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PHIL 427E.01: Environmental Philosophy

Deborah Slicer

University of Montana - Missoula, deborah.slicer@umontana.edu

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Philosophy 427 E/Environmental Philosophy
MWF 1:10-2:00
Professor Deborah Slicer
Office: LA 148, phone 243-2527
O.H.: MW 2:10-3:00 and by appointment

Are the moral traditions that were developed to guide human relations also relevant to interspecies relations? If so, to what extent are they relevant? If not, is it because the theories are ultimately anthropocentric, as some critics argue? Or are they problematic for other reasons? If our traditions fail to justify the interspecies obligations we have gut feelings about, then what other moral visions can we appeal to as alternatives? And, importantly, how is environmental philosophy--all this pin-headish theorizing--relevant to our environmental crisis?

We begin by reading Al Gore's presentation of the global environmental facts. Then we'll look at various attempts to extend virtue, deontological, and utilitarian theories to encompass interspecies relations and at criticisms of such attempts. Deep ecologists, ecofeminists, and social ecologists try to articulate profoundly nontraditional ways of thinking about the "self" in relation to the natural environment. We focus on that literature during the second half of the semester. Leslie Silko's novel Ceremony is a narrative account of an environmental ethic. We'll close the reading portion of the semester with that novel and talk about the benefits of narrative, versus analytic, accounts of environmental ethics. The last three weeks of class feature group presentations of local environmental issues. Presentations include the group's efforts to justify its policy recommends using class theories and an account of the group's activist project. This is when we test the theories against the "real world."

Syllabus

1/29 Hello, Business, start reading Al Gore's Earth in the Balance
1/31 Begin discussion of Gore
2/5 Gore
2/7 At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, Mark Sagoff (EEP)
2/9 Paper 1 due in class, group work for presentations
2/12-Animal Liberation, Peter Singer, The Case for Animal Rights, Tom Regan (EEP)
2/16
2/19 Respect for Nature (RN), Paul Taylor, Part I
2/21 RN, Part II
2/23 RN, Part III
2/26 RN, Part IV
2/28 RN, Part VI
3/1 RN, Part VI continued
3/5 group work
3/7 Paper 3 due in class, The Land Ethic, Leopold (EEP)
3/12 Leopold, continued
3/14 Rediscovering North America, Barry Lopez
3/16 Spring break begins
3/26 Self-realization, Arne Naess (EEP)
3/28 Naess
3/30 Deep Ecology, Sessions and Devall (EEP)
4/2- The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism, Karen Warren (EEP)
4/6
4/9 Environmental Racism, Carl Grossman (EEP)
4/11-13 Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness, Guha (EEP)
4/16-25 Ceremony, Leslie Silko

4/27 Group work

4/30 Paper 3 due in class

Presentations will begin on either 4/30 or 5/2

5/11 Wrap up and discussion of activism and activism essays from EEP

5/16 Presentation paper deadline, 3:00 p.m.

Texts:

Earth in the Balance, Al Gore

A Respect for Nature, Paul Taylor

The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book, Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce, eds.

(optional--I'll have a copy of this on reserve in the library)

Rediscovering North America, Barry Lopez

Ceremony, Leslie Silko

xeroxes on reserve in the library (x)

Requirements:

Paper I--15%

Paper II--25%

Paper III--25%

Presentation, activist concept and follow-through--20%

Presentation paper--10%

Attendance and participation--5%

Attendance is mandatory as this is largely a discussion class. Three unexcused absences results in the loss of 1/2 letter grade.