

Syllabus, PHIL*2070
Philosophy of the Environment
Winter 2012

Instructor

Dr. Stefan Linquist
Office: MacKinnon (MACK) 358
Hours: Mon. & Wed. 5:30-6:00 (or by appointment)
Email: linquist@uoguelph.ca

Lecture

Monday & Wednesday
4:30- 5:20
Thornborough (THRN) 1200

Teaching Assistants

Pat McHugh imchugh@uoguelph.ca
Martin King mking04@uoguelph.ca
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Sections

1 & 2
3 & 4
5 & 6
7 & 8
9 & 10

office / hrs

MACK 328/ Wednesday, 5:30-6:30
MACK 362/ Wednesday 1:00-2:00
MACK 368/ Thursday, 5:30-6:30
MACK 368/ Friday, 10:30-11:30
Hutt 124 / Tuesday, 11:00-12:00

Course Description

This course will critically examine popular beliefs about the environment and humanity's relationship to it. We begin with the foundations of modern environmentalism. This movement was grounded on an image of Mother Nature as an interconnected whole whose components hang together in delicate balance. Human progress and development supposedly threaten the balance of Nature. We will consider whether this picture withstands philosophical and scientific scrutiny. The second part of the course investigates recent debates over climate change. Often, people or governments who are reluctant to take action to prevent climate change are disparaged as irresponsible or unscientific. What do these accusations say about public perceptions of science and policy? How accurate is the public understanding of climate change? Does it matter? The third part of the course will investigate economic approaches to environmental decision making. For example, is it possible to quantify the value of biodiversity or the cost of pollution in economic terms? Or, does an economic framework overlook important ethical and aesthetic reasons for valuing nature?

Learning Objectives

- By engaging with readings and other course materials, students will develop skills in philosophical analysis and critical thinking.
- By completing course assignments, students will develop skills in clear, argumentative writing.
- Through attending lectures and tutorials, students will become conversant in the central concepts and theories of environmental philosophy.

Reading

All of the readings for this course, as well as notes, assignments and supplementary materials, are available on the course website. www.biophilosophy.ca/Teaching/Philosophy2070.html (You can also find the site by going to www.biophilosophy.ca – look under “Teaching” and follow the course link).

Assessment

Weekly assignments	25%	Midterm 1	20%
Participation	5%	Midterm 2	20%
Skeptical Env. Assignment	5%	Final Paper	25%

Grading and general expectations

Readings

Students are expected to show up to each class having read (at least once) the reading assignment for that day. Lectures are designed to complement these readings by providing background, emphasizing key concepts and arguments, and (most importantly) engaging in a critical analysis of the material. Therefore, it is important for students to be familiar with the focal reading when participating in class.

Weekly Assignments

There are ten weekly reflection assignments. Each assignment is worth approximately 3 % of the final grade. The two lowest assignments will be dropped from the final grade (best 8 of 10). Each assignment will be graded as either an "A" (3/3), a "B" (2/3), a "C" (1/3) or "D" (0/3). Roughly, an "A" assignment displays comprehension of the relevant material, as well as the students' critical analysis of that material. A "B" assignment displays comprehension but inadequate critical reflection. A "C" grade demonstrates effort, but inadequate analysis and comprehension. A "D" assignment displays inadequate effort.

Weekly assignments are due in class, at the beginning of class. You can also submit them by email. Electronic submissions must be sent to both the TA and professor prior to class. Please make sure to include your TA's name and section number at the top of the assignment, or else there is no guarantee that your grade will be recorded. If you submit by email, please state your name and the assignment number in the header of your email (e.g. "Barney Rubble, Assignment 4"). All electronic assignments must be in either ms word or rtf (rich text) format.

Participation

Participation grades are assigned at the end of semester as a result of consultation between the instructor and TAs. This grade is based on the students' participation in philosophical discussion, in class or during tutorial.

Midterms

Practice questions will be provided in the review session prior to each midterm. These questions are designed to help students finalize their preparation for the midterm. Students are expected to have already undertaken preparation for the exam before the day of the review session, so that the practice questions can serve as a mock exam.

Final paper

The final paper assignment for this course will be provided no later than week nine. Papers are due during the exam period, on April 16th. Students will receive a set of guidelines to assist in writing these papers, and it is essential that these guidelines are followed.

Lateness Policy

All weekly assignments must be submitted in class on the due dates or before class (electronically) to both TA and instructor. No assignments will be accepted late without documentation or otherwise legitimate justification. The deadline for electronic submission of the final exam is similarly firm.

Plagiarism

Most students think they understand what plagiarism is, but in my experience this is often not so. Students are therefore directed to this online tutorial on plagiarism, and are responsible for having completed it (<http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/tutorials/plagiarism-tutorial>). Evidence of plagiarism will result in the submission of an academic misconduct report to the Assistant Dean of Arts.

For additional information about student rights and responsibilities, as outlined by UofG College of Arts, please visit the Course Info section of the webpage:

www.biophilosophy.ca/Teaching/phil2070courseinfo.html

Course Outline

Part 1: A Critical Look at the Foundations of Environmentalism.

Week 1 – Introduction to environmental philosophy.

Jan. 09 Introduction to course themes and expectations.

Jan. 11 *Read:* Select any environmental organization and read their online materials.
Submit: Assignment 1 – survey of an environmental organization.

Tutorial: Introduction.

Week 2 – The Land Ethic: Is it justified by the Moral Expansion argument?

Jan. 16 *Read:* Aldo Leopold, Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic (p. 163- 172).

Jan. 18 *Read:* Baird Callicott, Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic (p. sections I-IX; p. 173-181)
Submit: Assignment2 – Analysis of Calicott’s Moral Expansion Argument.

Tutorial: Discuss Leopold’s Moral Expansion argument.
Receive Skeptical Environmentalism assignment.
Determine working groups.

Week 3 – Other arguments in defense of the Land Ethic.

Jan. 23 *Read:* Mark Sagoff, Animal Liberation & Enviro. Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce (p. 38-44).

Jan. 25 *Read:* J. Kricher, Nothing endures except change (p. 165-174).
Submit: Assignment 3 – Analysis of Kricher.

Tutorial: Research Skeptical Environmentalism projects.

Week 4 – Deep ecology and its critics.

Jan. 30 *Read:* Arne Naess, The World of Concrete Contents (p. 43-55).

Feb. 01 *Read:* Elliott Sober, Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism (p. 173- 187).

Tutorial: ****Present & submit skeptical environmentalist group projects****

Week 5 – Should nature be conserved for its aesthetic value?

Feb. 06 *Read:* Sober , Philosophical Probs for Environmentalism “the demarcation problem” (187- 191).

Feb. 08 *Read:* Yuirko Saito, The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature (p. 101- 111).
Submit: Assignment 4 on environmental aesthetics.

Tutorial: TA presents and leads discussion of meaning of “natural.”

Week 6 – Review of Part 1 and exam.

Feb. 13 Review class

Feb. 15 ****First Midterm Exam****

No Tutorials this week.

Part 2: Climate Change and the Scientific Method

Week 7 – What is at issue in the climate change controversy?

Feb. 27 *Read:* G. Monbiot, Introduction (p. ix-xiii) & Chapter 1, A Faustian pact (p. 1-19).

Feb. 29 *Read:* G. Monbiot, The denial industry (p. 20-42).

Submit: Assignment 5 - Find and analyze a climate change article or website.

Tutorial: Discuss Assignment 5.

Week 8 – How accurate is the public understanding of climate science?

Mar. 05 ****Guest lecture on the Science of Climate Change ****

Mar. 07 *Read:* Woodward & Goodstein, Conduct, misconduct and the structure of science (p. 12-22).

Submit: Assignment 6- Reflection on scientific method.

Tutorial: Discuss of public understanding of climate change science.

Week 9- How justified are concerns over climate change?

Mar. 12 *Read:* E. Crist, Beyond the climate change crisis (p. 29-55).

Mar. 14 Guest lecture on science and society.

Submit: Assignment 7 – Reflection on Crist.

Tutorial: Paper topics assigned. Discuss how to write a philosophical paper.

Part 3: Economic analysis and environmental values.

Week 10 – The economic approach to environmental decision making

Mar. 19 *Read:* W.F. Baxter, Economics and Ecology & People or Penguins (p. 108-118)

Mar. 21 *Read:* M. Sagoff, Why Political questions are not all economic. (p. 24-45)

Submit: Assignment 8 - Cost benefit analysis.

Tutorial: Discuss economic approach to env. decision making.

Week 11 – The economic approach to valuing nature.

Mar. 26 *Read:* Sagoff, Can we put a Price on nature's services? (p. 87-109)

Mar. 28 *Read:* Sagoff, The concept of place in environmental ethics. (p. 157-174)

Submit: Assignment 9 – Reflection on Sagoff's The concept of place.

Tutorial: Arboretum visit. Submit final paper outlines.

Week 12 – Review of Parts 2 & 3 and exam.

Apr. 02 Review Class. *Submit:* Assignment 10 - Reflection on arboretum visit.

Apr. 04 – ****Second Exam****

Tutorial: receive feedback on final paper outlines

April 16 – Term paper (take home exam) due at 12:00 pm. Submit to prof by email in Ms word or rtf format. Make sure to follow paper writing guidelines (as specified on handout , available on course website).