

PHIL 349: Environmental Philosophy

Time and place

8:30-10:00 Tuesday and Thursday, Arts W-20

Instructor

Greg Mikkelson

Leacock 913, 514-398-8630

Office hour: 10:15-11:15 Tuesday

Course description

Ecological problems ramify daily, posing daunting questions about what to do and why. Adequate answers to such questions demand not only scientific knowledge, but also wisdom about humanity's place in nature. This course will help students cultivate such wisdom, through an introduction to environmental ethics, as well as related topics in environmental science and political ecology.

Required readings

Available at The Word bookstore, 469 Milton Street

Leopold, A. 1949. A Sand County Almanac. Oxford University. New York, NY.

Schweickart, D. 2011. After Capitalism. Rowman and Littlefield. Lanham, MD.

Singer, P. 2011. Practical Ethics. Cambridge University. Cambridge, UK.

Available on reserve at the library

Fuller, E. 2013. Lost Animals: Extinction and the Photographic Record. Bloomsbury. New York, NY.

Available through MyCourses

All other readings

Course requirements

Animal report: 5% of grade

Brief the class on one extinct animal featured in Fuller's Lost Animals, and one wild animal extant in Québec (see www.iucnredlist.org).

Class participation: 10%

Do all the readings before class, and come prepared to discuss them.

Quiz: 15%

In class Thursday January 19th

Debate: 15%

Many class sessions feature a debate between two students, for and against the position taken in one of the readings for that day. Each debater presents her case in 10 minutes, and rebuts the case made by her opponent in five minutes. The grade for this assignment is for the debate as a whole – in other words, both debaters get the same grade, no matter who wins.

Essay: 25%

This paper conveys the argument you plan to make in your debate.

Failure to follow any of the essay instructions below is grounds for a failing essay grade.

1,000-1,500 words of text (excluding title page, tables, figures, bibliography, etc.), double-spaced: Must include word count.

1. Right after signing up for a debate (Tuesday January 10th), set up an appointment for a tutorial session at the McGill Writing Centre, so that the tutorial takes place around two weeks before said debate (see www.mcgill.ca/mwc/tutorial-service/appointments).
2. Write your paper, receive feedback on it at the tutorial, and get a signed note from the tutor confirming that you attended the session.
3. Re-write the essay in light of the advice you get from the tutor, and bring a hard copy of the revised paper, along with the tutor's note, to my office hours the week before your debate. (If you cannot make those hours, we can arrange to meet elsewhere.)
4. Re-write again the paper in light of my comments, and submit it to me via e-mail the day of the debate.

Final examination: 30%

Schedule

Introduction

Thursday January 5th: What it's all about

Part 1: Environmental science

Tuesday January 10th: WWF; Living Planet Report 2016 Pp. 18-44, 74-83

Thursday January 12th: Broome, Climate Matters Pp. 16-36

Tuesday January 17th:

Meadows *et al.*, The Limits to Growth Pp. 25-44

York, "Ecological Paradoxes"

Knight *et al.*, "Could working less reduce pressures on the environment?"

Thursday January 19th: Quiz

Part 2: Environmental ethics

Animals

Tuesday January 24th: Singer; Practical Ethics Pp. vii-xiii, 1-15, 48-70

Thursday January 26th: Singer Pp. 94-122

Tuesday January 31st: Singer Pp. 216-275

Thursday February 2nd: Miller, "Do Animals Have Interests Worthy of Our Moral Interest?"

Organisms

Tuesday February 7th:

Miller, "Is Health an Anthropocentric Value?"

Kallhoff, "Plants in Ethics"

Ecosystems

Thursday February 9th: Leopold; A Sand County Almanac Pp. vii-ix, 3-40

Tuesday February 14th: Leopold Pp. 41-94

Thursday February 16th: Miller, "Value as Richness"

Tuesday February 21st: Leopold Pp. 95-153

Thursday February 23rd: Miller, "Axiology"

Tuesday March 7th: Leopold Pp. 154-187

Thursday March 9th: Kelly, A Theory of the Good Pp. 66-107

Tuesday March 14th: Leopold Pp. 188-226

Thursday March 16th:

Cafaro, "Thoreau, Leopold, and Carson"

Norlock, "Building Receptivity"

Part 3: Political Ecology

Tuesday March 21st: Schweickart, After Capitalism Pp. xiii-xxix

Thursday March 23rd: Schweickart Pp. 1-57

Tuesday March 28th: Schweickart Pp. 58-124

Thursday March 30th: Schweickart Pp. 125-133

Tuesday April 4th: Schweickart Pp. 134-164

Thursday April 6th: Schweickart Pp. 165-206

Conclusion

Tuesday April 11th: Review for final exam

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest for more information).