

PHIL 349: Environmental Philosophy

Winter 2014

Time and place

10:00-11:30 Tuesday and Thursday, Leacock 210

Instructor

Greg Mikkelson

Leacock 913, 514-398-4583

Office hours: 11:30-1:00 Tuesday and Thursday

Course description

Ecological problems ramify daily, posing daunting questions about what to do and why. Adequate answers to such questions demand not only thorough scientific knowledge, but also deep 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, political ecology, and eco-poetics.

Required readings

Available through MyCourses

Course requirements

Class participation: 15% of grade

Requires reading all assigned texts before class. Includes class attendance, questions and comments in class, and written evaluation of fellow students' debates.

Essay: 25%

1,000-1,500 words of text (not including title page, bibliography, tables, figures, etc.), double-spaced. The essay presents the argument you plan to make in a debate with a fellow student (see below).

On the Tuesday nine days before that debate, bring the paper to my office hours. (If you cannot make my office hours, we can arrange to meet on the Monday 10 days before your debate.) I will read the essay then, and provide written and oral feedback on it. Revise the essay in light of this feedback and re-submit it in class one week later, i.e., on the Tuesday two days before the debate.

Debate: 25%

Most Thursdays will feature a debate or debates between students, for and against the position taken in one of the readings for the week. Each participant presents her case to the class 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 participants get the same grade, no matter who won.

Oral examination: 35%

I hand out a long list of possible questions on the last day of class. Each student prepares detailed answers to every question on that list, and makes an appointment to meet with me during finals period. At the time of said appointment, I tell a given student which two questions I will ask, and give the student 30 minutes to refine her answers to those questions. The student then has 30 minutes to answer the two questions, as well as follow-up questions.