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PHL 112E.01: Introduction to Ethics and Environment

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INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT
PHIL 112E

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1. Course Introduction:

This class is an introduction to ethics in the western tradition and, in particular, the consideration this tradition has given to animals and the natural environment. We will be approaching our study through the work of Holmes Rolston, III, a thinker widely regarded as the “father of environmental ethics.” In the course of familiarizing ourselves with the main ideas in animal and environmental ethics, we will also take time to understand the three main traditions in western ethical thought; Kantianism, Utilitarianism, and Aristotelianism. We will apply our reading to contemporary ethical issues of importance such as animal rights, pollution, wildland preservation, and climate change.

You will find some of the ideas and concepts discussed in this course to be straightforward and intuitive. Others you will find extremely challenging! Philosophy is not just about “having an opinion.” It is a difficult subject that requires intense concentration and learning. Do not get demoralized when you are working through a difficult reading! We will use the class time to highlight the most important points and to discuss their significance.

Please note that the course requires the use of Moodle. A significant portion of the reading will be posted there, in addition to reminders about assignments and other important administrative materials. Please familiarize yourself with the use of this digital service. (Note that I am not requesting that you submit assignments through Moodle. You should bring assignments to class in hard copy).

2. Reading Material:

Holmes Rolston, III. (2012) *A New Environment Ethics: the Next Millennium for Life on Earth* (New York: Routledge) (R)

Materials on Moodle (M)

3. Reading Assignments (subject to change):

Week 1 (Jan 29-31). SOME ETHICS BASICS: (**R:** vi-vii, 1-14), (**M:** Solnit).

Week 2 (Feb 5-7). HUMANS: (**M:** Rachels), (**R:** 32-36), (**M:** Kant 1).

*****Ethical autobiography due in Thursday class (Feb 7th)*****

Week 3 (Feb 12-14). HUMANS: (**R:** 36-44), (**R:** 14-15), (**M:** Kant 2), (**M:** Reece).

Week 4 (Feb 19-21). ANIMALS: (**R:** 18-19, 63-68), (**M:** Singer), (**M:** Mill).

Week 5 (Feb 26-28). ANIMALS: (**M:** Regan), (**R:** 68-75), (**M:** Fields).

*****First in-class quiz during Thursday class (Feb 28th)*****

Week 6 (Mar 5-7). ANIMALS: (**R:** 75-89), (**M:** Jones), (**M:** Jamieson).

Week 7 (Mar 12-14). PLANTS: (**R:** 93-103), (**M:** Lockwood), (**M:** Schweitzer).

Week 8 (Mar 19-21). PLANTS: (**R:** 103-113, 115), (**M:** Aristotle).

Week 9 (Mar 26-28). SPECIES: (**M:** Sandler), (**R:** 128-138).

*****Second in-class quiz in Thursday class (March 28th)*****

*****Deadline for submission of campus talk, Thursday class (March 28th) *****

-----SPRING BREAK-----

Week 10 (Apr 9-11). SPECIES: (**R:** 138-143, 148-154).

Week 11 (Apr 16-18). ECOSYSTEMS: (**R:** 19-24), (**M:** Leopold), (**R:** 158-168).

Week 12 (Apr 23-25). ECOSYSTEMS: (**R:** 173-185), (**M:** Dowie).

*****Three page essay on the question “Should Wilderness be a Place where Humans visit, but do not remain?” Due in class on Thursday (April 25th)*****

Week 13 (Apr 30 - May 2). EARTH: (**R:** 44-48, graphs 204-207), (**M:** McKibben), (**R:** 210-217).

*****Deadline for extra credit campus talks, Thursday class (May 2nd)*****

Week 14 (May 7-9). EARTH: (**R:** 52-60, 194-199, 217-222).

*** Final Exam 8 – 10 a.m., Tuesday, May 14th ***

4. Course Requirements:

Please note that for each assignment you will be given points (not a grade). Your goal this semester will be to score as many points as possible. Some points (e.g. the ethical autobiography, campus talk, extra credits) are very easy to get. You should plan to capture all these points. Others (e.g. the quizzes and the final) are harder. You will be able to see your running total of points on Moodle. Twice during the semester, I will give you an idea of how your points are looking for your grade. However, this will only be an estimate until points for the final exam and attendance are included. **Concentrate on accumulating as many points as you can during the semester. Take advantage of the extra credit opportunities.**

a) Attendance and participation (15 points). Attendance and participation are required in this class. Attendance will be measured in part by unannounced in-class assignments that cannot be made up. **Two classes can be missed without any penalty. Your next two missed classes cost one point each. From the fifth miss onwards, you will lose two points for each absence.** If you need to miss class for a legitimate reason, please e-mail or talk to me directly ahead of time so that I know what is going on.

b) Ethical autobiography (5 points). On Thursday, February 7th you must turn in a three page (typed, double-spaced) ethical autobiography detailing *the source* of your current views on matters of right and wrong. Think back to your early influences and identify all the main sources of the values, principles, and ethical considerations you have incorporated into your life. Points will be lost for turning in less than 2.5 pages and for completing only a superficial examination of your influences.

c) Campus talk (5 points). UM offers a range of extra-curricular lectures, conferences, and talks touching on ethics and/or the environment. You are required to attend one of these events during the semester before spring break on your own initiative and to turn in a two-page summary of the **content** and **quality** of the talk. You must also **include some analysis that reflects the ethics** we have been studying. You may not use an event that you are required to attend for another class. Suitable events are regularly announced in the *Kaimen*, the *Missoulian*, the *Independent*, posted on flyers around campus, and on the website <http://events.umt.edu>. Please note that I will **not** be providing you with a list of talks. You must find a talk with an ethical dimension on your own initiative. The deadline for submission of your campus talk is the Thursday class, right before spring break, March 28th.

d) Two In-Class Quizzes (20 points each). These quizzes will contain a mixture of short and longer answers on questions relevant to the reading and lecture so far. One week

prior to each quiz, I will post some study questions on Moodle designed to help you prepare.

e) One three page essay (10 points). The essay question is: “Should wilderness be a place where humans visit, but do not remain?” (Read the Pryor guidelines on essay writing to assist you in your paper (available on Moodle)). You can use material from any point of the semester to support your position. Weeks 10, 11, & 12 should be particularly helpful.

f) Final Exam (25 points). There will be a final exam on Tuesday, May 14th 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 **will not be allowed** to retake it.

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 2) for coming to an office hour (either mine or the TA’s) to discuss issues related to the ethical theory we study this semester.

ii) Campus talks: There is enormous value in taking yourself to a range of extra-curricular talks offered on campus. The speakers are often highly motivated and interesting people. After you graduate from college, 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 limit of 4) for additional campus talks on subjects related to ethics and/or the environment that you attend during the semester. To get this credit, you must turn in a two-page summary of the talk (as instructed in the campus talk assignment above) within a week of attendance of the talk. You may not use any event that you are required to attend for another class. The last date to turn in any campus talk write-up is Thursday, May 2nd.

5. General Expectations:

I expect you to come to class having carefully read the material assigned for that week. If there are two (or three) readings, we will tend to discuss the first one on Tuesday and the second (and third) on Thursday. It will usually be helpful, however, to have them all 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.

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 not disrupt those around you unnecessarily, and to **stay for the duration of each class period.**

No electronic devices can be used 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 and doing other work during our brief time together. Such use is always a distraction to your neighbor and to me. A student found using such a device during class will be ejected and have the class count as “unattended.” (Please come and see me if there is a legitimate reason why I should grant an exception to you).

I also expect complete academic integrity at every point of the course. Any academic dishonesty will lead to an automatic 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.

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). 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 almost directly above our classroom in the LA building (LA 144). This is an important resource to keep in mind, especially when it comes to writing your essay in Week 12.

Finally, I ask you to contribute to the best learning environment possible as we share time together this semester. Please do your part to make our time together as productive and enjoyable as possible. I guarantee you that I will be working hard to do the same.