

Environmental Ethics



Instructor: Amanda Nichols, MA

Office: Anderson Hall 117

Office Hours: Monday 10:30-11:30

Wednesday 1:00-2:00

or by appointment

Email: amnv22@ufl.edu

Phone: 352-867-5309

Course Information

Rel. 2104, Spring 2017

Meeting Time: MWF 5th Period

Classroom: MAT 18

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to environmental ethics. Students will engage with competing secular and religious views regarding human impacts on and moral responsibilities toward nature. Students will also examine critical theoretical approaches, key thinkers, and social movements in contention over competing environmental values.

Role in Curriculum

This course serves as an elective for Religion majors and minors, and provides credit for the department's ethics emphasis. It also meets the ethics requirement in UF's Sustainability minor and for SNRE students, and provides Humanities General Education, and Gordon Rule Writing credit (E2/2000 words or more).

Course Objectives:

1. To understand the historical emergence and development of environmental philosophy and environmental ethics in Western societies, as well as the ways such ethics become entwined with and influenced by developments in religion, literature, and the arts, as illuminated by the Humanities.
2. To understand the range of perspectives on human responsibility to the environment and enable critical thinking and writing about them, including by arbitrating among competing views of environmental facts.

3. To understand the epistemological bases (philosophical, scientific, religious, aesthetic) for different ethical orientations as well as the various methodological approaches to making individual and public environment related decisions.
4. To introduce the contribution of diverse humanities disciplines, especially art history, literary criticism, philosophy, and religious studies, to illuminating environmental ethics and practice.
5. To communicate effectively and logically one's own moral perspective and views of environmental facts and trends orally and in writing.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and Participation – 10%: Class attendance and quality participation are expected from students throughout the course of the semester.

- All students are allowed one unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first will result in a five point deduction from the overall class participation grade. Students with five or more unexcused absences will automatically fail the course. Absences will be considered excused only if written request is submitted in person in advance (not via email) or if written explanations are submitted with valid documentation.
- Participation implies consistent and quality preparation for class, engaged attitude, active note taking, and educated questions and comment.
- There will be a series of unannounced pop quizzes throughout the semester which will count toward the participation grade.

2. Reading Responses-15%: Students are required to submit a 500-700 word reflection every Friday on the weeks' assigned readings, detailing the arguments, evidence, and critical assertions made. If multiple articles are assigned, students should attempt to put the readings in conversation with one another. The response should also pose at least two critical questions for discussion.

3. Essay Review -20%: By the end of week six (Friday, February 6) students should have completely read the assigned book *Ishmael*. Each student will then prepare a 500-1000 word review essay of the book. You should analyze the book, describing its overall moral perspective and the kind of evidence provided related to this perspective. Make an *argument* about what you take to be the strengths and/or weaknesses in the book's assertions.

4. Exams – Midterm (15%), Final (20%): There will be two examinations in the course. The midterm, which will be taken during week nine, will cover all course material up to that point, focusing on key terms, ideas, and theories. The final examination, which will be taken during finals week, will be cumulative.

5. Final Paper 20%: Each student will prepare a 1500-2000 word research paper on a topic of their choice, due by the last class of the semester. The project must: 1) describe, in detail, a current issue of environmental injustice; 2) engage with course materials including at least some theoretical discussion; 3) examine how individuals negotiate environmental issues through their religious and philosophical worldviews. In conjunction with the final paper, a research proposal is

due during week four, outlining the proposed topic. Additionally, a list of five annotated sources is due by the end of week eight. The instructor will give feedback on both the proposal and annotated sources. Each student will also be asked to do a short presentation on their research topic and findings during the last four weeks of class. Presentations will last 5-10 minutes and should thoroughly cover the topic. Students will receive comments, questions, and feedback from the class and there should be some consideration of this feedback in the final paper.

6. Extra Credit: There will normally be extra credit opportunities announced in class or via the class email list serve. These usually involve attending an event on campus or in Gainesville that engages environmental ethics. Students then will write 250-500 word essay analyzing the following: What are the central argument(s) that were being advanced? How did the individuals or groups build their argument(s)? What evidence did they cite? What do they think is at stake? With whom are those involved in contention, and why? These extra credit write ups must be turned in no later than the final exam. The points used often help students raise their grade a notch or two, e.g., from a C+ to a B- or even a B.

Grading Scale

A 94-100
A- 90-93
B+ 87-89
B 84-86
B- 80-83
C+ 77-79
C 74-76
C- 70-73
D+ 67-69
D 64-66
D- 60-63
F Below 60

Grades are consistent with UF policy as stated here:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

POLICIES AND RULES

1a. Late or Make-Up Assignments

Students who do not turn in reading responses on the days they are collected will receive a zero for the assignment. You may take an exam early or receive an extension on an exam or essay assignment only in extraordinary circumstances and with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down ½ grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

1b. Returned Assignments

Assignments will usually be returned to students no later than one week after they were due. At the end of the semester, unreturned course work will be available for pickup in my office in

Anderson 117 for 30 days after the official date that grades are posted by the registrar. After this time, they will be shredded to ensure privacy, and then recycled.

2. Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is required. Poor attendance will have a negative impact on your course grade. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day's readings. Showing up more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will result in being marked absent for the day. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

3. Honor Code

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the "Academic Misconduct" section of the Student Discipline Code, may fail the course and will be subject to other disciplinary measures.

4. Common Courtesy

Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. You may take notes on a laptop computer, although the instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class.

5. Conferences

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours or by appointment.

6. Accommodation for Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

7. Counseling Resources

Resources available on-campus for students include the following: 1. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling; 2. Student Mental Health,

Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling; 3. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling; 4. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

8. Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

9. Online Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.

Required Texts:

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael* (Bantam, 1992)

**All other readings will be provided by the instructor or uploaded into the class resources folder on canvas.

-Recommended Readings are additional readings that will enhance your knowledge on the subject. You are not *required* to read them, but they will be discussed in class and you may be tested on them.

Special Note:

The course instructor reserves the right to lower or raise grades based on classroom contributions or absences. Instructor also reserves the right to change course requirements and to make changes to the syllabus at any time.

Class Schedule and Readings:

Unit 1: Introduction to Environmental Ethics

Week 1:

Wednesday, January 4

-Introduction to Environmental Ethics

Friday, January 6

- Des Jardins, Chapter 1, "Science, Ethics & the Environment," pp.1-15.
- Garret Hardin, "Ethical Implications of Carrying Capacity" (1977) skim

-Go to Ecological Footprint Network and peruse the website. Then go to the personal footprint link and do the analysis there. Please include your footprint (how many planets needed) at the end of your reading response and be prepared to talk about it in class today.

-----Reading Response Due-----

Unit 2: Historical Overview of Environmental Ethics

Week 2:

Monday, January 9

- Gardiner and Thompson, Chapter 1, "Introducing Contemporary Environmental Ethics," pp. 1-9
- Gardiner and Thompson, Chapter 2, "A History of Environmental Ethics," pp. 13-26

Wednesday, January 11

- Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis"
- Bron Taylor, " The Greening of Religion Hypothesis Part 1"

Friday, January 13

****No Class****

-----Reading Response Due-----

Reading Response for this week should cover all readings done thus far.

Week 3:

Monday, January 16

- Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (Verso, 1990), pp. 67-85.
- Aldo Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain," in *A Sand County Almanac* (Ballantine, 1949)

Wednesday, January 18

- John Muir, "Cedar Keys"
- Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," in *A Sand County Almanac* (Ballantine, 1949), pp. 237-264.

(Recommended)

- Murray Bookchin, "What is Social Ecology" pp.62-76

Friday, January 20

- Paul Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature" pp.83-95

(Recommended)

- Lucas Johnston, *Religion and Sustainability: Social Movements and the Politics of the Environment*. Chapter 1 and 2. Pp.7-30

-----Reading Response Due-----

Week 4:

Monday, January 23

- Holmes Rolston, III, "The Anthropocene! Beyond the Natural!" pp. 62-73
- J. Baird Callicott, "How Ecological Collectives Are Morally Considerable" pp. 113-124

Wednesday, January 25

- Selections from Henry David Thoreau – *Walden*
- Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson - *Nature*

Friday, January 27

- Garret Hardin, 'Lifeboat Ethics' (1974)
- Sandy Irvine, "The Cornucopia Scam: Contradictions of Sustainable Development" pp.72-82

-----Reading Response Due-----

**Reading responses this week should also include your personal reflections on the documentary 'An Inconvenient Truth'

******Research Proposal Due in class ******

Week 5:

Monday, January 30

- N. Katherine Hayles, "Searching for Common Ground" in Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease, eds., *Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction*, pp. 47-64.

- Watch 'An Inconvenient Truth' (1995)

Wednesday, February 1

- Bron Taylor, "The Sacred, Reverence for Life, and Environmental Ethics in America" pp. 248-261

(Recommended)

- Lucas Johnston, Chapter 8, "Stories of Partnership: Interfaith Efforts Toward Sustainability"

Friday, February 3

- Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, Introduction and Chapters 1 & 2

-----Reading Response Due-----

Unit 3: Approaches to Environmental Ethics: Wilderness and Other-Than-Human Rights

Week 6:

Monday, February 6

-William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," in W. Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground* (Norton, 1996), pp. 69-89

-Ronald Sandler, "Environmental Virtue Ethics: Value, Normativity, and Right Action" pp.223-233

(Recommended)

-Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Wednesday, February 8

- Immanuel Kant: "Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth"

(Recommended)

- Christopher Stone, "Should Trees Have Standing: Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects"

-Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, Introduction

Friday, February 10

- Marc Beckoff and Jessica Pierce, *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals*. Introduction.
- Eileen Christ, "Ecocide and the Extinction of Animal Minds." In Beckoff, Marc. *Ignoring Nature No More: The Case for Compassionate Conservation*.

Week 7:

Monday, February 13

- Peter Singer, "The Animal Liberation Movement"

(Recommended)

- Carl Safina, *Beyond Words*. pp. 1-41

Unit 4: Approaches to Environmental Ethics: Deep Ecology and Eco-Feminism

Wednesday, February 15

- Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement." *Inquiry* 16, no 1 (1973): 95-100
- Robert Sessions, "Deep Ecology versus Ecofeminism: Healthy Differences or Incompatible Philosophies?" *Hypatia* 6.1 (1991): 90-107.

Wednesday, February 15

- Bill Devall and George Sessions, "Chapter 38: Deep Ecology." *Technology and Values: Essential Readings*. N.p.: Blackwell Publishind, 2010.
- Salleh, Ariel Kay. "Deeper than Deep Ecology." *Environmental Ethics* 6.4 (1984).

Friday, February 17

- Bron Taylor, "Deep Ecology and its Social Philosophy: A Critique. Pp.269-299.
- Carolyn Merchant, "Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory" pp.77-83

-----Reading Response Due-----

*****Review Essay Due Today*****

Week 8:

Monday, February 20

- Selections from Carol Adams *The Sexual Politics of Meat*
- Val Plumwood, From "Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism" pp.92-108

(Recommended)

- Karen Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism." *Environmental Ethics* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 125-146.

Unit 5: Approaches to Environmental Ethics: Issues of Environmental Injustice

Wednesday, February 22

- Terry Tempest Williams “Clan of the One Breasted Woman”
- Robert Bullard, “Addressing Urban Transportation Equity in the United States” pp.141-152

(Recommended)

- Selections from Stephanie Malin, *The Price of Nuclear Power: Uranium Communities and Environmental Justice (Nature, Society, and Culture)*

-In class video clips from *Gasland* and *FoodInc.*

Friday, February 24

- Lois Bryson et. al, “Turning Public Issues Into Private Troubles: Lead Contamination, Domestic Labor, and the Exploitation of Women,” pp. 127-140
- Alison Alkon and Kari Norgaard, “Breaking the Food Chains: An Investigation of Food Justice Activism,” pp.111-126

-----Reading Response Due-----
Reading responses from this week should include some analysis of the documentaries *Gasland* and *FoodInc.*

Week 9:

Monday, February 27

- Robert Figueroa, “Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism” from *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*
- Selections from Rachel Stein, *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice*

Wednesday, March 1

- J. Fox, “Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia: An Environmental Sacrifice Zone”
- Thomas Beamish, “Silent Spill: The Organization of an Industrial Crisis” pp.211-224

Review for Midterm

-Each student should be prepared to turn in at the beginning of class a typed and printed list of five questions that they would like to go over during the midterm review on Wednesday. These will count as part of your participation grade.

Friday, March 3

MIDTERM EXAM

-----NO CLASS March 6-10 for SPRING BREAK-----

Unit 6: Approaches to Environmental Ethics: Radical Environmentalism

Week 10:

Monday, March 13

- Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature, Spirituality, and the Planetary Future*. Chapter 4, “Radical Environmentalism” pp. 71-102

(Recommended)

- Selected readings from *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. “Radical Environmentalism” and “Earth First and the Earth Liberation Front”
- Watch Dave Foreman Lecture at UW Oshkosh (1990)

Wednesday, March 15

- Michael Martin, “Ecosabotage and Civil Disobedience” pp. 291-310
- Dave Foreman with Edward Abbey and T.O. Hellenbach, “Why Monkeywrench?” pp. 7-23

Friday, March 17

- Bron Taylor, “Resistance: Do the Means Justify the Ends?”

(Recommended)

- Bron Taylor, “Earth Religion and Radical Religious Reformation”

-----Reading Response Due-----

Unit 6: Approaches to Environmental Ethics: Consumerism and Capitalism

Week 11:

Monday, March 20

- Karl Marx, Selections from *The German Ideology*
- Selections from Stephen Vogel, *Thinking Like A Mall*

Wednesday, March 22

- Bron Taylor, “Disney Worlds at War”
- Selections from Michael Huber, *Lifeblood*

Friday, March 24

- Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” (1968)
- Stephen Longo and Rebecca Clausen, “The Tragedy of the Commodity: The Overexploitation of the Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna Fishery” pp.53-73

(Recommended)

- Garrett Hardin, “Whose Common Future? Reclaiming the Commons”

Unit 7: Approaches to Environmental Ethics: Non-Western Approaches

Week 12:

Monday, March 27

- Lily de Silva, "The Buddhist Attitude Toward Nature"
- Selections from Stephanie Kaza, "Hooked"

Wednesday, March 29

- Starhawk, "Pagan Environmentalism: Principles of Unity," pp.655-658
- Bron Taylor, "Resacrilizing Earth: Environmental Paganism and the Restoration of Turtle Island"

(Recommended)

- From *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*: Kretch American Indians as 'First Ecologists'; F. Berkes, Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Friday, March 31

- Kyle Powys Whyte and Chris Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies"
- Mawil Y. Izzi Deen, "Islamic Environmental Ethics, Law, and Society," pp. 640-649

(Recommended)

- Selections from E. Anderson, *Ecologies of the Heart*

Unit 8: Approaches to Environmental Ethics: New Approaches

Week 13:

Monday, April 3

- James Lovelock, "The Gaia Hypothesis"
- Paul Thompson, "Philosophy of Technology and the Environment" pp.438-448

In Class Video on E-Waste

Wednesday, April 5

- Michael Pollan, "In Defense of Food"
- Ramachandra Guha, *Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique* pp.285-293

(Recommended)

- Engel, "Hunger, Duty, and Ecology: On What We Owe Starving Humans"

Friday, April 7

- Selections from Jake Kosek – *Understories*

(Recommended)

- Selections from Bruno Latour – *We Have Never Been Modern*

-----Reading Response Due-----

Week 14:

Monday, April 10

- Selections from Timothy Morton – *Hyperobjects or Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*
***** Project Presentations*****

Wednesday, April 12

- Selections from Donna Haraway – *Staying with the Trouble*
***** Project Presentations*****

Friday, April 14

- Selections from Donovan Schaefer – *Religious Affect*
*****Project Presentations*****

-----Reading Response Due-----

Week 15:

Monday, April 17

*****Project Presentations*****

- Reflections on Environmental Ethics

Please make sure all of your assignments to this point have been submitted and that you are caught up on all readings for the midterm exam.

-Each student should be prepared to turn in at the beginning of class a typed and printed list of five questions that they would like to go over during the midterm review on Wednesday. These will count as part of your participation grade.

Wednesday, April 19

- In class review for final exam – students should come prepared with a typed and printed list of five questions that will be turned in at the end of class. This will count as part of your participation grade.

*****Final Papers Due Today*****

Friday, April 21

- **NO CLASS – Reading Day**, Optional Review for Final Exam

*****FINAL EXAM*****
Time/Date: TBD