

REL 6183: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS, Spring 2013

Tues. 2/Thurs. 2-3, 112 Matherly

Instructor: Anna Peterson

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30-1:30, Thursdays 12:30-1:30, and by appointment.

DESCRIPTION

This course is a core seminar required for the Religion and Nature concentration within the Ph.D. program in the Department of Religion. It is also open to graduate students from other subfields in religion and from other departments, as long as they have some background in environmental studies, environmental philosophy, or religion and nature.

Readings and discussions will explore classic and contemporary theoretical approaches and models in environmental ethics, as well as the possibilities of teaching, applying, and critiquing these approaches. Some of the approaches and topics covered will include land ethics, theistic and non-theistic religious ethics, postmodernist critiques, evolutionary and ecological theory, ecofeminism, social ecology, bioregionalism, and others. Special attention will be paid to thinkers and debates within the discipline of religious studies, although readings will also come from philosophy, anthropology, environmental studies, education, ecology, and related fields.

Throughout the class, we will pay attention not only to theoretical issues but also to the real-world implications and applications of ethical theories. Thus we will explore areas such as environmental education, ecological restoration, and sustainable resource consumption, in addition to philosophically-oriented topics and readings. We will also discuss the process of teaching environmental ethics, at both university and secondary levels, in both practical and theoretical dimensions.

OBJECTIVES

1. Familiarize students with key texts, issues, approaches, and debates in environmental ethics, with particular attention to thinkers and issues related to Religious Studies;
2. Examine current trends and developments in environmental ethics, including critiques of earlier texts and models, as well as ongoing debates;
3. Think critically about the process and practice of teaching environmental ethics, at different levels ranging from elementary schools to college and university classes; and
4. Explore – and begin to answer – the challenge of applying ethical thinking and models to real-world environmental problems.

POLICIES, RULES, AND RESOURCES

1. *Attendance and reading:* This is a graduate seminar. I expect you to attend all meetings of the class, barring extraordinary circumstances, and to come prepared to discuss the reading at each and every class meeting.

Please note: I realize that students are human, have busy lives, and may occasionally miss a class due to less than extraordinary circumstances. Should that occur, you will be required to prepare a short (approx. 5 page) critical report on the reading for that day, due one week from the class you missed. This is not a punitive requirement but an effort to ensure that you complete and critically engage all assigned readings, which have been selected with care in order to provide you with the skills, resources, and background knowledge that you seek and require as scholars and teachers of environmental ethics.

2. *Handing in Assignments:* Place all papers in my mailbox in the Religion Department, 107 Anderson Hall. DO NOT slip them under the door or leave them on the door of my office, the main department office, or the teaching assistant's office. Please also keep a dated electronic copy of all your papers.

3. *Late or Make-Up Assignments:* You may receive an extension on an 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.

4. *Completion of All Assignments:* You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing for any assignment or requirement.

5. *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 or other device, although the instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. Repeat violations of these rules will result in dismissal from the class.

6. *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 university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~jtl/honor.html>. Any student demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in any assignment for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. *Accommodation for Disabilities:* Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

8. *Counseling Resources* available on campus for students:
a. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575

- b. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171
- c. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- d. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601

9. *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.

REQUIRED READINGS

Required Books

1. Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature* (Princeton, 2011) (0691150249)
2. Lisa Sideris, *Environmental Ethics, Ecological Theology, and Natural Selection* (Columbia University Press, 2003) (0231126611)
3. Julian Agyeman, *Sustainable Communities and the Challenge of Environmental Justice* (NYU, 2005) (0814707114)
4. Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Routledge, 1994) (041506810X)
5. Matthew Hall, *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (SUNY, 2011) (1438434286)
6. Wes Jackson, *Nature as Measure* (Counterpoint, 2011) (1582437009)
7. Anna Peterson, *Being Animal: Beasts and Boundaries in Nature Ethics* (Columbia University Press, 2013)
8. James Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine* (Pilgrim Press, 1996) (0829811001)
9. Bill Jordan, *The Sunflower Forest* (University of California Press, 2003) (0520233204)

Articles

1. Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," in *A Sand County Almanac* (Ballantine, 1949), pp. 237-264.
2. Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.
3. Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement." *Inquiry* 16, no 1 (1973): 95-100; http://www.ecology.ethz.ch/education/Readings_stuff/Naess_1973.pdf
4. Karen Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism." *Environmental Ethics* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 125-146.
5. William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," in W. Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground* (Norton, 1996), pp. 69-89
6. N. Katherine Hayles, "Searching for Common Ground" in Michael E. Soule and Gary Lease, eds., *Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction* (Island Press, 1995), pp. 47-64.
7. Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (Verso, 1990), pp. 67-85.
8. Rita Gross, "Toward a Buddhist Environmental Ethic," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65, No. 2 (Summer, 1997): 333-353
9. Joanna Macy, "The Greening of the Self." From *Dharma Gaia* (Parallax Press, 1990), pp. 53-63.

10. Gary Snyder, "Nets of Beads, Webs of Cells." From *A Place in Space* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1995), pp. 65-73.
11. Paul Tillich, "Nature and Sacrament," from *The Protestant Era* (University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp 94-112.
12. Anthony Weston, "Non-Anthropocentrism in a Thoroughly Anthropocentrized World," *The Trumpeter* 8, no. 3 (1991); <http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/contents/v8.3/weston.html>
13. Jim Cheney and Anthony Weston, "Environmental Ethics as Environmental Etiquette," *Environmental Ethics* 21, no. 2 (summer 1999): 115-134.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. *Active participation* in all class discussions, including completion of all assigned readings by the date due. 10% of total grade.
2. *Take-Home Exam* on course readings (5-7 pages). Due Feb. 5 by 4:00 pm. 20% of grade.
3. *Review Essay*: Read and discuss together at least four recent articles from *Environmental Ethics* or other scholarly journals, to be chosen in consultation with the instructor. (8-10 pages). Due Feb. 28 by 4:00 pm. 20% of grade.
4. *Syllabus*. Design a syllabus for a course in environmental ethics at the college, community college, or seminary level, or a curriculum for environmental ethics materials in elementary, middle, or high school classes. Clarify the level for which your curriculum/syllabus is intended and include a list of course/class objectives and a rationale and explanation for your choices of readings, assignments, and activities (5-7 pages). Due March 28 by 4:00 pm. 20% of grade.
5. *Final Exam*, held during finals week. 30% of grade.

SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic/Assignment</u>
Tues. 1/7	Introduction to the class
Thurs. 1/9	Religion and environmental ethics: White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis"
Tues. 1/14	Ecocentrism: Leopold, "The Land Ethic"; Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep."
Thurs. 1/16	Biocentrism: Taylor, <i>Respect for Nature</i>
Tues. 1/21	Taylor, <i>Respect for Nature</i>
Thurs. 1/23	Taylor, <i>Respect for Nature</i>
Tues. 1/28	Environmental ethics and science: Sideris, <i>Environmental Ethics</i>

Thurs. 1/30 Sideris, *Environmental Ethics*

Tues. 2/4 Sideris, *Environmental Ethics*

* Take home exam due Wed. Feb. 5 by 4:00 pm *

Thurs. 2/6 Environmental justice: Agyeman, *Sustainable Communities*

Tues. 2/11 Agyeman, *Sustainable Communities*

Thurs. 2/13 Ecofeminism: Warren, "The Power and Promise"

Tues. 2/18 Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*

Thurs. 2/20 Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*

Tues. 2/25 Bioregionalism: Jackson, *Nature as Measure*

Thurs. 2/27 Jackson, *Nature as Measure*

** Review essay due Friday, 2/28 by 4:00 pm *

Spring break: March 3-7

Tues. 3/11 Philosophical botany: Hall, *Plants as Persons*

Thurs. 3/13 Hall, *Plants as Persons*

Tues. 3/18 Animals and environmental ethics: Peterson, *Being Animal*

Thurs. 3/20 Peterson, *Being Animal*

Tues. 3/25 Buddhism: Gross, Macy, and Snyder

Thurs. 3/27 Theocentric ethics: Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine*

* Syllabus due Friday, March 28 by 4:00 pm *

Tues. 4/1 Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine*

Thurs. 4/3 Tillich, "Nature as Sacrament"

Tues. 4/8 Social construction of nature: Cronon, Hayles, and Williams essays

Thurs. 4/10 Environmental practice: Weston, "Non-Anthropocentrism"; Cheney and Weston, "Environmental Etiquette"

Tues. 4/15 Ecological Restoration: Jordan, *The Sunflower Forest*

Thurs. 4/17 Jordan, *The Sunflower Forest*

Tues. 4/22 Jordan, *The Sunflower Forest*

Finals week: April 26-May 2