

**Syllabus, PHIL\*2070**  
**Philosophy of the Environment**  
**Winter 2017**

**Instructor**

Dr. Stefan Linquist  
 office / hrs: MACK 358 / Wed. 5:00-6:00 or by app.  
 email: [linquist@uoguelph.ca](mailto:linquist@uoguelph.ca)

**Lecture**

Monday / Wednesday  
 11:30-12:20  
 Rozanski 103

**Sections**

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

**Teaching Assistants**

Sofian Aoumari  
 Thomas Doerkse  
 Yanis Aoumari  
 Josh Grant-Young  
 Patricia Pajunen

**Email**

[saouamri@mail.uoguelph.ca](mailto:saouamri@mail.uoguelph.ca)  
[tdoerkse@uoguelph.ca](mailto:tdoerkse@uoguelph.ca)  
[yaouamri@mail.uoguelph.ca](mailto:yaouamri@mail.uoguelph.ca)  
[jgrantyo@uoguelph.ca](mailto:jgrantyo@uoguelph.ca)  
[ppajunen@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ppajunen@uoguelph.ca)

**office / hrs**

MACK 324/ Tuesday 12:00-1:00  
 MACK 324/Thursday 2:30-3:30  
 MACK 336/Thursday 12:00-1:00  
 MACK 361/Thursday 12:00-1:00  
 MACK 360 /Monday 1:00-2:00

**Course Description**

This course critically examines 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 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? 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 engaging in group research projects, students will develop generally applicable research skills.
- By completing reflection 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.

**Course Website**

All course materials (assignments, readings, notes, etc.) are available on the course webpage: [www.biophilosophy.ca/Teaching/Philosophy2070.html](http://www.biophilosophy.ca/Teaching/Philosophy2070.html) . You also easily find the site by going to my homepage: [www.biophilosophy.ca](http://www.biophilosophy.ca) and looking under Teaching. Note that Courselink will be used to submit reflection assignments and for grades only. For readings, notes, assignments, and other materials please visit the course website.

**Assessment**

Reflections	30%	Midterm	20%	Participation	10%
Group projects	10%	Final	30%		

## **Reflection Questions**

There will be six sets of reflection questions. Their purpose is to help guide you through the course material and promote the development of your critical thinking and writing skills. All reflections must be submitted on time using Dropbox in CourseLink.

## **Group Projects**

There will be three group projects. They involve a short written component and a presentation in tutorial. These assignments help r students to get to know one another, they assist in the development of writing skills, and they provide practice in discussing abstract concepts.

## **Midterm and Final**

There are two short exams in this course. Their purpose is to help students get a “big picture” understanding of the topics covered in this course. The final exam is cumulative, but will mostly cover material from the second half of the course.

## **Participation**

A participation mark will be assigned by your TA at the end of the semester to reward students for engaging in tutorial discussions and for speaking up in class.

## **Student Centered Learning**

Students are expected to take responsibility for what they learn in this course. The instructor and TAs will present you with materials (online, in tutorial, and in lecture) that are designed to inspire, challenge and inform you. But ultimately you must take charge of your own intellectual growth and development.

## **Conduct**

Many of the topics discussed in this class have deep personal significance for students. We must all therefore make an effort to treat one another with respect, separating our assessment of ideas and arguments from our opinions about the individuals who might hold them.

## **Readings**

Students are expected to show up to each class having read the material and completed the assignment for that day (if there is one). All readings are available on the course website.

## **Lectures**

Lectures are designed to complement readings by providing background, emphasizing key concepts and arguments. We should take these opportunities to explore questions together, even if they deviate sometimes from the lecture plan. Any question you have is fair game and I will do my best to answer it.

## **Class Notes online**

For each weekly topic notes are posted on the course website. These are designed to assist with comprehension of the readings and in the development of philosophical skills. They are not a substitute for lecture. In lecture, we cover some topics in greater depth than in the notes.

## **Plagiarism**

Evidence of plagiarism will result in submission of an academic misconduct report to the Associate Dean and a potential blemish on your permanent academic record. Just don't risk it. If you are having trouble with an assignment, please see the instructor or TA for assistance.

Please see [this link](#) for additional information about student rights and responsibilities, as outlined by UofG College of Arts.

## Course Outline

### Week 1 – Introduction to environmental philosophy.

Jan. 09 *Introduction to course themes and expectations.*

Jan. 11 *Philosophical methods: Argument reconstruction and analysis*

Tutorial: Meet your TA and discuss expectations.

### Week 2 – The Land Ethic: Is it justified by the moral extensionism argument?

Jan. 16 *What is the Land Ethic?*

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

Jan. 18 *Critique of the Moral Expansion argument.*

*Read:* Callicott, B. Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic (sections i-ix; p. 173-181)

Tutorial: Form groups for Skeptical Environmentalist group project (due Week 4 tutorial).  
Discuss Leopold's argument.

### Week 3 – Other arguments for and against the Land Ethic.

Jan. 23 *Is the Land Ethic in conflict with human and animal welfare?*

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

Jan. 24 Submit Reflection 1 (via Courselink).

Jan. 25 *Can the Land Ethic survive the death of ecophilism?*

*Read:* J. Kricher, Nothing endures except change (p. 165-174).

Tutorial: Discuss Reflection 1.

### Week 4 – Deep ecology and its critics.

Jan. 30 *When environmentalism turns against science.*

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

Feb. 01 *How deep is to Deep Ecology really?*

*Read:* Dobson Deep Ecology: Ethics as a code of conduct (p. 271-276).

Tutorial: Present Skeptical Environmentalism projects – write-ups due in tutorial.  
Form new groups for Bottled Water Group Projects (due Week 8 tutorial).

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

Feb. 06 *Cuddly critters and scenic landscapes: beauty as a source of conservation duty.*

*Read:* Newman et al. (2017) Should biodiversity be conserved for its aesthetic value?

Feb. 07 Submit Reflection 2 (via Courselink).

Feb. 08 *Conserving biodiversity for aesthetic reasons.*

Tutorial: Discuss Reflection 2.

## **Week 6 – Review and exam.**

Feb. 13 Review class

Feb. 15 **\*\*Midterm\*\***

No Tutorials this week.

## **Week 7 – Sense and nonsense in the climate change controversy.**

Feb. 27 *Battle lines in the climate change debate.*

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

Feb. 28 Submit Reflection 3.

Mar. 01 *Three sensible ways of questioning climate change.*

Read: Jameson, D. Ethics, Public Policy and Global Warming (p. 371-379).

Tutorial: Discuss Reflection 3.

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

Mar. 06 *Popular misconceptions about the scientific method.*

Read: Woodward & Goodstein, Conduct, misconduct and the structure of science .

Mar. 08 *Trust, mistrust, and scientific authority.*

Read: Whyte, K.P. and Crease, R.P. Trust, expertise, and the philosophy of science.

Tutorial: Present group projects on bottled water.

## **Week 9- Is the precautionary principle an adequate guide for making decisions?**

Mar. 13 *Why environmentalists love the precautionary principle.*

Read: Newman et al. (2017) The Precautionary Principle (part 1)

Mar 14. Submit Reflection 4.

Mar. 15 *Why environmentalists should avoid the precautionary principle.*

Read: Newman et al. (2017) The Precautionary Principle (part 2)

Tutorial: Discuss Reflection 4.

## **Week 10 – The economic approach to environmental decision making**

Mar. 20 *How do economists think about preferences?*

Read: Baxter, W.F. Economics and Ecology- People or Penguins? (p. 108-118)

Mar. 21 Submit Reflection 5.

Mar22 *Is the aggregation of preferences a good procedure for decision making?*

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

Tutorial: Discuss reflection 5.

**Week 11 – The economic approach to valuing nature.**

Mar. 27 *How economists attempt to assign a value to nature.*

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

Mar 28: Submit Reflection 6.

Mar. 29 *The questionable idea of an ecosystem service.*

Tutorial: Discuss Reflection 6.

**Week 12 – Class Summary and Exam Review**

Apr. 03 *A place-based approach to environmental ethics.*

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

Apr. 05 *Review session for final exam.*

Tutorial: Question and answer session for final exam.

**Final**

Apr. 18 **\*\*Final exam\*\***