

PHIL 544: Political Theory

Winter 2014 topic

Ecology and Democracy: In Town and at Work

Time and place

12:30-2:30 Tuesday and Thursday, Leacock 927

Instructor

Greg Mikkelson

Leacock 913, 514-398-4400 x094660

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

Course description

Some of the most important recent advances toward ecological harmony have occurred not at the federal, or provincial/state, but instead the municipal, level of democratic governance. This suggests that better environmental quality would result if more power were devolved to the local level. Meanwhile, some political and economic thinkers have argued for the environmental benefits of extending democracy to a realm from which it has been almost completely absent for a long time – the workplace. In this seminar we shall explore some of the literature reporting and/or espousing these two forms of democratization, and consider their fitness as means to ecological ends.

Required readings

Available at The Word bookstore, 469 Milton

Biehl, J. 1998. The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism. Black Rose. Montreal, QC.

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

Wolff, R. 2012. Democracy at Work: A Cure for Capitalism. Haymarket. Chicago, IL.

Available in class

All other readings

Course requirements

General class participation: 10%

Very short essay: 15%

500-750 words of text (not including title page, bibliography, tables, figures, etc.), double-spaced

Due in class one week before your oral presentation

The essay presents the argument you plan to make, and then defend, in your oral presentation. The argument draws upon all of the assigned readings for the day of that oral presentation. In it, you make an original case that municipal and/or workplace democratization will help solve a specific problem identified in an assigned section of Leonard's book The Story of Stuff.

Oral presentation: 20%

Summarize an assigned section of Leonard's book The Story of Stuff that the rest of the class may have not have read. Then make the case orally that you made in writing through your very short essay, and defend your argument in response to critique by the instructor and your fellow students.

Final paper: 55%

3,500-4,000 words of text (not including title page, bibliography, tables, figures, etc.), double-spaced
Please include page numbers and word count

Due in class Wednesday April 9th

Schedule

Introduction

Part 1: Social ecology and worker self-direction

Part 2: Bioregionalism and economic democracy

Etc.

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).