

UNIVERSITY of GUELPH

PHIL*2070

Philosophy of the Environment
Syllabus, Winter 2021

Instructor

Dr. Stefan Linquist
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Virtual Office Hours

Dr Linquist will hold an open office hour, between 1:00-2:00 pm each Monday, using Microsoft Teams. The link will be posted under “Announcements” in Courselink each Monday. Contact him by email if you need to meet at another time.

Lectures

Lectures will be asynchronous this semester. Each week in lieu of lecture, written notes will be posted on Courselink. These notes highlight and explain important concepts in the readings, but are not a substitute for the readings. Often, written notes will be supplemented with short videos, also available via Courselink in the Announcements section.

Online Tutorials / Discussions

Tutorial groups/discussions will meet synchronously each week using Microsoft Teams. These meetings are an important opportunity for students to discuss course themes and ideas. They are also your main contact point with the course. Students are expected to attend and participate in these sessions and will be graded on their participation. **Students should get to know their TA.** Your TA is the primary contact for questions about the course.

Teaching Assistants	Tutorial Section	Day	Time	TA's Email
Camille Irvine	T01	W	2:30 - 3:20	irvinec@uoguelph.ca
Camille Irvine	T02	W	3:30 - 4:20	
Lukas Nicholson	T03	W	4:30 - 5:20	lnicho03@uoguelph.ca
Lukas Nicholson	T04	TH	2:30 - 3:20	
Brian Gilmour	T05	TH	3:30 – 4:20	bgilmo01@uoguelph.ca
Brian Gilmour	T06	TH	4:30 - 5:20	

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 the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe how environmental problems arise and grow, often due to a failure of coordinated action.
- Critically evaluate ethical arguments for the conservation of species and ecosystems.
- Distinguish a scientific/factual claim from value claim and apply the appropriate scrutiny to each.
- Understand the reasons that certain scientific claims are trustworthy and develop strategies for assessing the reliability of scientific experts.
- Make informed judgments about the use and limits of economic tools for evaluating environmental “goods and services” and for making environmental decisions.
- Describe some of the approaches to environmental decision-making developed by some Canadian First Nations and contrast them with western/settler approaches.
- Write a clear argumentative paper on a topic that they have selected.

Assignments/evaluation

Quizzes (25%). There will be five quizzes taken online using the lockdown browser (without video). The aim of these quizzes is to encourage you to carefully read and the required readings and to test your comprehension.

Paper writing assignments (60%). Students will submit five paper-writing assignments covering different stages of the writing process:

Assignment 1: identifying and reconstructing an argument (5%).

Assignment 2: argument reconstruction plus rationalizing premises (10%).

Assignment 3: argument reconstruction, premise rationalization, plus generating a response (15%).

Assignment 4: find a research topic (5%).

Assignment 5: write an entire philosophical essay of approximately 1,500 words (25%).

Participation (15%). Students are expected to attend at least 10 weekly Teams meetings with their TA and fellow discussion group members. The best policy is to have your camera on and actively participate, for example asking and responding to questions. Students receive approximately 1.5% of their grade for each meeting in which they attend and participate. It is not expected that you participate in every meeting, but nor can you “free ride” on the contributions of other students.

Course Materials

Readings for this course are mostly academic articles, all available on Courselink.

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.

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. Students are expected to watch [this video](#) explaining what plagiarism is, and take [this online tutorial](#).

Course Outline

Week 1 (Jan. 11-15): Environmental problems at local, regional, and global scales.

Reading: Guelph Mercury Tribune article "Almost a sense of panic" March 7, 2020.
Switzer, D. (2019) "Getting off the (water) Bottle." *Ethics, Policy & Env.* 22: p. 331-48.
Tutorial: Meet TA and classmates, discuss protocols.

Week 2 (Jan. 18– 22): Why humans knowingly destroy their environment: the principle of rational depletion.

Reading: Hardin, G. (1968) "The Tragedy of the commons."
Watch: documentary on deforestation in Businga.
Tutorial: Discuss the phenomenon of rational depletion and possible solutions.

Week 3 (Jan.25-29): The appeal of a Land Ethic.

Quiz 1: January 25.
Reading: Leopold, A. (1949), "The land ethic." Excerpt from *A Sand County Almanac*.
Tutorial: Introduction to argument reconstruction.

Week 4 (Feb. 1-5): Extending moral standing to animals.

Reading: Singer, P. (2009), "Speciesism and moral status." *Metaphilosophy* 40:567-81.
Tutorial: Review argument reconstruction/ discuss Singer article.
First writing assignment: Due on February 7.

Week 5 (Feb 8-12): Should moral standing be extended to species and ecosystems?

Reading: Callicott, B. (date),
Tutorial: Discuss readings.
Quiz 2: February 12.

Week 6 Feb. 15-20): Winter Break

Week 7 (Feb. 22-27): Questioning the wilderness ideal.

Reading: Cronon, W. (1995), "The trouble with wilderness," from *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. Norton & co.
Tutorial: Discuss readings.
Second writing assignment: Due on February 27

Week 8 (Mar. 1-5): Is there a balance of nature?

Reading: Kricher, J. (1998), "Nothing Endures but Change: Ecology's Newly Emerging Paradigm." *Northeastern Naturalist* 5: 165-74.
Watch: *Adam Curtis (date) All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace. Part 2: The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts.*
Tutorial: Discuss third writing assignment.
Quiz 3: March 5.

Week 9 (Mar. 8-12): Can conservation be justified on aesthetic grounds?

Reading: Newman, Varner and Linquist (2017), "Should biodiversity be conserved for its aesthetic value?" *Defending Biodiversity*, Cambridge University Press.

Tutorial: Discuss readings/ writing assignments.

Third writing assignment: Due March 12.

Week 10 (Mar. 15-20): A Canadian First Nations view on human/nature relations.

Reading: Atleo, E. Richard (2004), "Heshook-sh Tsawalk: Everything is One," in *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*, UBC Press.

Cote, Charlotte (2010), "The Makah harvest a whale," in *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*, UBC Press.

Tutorial: Discuss readings before quiz.

Quiz 4: March 20.

Week 11 (Mar. 22-27): The role of trust in science.

Reading: Whyte, K.P. and Crease, R.P. (2010), Trust, expertise, and the philosophy of science." *Synthese* 177: 411-425.

Tutorial: Discuss strategies for choosing a final paper topic.

Week 12 (Mar. 29-Apr.2): Economic approaches to valuing our environment.

Reading: Sagoff, M. (1994), "Four dogmas of environmental economics" *Environmental Values* 3: 285- 310.

Tutorial: Discuss readings.

Fourth writing assignment: Due April 2nd.

Week 13 (Apr.5-9): Place-based environmental value.

Reading: Sagoff, M. (2008), "Settling America: The concept of place in environmental ethics," in *The Economy of the Earth : Philosophy, Law, and the Env.* Cambridge U. Press.

Coulthard, G. (2010) "Place against empire: understanding indigenous anti-colonialism." *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action*, 4(2): 79-83.

Tutorial: Discuss readings before Quiz 5.

Quiz 5: April 9

Fifth writing assignment (final paper): due April 16, 11:59 pm.

No final exam.

University Statements

Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars. Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/index.shtml>

Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student. When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance and not later than the 40th Class Day. For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas> For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website <https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm>

Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community-faculty, staff, and students-to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff, and students have the

responsibility of supporting an environment that encourages academic integrity. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

Illness

The University will not normally require verification of illness (doctor's notes) for fall 2020 or winter 2021 semester courses. However, requests for Academic Consideration may still require medical documentation as appropriate

Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs. Academic Calendars <https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>

Online Behaviour

Inappropriate online behaviour will not be tolerated. Examples of inappropriate online behaviour include:

- Posting inflammatory messages about your instructor or fellow students
- Using obscene or offensive language online
- Copying or presenting someone else's work as your own
- Adapting information from the Internet without using proper citations or references
- Buying or selling term papers or assignments
- Posting or selling course materials to course notes websites
- Having someone else complete your quiz or completing a quiz for/with another student
- Stating false claims about lost quiz answers or other assignment submissions
- Threatening or harassing a student or instructor online
- Discriminating against fellow students, instructors and/or TAs
- Using the course website to promote profit-driven products or services
- Attempting to compromise the security or functionality of the learning management system
- Sharing your user name and password
- Recording lectures without the permission of the instructor

Privacy

By enrolling in a course, unless explicitly stated and brought forward to their instructor, it is assumed that students agree to the possibility of being recorded during lecture, seminar or other “live” course activities, whether delivery is in-class or online/remote.

If a student prefers not to be distinguishable during a recording, they may:

1. turn off their camera
2. mute their microphone
3. edit their name (e.g., initials only) upon entry to each session
4. use the chat function to pose questions.

Students who express to their instructor that they, or a reference to their name or person, do not wish to be recorded may discuss possible alternatives or accommodations with their instructor.