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PHL 395.01: Environmental Ethics and Global Climate Change

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PHL 324: Ethics of Climate Change

A University of Montana and Wild Rockies Field Institute Course

Current Course Listing:

PHL 395: Environmental Ethics and Global Climate Change/Honors (sections 01/80).

Honors Section and Statement of Qualitative Difference:

The Honors section (section 80) will meet at the same place and time as the regular section (section 01). The maximum aggregate enrollment in both sections will be unchanged, at 10 students. Assignments and learning objectives are the same in both sections with the exception that Honors students will be required to give an oral presentation based on their final paper that will be filmed and shown during Fall 2013 at the Davidson Honors College.

Course Dates: July 30-August 16 (18 days)

Course Location: University of Montana, Rocky Mountain Front and the Bob Marshall Wilderness, Helena, Montana, Blackfoot Nation, Glacier National Park and other locations throughout western Montana.

Instructors:

Patrick Burke: M.A. Philosophy, University of Montana; M.S. Forest Ecology, University of Montana; B.S. Forestry, University of Montana; B.A. Philosophy, University of California at San Diego.

Adam Perou Hermans: Ph.D. Candidate, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Colorado; M.S. Environmental Communication, University of Otago, New Zealand; B.A. Colgate University, Fine Arts and Biology.

Course Goals:

This course will examine some of the fundamental issues raised by global climate change and consider how environmental ethics might help to address these issues. Students will become acquainted with the essential elements of climate change science and be provided with an introduction to contemporary approaches to environmental ethics that have developed out of the primary ethical traditions of western thought: deontological (Kantian) ethics, utilitarian ethics, and virtue ethics. In addition, the course will examine alternative understandings of the appropriate relationship between humans and the natural world including: "Deep Ecology" and Native American perspectives. Students will observe firsthand the effects of climate change on Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) ecosystems, Pika (*Ochotona princeps*) populations, fire frequency and intensity, and glacial recession during a week long backpacking trip to sub-alpine and alpine ecosystems in the Bob Marshall Wilderness and a subsequent trip in Glacier National Park. In addition students will meet with philosophers, scientists, politicians, activists, and community leaders throughout the course to deepen their understanding of the political, social, economic, and cultural changes required to effectively address climate

change. By the end of the course students will be expected to be able to articulate a vision of a truly “sustainable” future.

Course Instructional Plan:

The course will take place over an eighteen-day period. We will begin in Missoula with two lectures and extended discussions with University of Montana Restoration Ecology and Philosophy faculty. The first lecture/discussion will focus on the science and current status of global climate change. The second will center on environmental ethics and its application to issues raised by anthropogenic climate change. The class will then travel to the Rocky Mountain Front for a day of meetings with representatives of federal land management agencies, conservation groups, and the local farming/ranching community to discuss the effects of climate change. We will then backpack for a week in the Bob Marshall Wilderness observing the effects of climate change on Whitebark Pine ecosystems, Pika populations and fire frequency/intensity. Readings, discussions, and daily written journal assignments during this backcountry section will focus on environmental ethics, climate science, and conservation biology. We will then visit the Blackfeet Nation for discussions with Blackfeet elders and educators regarding traditional Native American perspectives on the proper relationship between the human and natural world. Finally, we will travel to Glacier National Park to observe and discuss the effects of climate change on glacial recession, wolverines, and alpine ecosystems. During the final three days of the course we will visit the Swan Glaciers in the Great Bear Wilderness where each student will synthesize their experiences, readings, and discussions on environmental ethics, climate change, and conservation biology in a paper that outlines a truly sustainable future for both human and non-human others and that addresses the political, social, economic, and cultural changes required to achieve it.

Course Requirements:

Students will complete readings and facilitate group discussions on relevant topics throughout the course. Students will be required to keep a daily academic journal that responds to the readings, discussions, and specific assigned topics. Student journals will be read, commented on, and graded on a regular basis by the instructors. A written midterm will test student’s mastery of the basic issues in environmental ethics and climate science. The final paper and oral presentation will focus on articulating a coherent vision of a “sustainable” future that addresses the key ethical, political, social, economic, and cultural issues.

For academic credit each student will be required to:

- Complete all assigned readings, actively participate in daily class discussions, and engage course speakers during question and answer periods. (15 % of total grade)
- Keep a daily academic journal that responds to issues in our readings and discussion. In addition, the academic journal includes 4 extended responses to assigned topics. (15 % of total grade)
- Complete a comprehensive three-hour midterm examination. (30% of total grade)
- Write and present an individual final paper (10-12 pages) that relates environmental ethics to the issues of global climate change and the possibility of a “sustainable” future. (30% written paper; 10% oral presentation)

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Define key terms employed in climate change science
- Define key terms employed in the three main environmental ethics traditions (deontological, utilitarian, virtue)
- Analyze and synthesize course readings and relate this material to what students have observed in the field
- Employ environmental reasoning about central climate change topics

Course Readings:

To be completed prior to the start of the course:

Fundamentals of Global Climate Change Science

Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2006. *Field Notes From A Catastrophe*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, New York), pp. 5-44.

Dr. Stephen Schneider responds to critics of global climate change science:
www.dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/19/steve-schneider-climate-view

Days 1-2: Climate Science and the Historical Context of Anthropogenic Climate Change

Hansen, James. 2012. "Climate Change is Here—and Worse Than We Thought" in the *Washington Post*, August 3, 2012. 2 pp.

McKibben, Bill 2012. *Global Warnings' Terrifying New Math*. Rolling Stone July, 2012.

Days 3: Introduction to Environmental Ethics

Palmer, Clare. 1997. "Introduction to Environmental Ethics." *Environmental Ethics*, pp. 1-22.

Garvey, James. 2008. "Right and Wrong," *The Ethics of Climate Change*, pp. 33-55.

Days 4-5: Environmental Ethics and Global Climate Change

Jamieson, Dale. 2011. "Energy, Ethics and The Transformation of Nature" in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, Denis G. Arnold ed. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), pp. 16-39.

Gardiner, Stephen. 2011. "Is No One Responsible for The Global Environmental Tragedy? Climate Change as a Challenge to Our Ethical Concepts" in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, Denis G. Arnold ed. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), pp. 38-59.

Day 6: Pika, Bellwether Species and Ecological Restoration in the Anthropocene

Robins, Jim. 2011. "Pikas Move to Higher Ground," *New York Times*, p. 1-2.

Beever, Erik, et.al.. 2011. "Contemporary Climate Change Alters the Pace and Drivers of Extinction," *Global Change Biology*, pp. 2054-2070.

Woody, Todd. 2010. "Enlisting Endangered Species as a Tool to Combat Global Warming," *Yale Environment 360*, pp. 1-4.

Hale, Benjamin, Adam Hermans and Alex Lee. "Climate Adaptation, Moral Reparation and the Baseline Problem," pp. 1-13.

Day 7: Fossil Fuels, Politics and Economic Growth

McKibben, Bill. 2007. "After Growth," *Deep Economy*, pp. 5-45.

Klein, Naomi. 2011. "Capitalism vs. The Climate," *The Nation*, November 2011, pp. 1-16.

Day 8: Responsibility and Climate Change

Garvey, James. 2008. "Responsibility," *The Ethics of Climate Change*, pp. 57-87.

Day 9: Action and Climate Change

Garvey, James. 2008. "Doing Nothing," *The Ethics of Climate Change*, pp. 89-112.

Garvey, James, 2008. "Doing Something," *The Ethics of Climate Change*, pp. 113-135

Day 10: Native American Perspectives and Energy Exploration on The Blackfeet Nation

Healy, Jack. 2012. "Tapping Into The Land, and Dividing Its People" in *The New York Times* August 15, 2012. 1 p.

Scott, Tristan. 2012. "Blackfeet Women Join Together to Oppose Fracking," in *Missoulian*, June 30, 2012, pp. 1-3.

Reeves, O.K. 1998. "Sacred Geography: First Nations of the Yellowstone to Yukon, Y2Y Atlas, pp. 31-50.

Day 11: Religion and Nature

DeLoria, Vine, Jr. 1994. "Thinking in Time and Space," in *God Is Red*, pp. 62-77.

White, Lynn, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," in *Earthcare* ed. David Clowney & Patricia Mosto, pp. 54-61.

Day 12: Wolverine and Climate Change

Watters, Rebecca. 2010. "Climate Change's Threat to the Wolverine," in *High Country News* December 21, 2010. 2 pp.

Inman, Robert, Audrey Magoun, Jens Persson and Jenny Mattisson. 2012. "The Wolverine's Niche: linking reproductive chronology, caching, competition, and

climate,” in *Journal of Mammology*, 93(3), pp. 634-644.

Day 13: Glaciers, Climate Change and Ecofeminism

Warren, Karen. 2009. “The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism,” in Earthcare ed. David Clowney and Patricia Mosto, pp. 246-263.

Day 14: Nature, Biodiversity and Wildness in the Anthropocene

Turner, Jack. 1996. “The Abstract Wild: A Rant,” *The Abstract Wild*, pp. 19-37.

Quammen, David. 1998. “Planet of Weeds,” in *Harper's Magazine*, October 1998, pp. 57-69.

Hettinger, Ned. 2012. “Valuing Naturalness in the ‘Anthropocene’: Now More Than Ever.” Draft Paper. 11 pp.

Day 15: Energy Policy and Climate Change

Jamieson, Dale. 2011. “Energy, Ethics, and the Transformation of Nature,” in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis G. Arnold, pp. 16-37.

Day 16: The Good Life and Paths to the Future

Borgmann, Albert. 2012. “The Setting of the Scene: Technological Fixes and the Design of the Good Life,” in *Engineering The Climate* ed. Christopher Preston, pp. 189-199.

Berry, Wendell. 1990. “Word and Flesh,” *Helping Nature Heal*, pp. 1-4.

Cafaro, Philip. 2011. “Beyond Business as Usual: Alternative wedges to Avoid Catastrophic Climate Change and Create Sustainable Societies,” in *The Ethics of Global Climate Changes* ed. Denis G. Arnold, pp. 192-215.

Day 17: Visions of a Sustainable Future

Orr, David. 2009. “Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse,” pp. 181-202.

Abram, David. 2004. “Reciprocity” in *Rethinking Nature* eds. Foltz and Frodeman, pp. 77-92

Day 18: Presentations: Visions of a Sustainable Future