "wildness" with a collection of classic articles in environmental ethics. While learning the main ideas in animal and environmental ethics, we will familiarize ourselves with three leading traditions in western ethical thought (e.g. Utilitarianism, Kantianism, Care Ethics). We will also take note of places where the perspective of our authors is limited, drawing attention to where it ignores important issues of race, class, and gender, all of which are essential to good environmentalism.

Philosophy involves reading, thinking, and talking about ideas. This means I will be talking about *ideas* and *concepts* during our time together more than *facts* and *data*. It's a different type of learning. You will find some of the ideas and concepts to be intuitive and straightforward. Others you will find extremely challenging. Philosophy is not just about 'having an opinion.' It is a difficult subject that includes grasping of a whole range of different angles on things, as well as a few people, dates, and long words. It requires concentration and learning! Some of the theorists are complex. Prepare yourself for this. Do not get demoralized when you encounter a difficult reading. We will use the class time to highlight the most important points and to discuss their significance. Office hours are available to check in and resolve confusions.

This course satisfies the general education requirement for Group VIII: Ethics and Human Values.

2. Course Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, we hope to have fulfilled several course objectives.

- Students will understand major theories in environmental ethics and be able to correctly apply their concepts and forms of reasoning to relevant ethical issues
- Students will know how to analyze and critically evaluate these basic concepts and forms of reasoning within environmental ethics
- Students will be able to look at an environmental or conservation issue and see clearly its ethical dimensions
- Students will have gained skills in reading difficult texts, expressing their views clearly, and arguing complicated points with their peers

3. Covid-19 Accommodations

- Mask use is required within the classroom.
- If you feel sick and/or are exhibiting COVID symptoms, please don't come to class. Contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330.
- If you are required to isolate or quarantine, we will do what we can to give you the support necessary to ensure continued academic progress. The ppt slides will be posted and there may be occasions when the class is recorded.
- Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom.
- UM recommends students get the COVID vaccine and booster. Please direct your questions or concerns about vaccines to the Curry Health Center.

4. Reading Material:

Jason Mark. (2015) *Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man* (Washington DC: Island Press) (**J**)

Materials on Moodle (**M**)

5. Reading Assignments (potentially subject to change):

Week 1 (Jan 18, 20). INTRODUCTION, THE MORAL BACKPACK, AND ETHICAL RELATIVISM: (**M**: Churchill, Ethical Relativism link, Why Relativism Won't Work)

Week 2 (Jan 25, 27). WILD VS. DOMESTICATED: (**J**: Into the Wild, **M**: Problems with Wilderness, **J**: Bewildered)

***** Ethical autobiography due by Thursday class, Jan 27th*****

Week 3 (Feb 1, Feb 3). ANIMAL WELFARE: (**M**: Singer, Animal Welfare Crash Course)

Week 4 (Feb 8, 11). ANIMAL RIGHTS: (**M**: Kant Non-humans, Animal Rights Outline)

Week 5 (Feb 15, 17). EARLY WHITE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY:
(**J:** The Mountains of California, **M:** Leopold)
*****Quiz 1 in class, Thursday, February 17th*****

Week 6 (Feb 22, 24). SCRUTINIZING THAT HISTORY
(**M:** Pulling Down Our Monuments, Interview with Shelton Johnson, Global Conservation and Racism, Conservation Refugees)

Week 7 (Mar 1, 3). NATURAL RIGHTS AND NATURAL VALUES: (**J:** The Forest Primeval, **M:** Zartner link, Smith link, Colorado River news segment)

Week 8 (Mar 8, 10). AN ECOFEMINIST ALTERNATIVE: (**M:** Warren, Ecofeminism link)

Week 9 (Mar 15, 17). ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: (**M:** Environmental Justice Explained video link, Robert Bullard Interview)
*****Midterm quiz, Thursday, March 17th*****

SPRING BREAK

Week 10 (Mar 29, 31). ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (ctd.): (**M:** Benedict, Zimmer, EPA Resources, Animal Rights Activism and Race video)

Week 11 (APR 5, 7). CULTURAL REVIVAL AND SURVIVAL: (**J:** The Heart of Everything That Is, **M:** Immodest Proposal, Response)

Week 12 (APR 12, 14). PREDATORS: (**J:** The Ecology of Fear, The Island Wolves)
*****Quiz 3 in class on Thursday, April 14th*****

Week 13 (Apr 19, 21). THE ETHICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: (**M:** Gardiner, Tragedy of Commons clip, Prisoner's Dilemma clip)

Week 14 (Apr 26, 28). CLIMATE JUSTICE: (**M:** What is Climate Justice? How to Save a Planet Podcast, Climate and Gender)
*****3 page essay due by class on Thursday, April 28th*****

Week 15 (May 3, 5). THE END OF NATURE: (**J:** Fall of the Wild, Colbert Link, Marris)
*****Deadline for office hour visits, Friday, May 6th*****
*****Deadline for all extra credit points, Thursday class, May 5th*****

Week 16 (May 13). *****Final exam, Friday May 13th at 8 a.m.****

6. Course Requirements:

(For written assignments, please use 12-point font, one-inch margins all round, and double-spacing. Do not put extra spaces between paragraphs or headings.)

a) Attendance and participation (10% of your grade). Attendance and participation are generally required in this class. *Given the Covid-19 situation, it is very important you do NOT come to class if you have symptoms of Covid-19 or reason to suspect you might have contracted Covid-19 (see paragraph 3 above).* I will not take roll every class but attendance will be measured in part by unannounced in-class prompts/questions and by your participation in discussion board posts. If I put a question on the discussion board, your answer will be due by 6 pm on the day of class. If you need to miss class, please e-mail me ahead of time (if possible) so that I know what is going on.

b) Ethical autobiography (10% of your grade). On Thursday, January 27th you are required to upload to Moodle a **3 page** (typed, double-spaced) ethical autobiography detailing *the source* of your current views on right and wrong. Think back to your early influences and identify the roots of the values, principles, and ethical considerations you have incorporated into your “ethical backpack.” Points will be lost for turning in less than 2.5 pages and for completing only a superficial examination of your influences. The deadline is 1 p.m. on Thursday.

c) Two In-Class Quizzes and a Mid-term (40% of the grade). These quizzes will contain short and long answers on questions relevant to the reading and lecture so far. Prior to the first quiz, I will post some examples of questions on Moodle designed to give you an idea of what to expect. The mid-term quiz has twice the points of the two other quizzes.

d) One three-page essay (15%). The essay question is: "Should some parts of the world remain completely free of human control?" (due on Thursday, April 28th). Your essay must include an argument you find important in Jason Mark's book and must include a second theorist from elsewhere in the semester. Credit will be assigned for a) clear expression of your thoughts, b) understanding the philosophical issues at work, c) making connections to theorists from class, and d) anticipating complexities and counter-arguments. Read the Pryor guidelines on essay writing and the paper structure guide to assist you in writing your paper. Both will be posted on Moodle. You all have the option to resubmit your essay for additional points based on the comments you receive. You must turn in both the original essay and your rewrite at the final exam to have a chance of gaining any additional points.

e) Final Exam (25%). There will be a final exam on Friday, May 13th at 8 a.m. that will test your knowledge of the readings and the lectures throughout the semester. This exam may only be taken on the date and time specified. A student who misses the exam for a trivial reason (e.g. slept late, thought the exam was at a different time, decided to buy a

plane ticket and end the semester early, etc.) **will not be allowed** to retake or reschedule it. The final will have a similar structure to the mid-term but will be slightly longer.

Extra Credit:

i) Office visit: It is always a good thing to check in with the professor or the TAs from time to time. I encourage you to use office hours as much as you can. We are being paid to help you with this class! You will get one extra credit point (up to a limit of 3) for coming to an office hour (either mine or the TAs') before May 5th to discuss issues related to our studies.

ii) Extra-Curricular Events: UM offers a wide range of extra-curricular lectures, conferences, and talks touching on ethics and/or the environment. The speakers are often highly motivated and interesting people. After you graduate, it is unlikely you will have access to such people on a regular basis again. You will get 2 extra credit points (up to a maximum of 6) for events on subjects related to ethics and/or the environment that you attend during the semester. Zoom events are perfectly acceptable. To get this credit, you must turn in a two-page summary of the event within a week of attendance of the talk. You may not use any event that you are required to attend for another class. The two-page summary must include something about the (1) **content** and (2) **quality** of the talk. You should also include some (3) **ethical analysis** connected to something we have been studying. Suitable events are regularly announced in the *Kaimen*, the *Missoulian*, on flyers around campus, at <http://www.umt.edu/events>, at <http://www.missoulaevents.net>, and in the UMToday daily email update. The last date to turn in an event write-up is Thursday, May 5th during class.

7. General Expectations:

I expect you to come to class having carefully read the material assigned for that week. If there is more than one reading, we will tend to discuss the first on Tuesday and the second on Thursday. It will usually be helpful to have everything read before the Tuesday class. As we talk about the reading, I will seek opinions on various topics and may call upon individuals to answer questions relevant to the reading and lecture. Please be prepared to discuss the issues and to bring your own questions and concerns to everyone's attention. We will have as much discussion in this class as we can. It is more fun that way!

I expect everyone to contribute **positively** to a community of learning. This means being respectful of those around you in the class at all times, including myself. You are expected to attend every class, to arrive on time for the 11 a.m. start, to not disrupt those around you unnecessarily, and to **stay for the duration of each class period**. If you think you will need the bathroom, please go before class. Ideally our 80 minutes together is focused, challenging, and uninterrupted.

No electronic devices are permitted in this class (with the exception of a recording device). This means no laptops, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, etc. This is to avoid the temptation of web-surfing, texting, and doing other things during our brief time together. Such use is always a distraction to your neighbor and it is definitely a big distraction to me. A student found using such a device during class will be ejected and have the class count as “unattended.” Repeated flouting of this rule will lead to an F in the class. (Please come and see me in the first week if there is a legitimate reason why I should grant an exception to you).

When I need to communicate outside the class periods, I will use your **university email address** and Moodle. It is your responsibility to regularly check this email address.

You are required to show complete academic integrity at every point of the course. Any academic dishonesty will lead to an F for your semester grade (and that of any collaborators) and a meeting with the appropriate academic authorities. There will be no exceptions to this zero-tolerance policy on academic dishonesty.

7. Additional remarks:

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability with the potential to adversely affect your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154 (phone: 243-2243). Please 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.

The [University Writing Center](#) is located in Lommasson 271 (243-2266). This is an important resource to keep in mind, especially when it comes to writing your essay for Week 14.

Finally, I ask you to contribute to the best learning environment possible as we share time together this semester. A class in ethics and the environment can be really fun. It is both intellectually challenging and highly relevant to everyday life. Please do your part to make our time together as productive and enjoyable as possible. I guarantee you that I will be doing mine.