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

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INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT PHILOSOPHY 112E

Class info and office hours:

- Professor: Christopher J. Preston
- Classroom: CHEMISTRY Building, Room 123
- Class: Tuesday, Thursday, 12.30 -1.50 p.m.
- Office: Liberal Arts Building, Room 157
- Office hours: Tuesday 10 a.m. - noon, Wednesday 1-3 p.m.
- [Christopher's E-mail: christopher.preston@umontana.edu](mailto:christopher.preston@umontana.edu)
- Phone: 406-243-2937

Course Introduction:

This class is an introduction to ethics and, in particular, the consideration this tradition has given to animals and the natural environment. We will take time to understand the three main traditions in western ethical thought (Kantianism, Utilitarianism, and Aristotelianism) and draw some contrasts with Confucianism, Daoism, and an emerging feminist tradition. We will apply our reading to contemporary ethical issues such as animal rights, endangered species, wildland preservation and restoration, and climate change. We will seek to practice critical thinking on complicated matters.

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 of different theories. Some of the thinkers we will read are quite complex. 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. Office hours are available to help go over the difficult stuff.

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 wanting you to submit assignments through Moodle. You should bring assignments to class in hard copy).

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, you should have achieved the following objectives.

- Students should be familiar with some of the major theories in environmental ethics
- Students should also understand the basic ethical frameworks of Aristotle, Kant, and Mill, as well as some alternative theoretical frames
- Students should be able to look at an environmental or conservation issue and see clearly its ethical dimensions
- Students should have gained skills in reading difficult texts, expressing their views clearly, and arguing complicated points with their peers

Reading Materials:

- Marion Hourdequin. (2015). *Environment Ethics: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic) (represented in the schedule as **H**)
- Jason Mark. (2015). *Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man* (Washington DC: Island Press) (represented in the schedule as **M**)
- Materials on Moodle (represented in the schedule as **O**)

(When the syllabus assigns particular pages in one of our texts, look for the major section break and start there.)

Course Requirements:

(For written assignments, please use 12-point font, one-inch margins all round, and double-spacing. Do not get “creative” and add extra spaces between paragraphs or headings so that you have to write less.)

- a) Attendance and participation (15 %). 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 (if possible) so that I know what is going on.
- b) Ethical autobiography (5 %). On Thursday, February 1st you must turn in a three-page 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 ethical backpack. Credit will be lost for turning in less than 2.75 (or more than 3.5) pages and for completing only a superficial examination of your influences.
- c) Extra-Curricular Event (5%). 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 the end of Week 10 on your own initiative and to turn in a two-page summary of the event. You may not use an event that you are required to attend for another class. To get full credit you will need to discuss (1) the **content**, and (2) **the quality** of the talk. You must also include (3) **some analysis that reflects the ethics** we have been studying. Suitable events are regularly announced in the *Kaimen*, the *Missoulian*, the *Independent*, posted on flyers around campus, and listed on the website <http://events.umt.edu>. Please note that I will **not** be providing you with a list of talks. You must find an event with an ethical dimension on your own initiative. The deadline for submission of your assignment is the Thursday class of week 10, April 6th. However, please turn in your work as soon after the event itself as you can.
- d) In-Class Quizzes (40%). Four times during the semester (Week 4, Week 6, Week 8, Week 11), we will take time during the Thursday class for a quiz on the material covered in the most recent lectures. These quizzes will require very short written answers or the choosing of an answer.
- e) One three-page essay (15%). This essay requires you to revisit your ethical autobiography from the start of class and find a belief you held that has actual (or potential) environmental application. This assignment asks you to choose one of the ethical theories we have studied and use it to flesh out one of your earlier positions. After using this theory to support your belief, take time to anticipate how those who disagree with you might respond. Credit will be assigned for a) the clear expression of your thoughts, b) showing an understanding the philosophical issues at hand, c) making connections to theorists from class, and d) anticipating complexities and counter-arguments. You all have the option to resubmit your essay based on the comments received before the final. You must turn in both the original essay and your rewrite to have a chance of gaining any more credit. (Read the Pryor guidelines on essay writing to assist you in your paper (available on Moodle)).
- f) Final Exam (25%). There will be a final exam on Wednesday, May 10th at 8 a.m. that will test your knowledge of the readings and the lectures throughout the semester. Most of it will follow a similar format to the in-class quizzes but it will be longer. It will also require a few slightly longer answers. One week prior to the final, I will post some study questions on Moodle. 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 an early plane ticket home, etc.) **will not be allowed to retake or reschedule it.**

Extra Credit:

- i. Office visit: It is always a good thing to check in with the professor or the TA 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. Extra-Curricular Events: There is enormous value in taking yourself to extra-curricular events 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 events 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 event (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 extra-credit event write-up is Thursday, May 4th during class.

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 (and second) 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 plan to 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.

Please note that I will be lecturing on ideas and topics that will sometimes extend beyond the reading. You are required to take careful notes and to study from both the textbooks and the lecture notes for the quizzes.

Please also recognize that the dates of spring break and finals week are fixed by the UM Provost more than a year in advance (<http://www.umt.edu/provost/academiccalendar>). You must abide by these dates when you arrange your travel at spring break and at the end of the semester.

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. Please turn all phones off as you enter the classroom. This is to avoid the temptation of web-surfing and other distractions during our brief time together. Such use is always annoying to your neighbor and it is a big distraction 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 expect complete academic integrity at every point of the course. Any academic dishonesty will likely lead to an F for your semester grade (and that of any collaborators) and a meeting with the appropriate academic authorities. There will be zero tolerance of academic dishonesty.

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 Lomasson 154 (phone: 243-2243). Please also 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 Lomasson 271. This is an important resource to keep in mind, especially when it comes to writing your essay in Week 12.

Finally.....I expect everyone to contribute **positively** to a community of learning for the next 15 weeks. 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, to not disrupt those around you, and to **stay for the duration of each**

class period. I ask for your sincere commitment to our shared time together this semester. Please do your part to make this class as productive and enjoyable as possible. I guarantee you that I will be working very hard to do the same.

Reading Assignments (provisional):

DATE	ASSIGNMENTS/READINGS	DUE DATES
Week 1 (January 24-26)	SOME ETHICS BASICS: 1. (O: Churchill) 2. (H: 20-27) 3. (O: Rachels)	
Week 2 (January 31-Feb 1)	VALUES AND WORLDVIEWS IN THE ANTHROPOCENE: (H: 4-20)	
Week 3 (February 7-9)	UTILITARIANISM: 1. (H: 29-39) 2. (O: Mill)	
Week 4 (February 14-16)	KANTIANISM: 1. (H: 40-46), 2. (O: Kant)	***QUIZ (February 16th)***
Week 5 (February 21-23)	VIRTUE ETHICS: 1. (H: 46-56), 2. (O: Aristotle)	
Week 6 (February 28-Mar 2)	MORAL EXTENSIONISM: (H: 57-76)	***QUIZ (March 2nd)***
Week 7 (March 7-9)	RELATIONAL APPROACHES: 1. (H: 76-86), 2. (M: 1-38)	
Week 8 (March 14-16)	ECOFEMINISM: (H: 87-100)	***QUIZ (March 16th)***
Week 9 (March 28-30)	INSTITUTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: (H: 100-114, 117-130)	
Week 10 (April 4-6)	CLIMATE CHANGE: (H: 143-163, 163-167)	
Week 11 (April 11-13)	ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION: (H: 169-180, 180-193)	***QUIZ (April 13th)***
Week 12 (April 18-20)	NATURE AND THE POST-NATURAL: (M: 39-130)	
Week 13 (April 25-27)	WILDERNESS AND THE POST-WILD: (M: 131-198)	***Three-page essay due in class on Thursday, April 27th***
Week 14 (May 2-4)	ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN THE ANTHROPOCENE: 1. (M: 199-end) 2. (H: 202-218)	
Wednesday May 10th	*** Final Exam: Wednesday May 10th at <u>8 a.m.</u> ***	