

PHIL*4040
Advanced Philosophy of the Environment
Fall 2010

Tuesday & Thursday: 1:00 - 02:20 pm.
[MACK](#), Room 316

Stefan Linquist
Office: Mackinnon 358
Hours: Thursday, 10:00 – 12:00 (or by app.)

Course description

Why should society conserve biodiversity and at what cost? Environmentalists argue that biodiversity is essential for ecological stability, that it provides valuable ecosystem services, and that it offers economic and aesthetic benefits. Some also argue that biodiversity is intrinsically valuable or that organisms, species and ecosystems have moral rights. This course will critically evaluate environmentalist claims in light of scientific, economic and ethical considerations. We will explore competing accounts of what biodiversity is and why it should be conserved.

Course materials

McClaurin J. & Sterelny K (2008) [What is Biodiversity](#). University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

A collection of articles are available on my website: www.biophilosophy.ca under “Teaching” “Philosophy 4040”.

Assignments & grading

Weekly reflections: 30%

These are due at 6:00 pm on the **evening before** an assigned reading is discussed in class. There will be approximately one reflection due each week. These assignments should be no longer than one page. Do not summarize the target article. Instead, identify some issue or argument raised in the paper and briefly discuss it. Use these assignments to prepare for seminar discussions.

First Group Project : 20% (Due October 14)

Working in groups of 3-4, students will design and execute research projects. The first project is to answer the question, “What is the environmentalist agenda and how is it defended?” Students will devise a strategy for researching this question (e.g. sampling a particular body of literature) and for formulating an answer (e.g. a coauthored article, a research report, a website, etc).

Second Group Project : 20%

This project will follow the same format as above, except it aims to answer the question, “Are there multiple, competing conceptions of biodiversity?”

Final paper/ take home exam: 20%

Students will write a short philosophical paper (6-8 pages) on any topic relating to environmental philosophy. Due near the end of exam period

Participation: 10%

Outline

Week 1: The environmentalist agenda.

Sept. 14 Discuss reading:

Coufal (1997) "Biodiversity and environmental ethics: a personal reflection." *Journal of the American Water Resources Association*. 33(1): 13- 19.

Sept. 16 Discuss reading:

Ehrlich and Ehrlich (1992), "The value of biodiversity", *Ambio* 21(3): 219-226.

Week 2: Biological criticisms of biodiversity.

Sept. 21 Select one of the following readings to discuss:

- (1) Ghilarov, A. (1996) "What does 'biodiversity' mean –scientific problem or convenient myth? *TREE* 11(7): 304-306.
- (2) Angermeier P. (1994) "Does biodiversity include artificial diversity?" *Conservation Biology* 8(2): 600-602.

Sept. 23 First organizational meeting for group projects.

Week 3: Philosophical criticisms of Biodiversity I.

Sept. 28: Discuss reading:

Sarkar, S. (2002) "Defining biodiversity; defending biodiversity" *Monist*, 85(1): 131-155.

Sept. 30: Progress meeting for first group projects.

Week 4: Philosophical criticisms of Biodiversity II.

Oct 5: Discuss reading:

Shrader- Frechette K., & McCoy, E. (1994) "Biodiversity, biological uncertainty, and setting conservation priorities." *Biology and Philosophy* 9: 167-195.

Oct 7: Presentation and discussion of preliminary results for group projects.

Week 5: The 'species richness' account of biodiversity I.

Oct 12 Discuss reading:

What is Biodiversity? Chapter 1, Taxonomy Red in tooth and Claw (p. 1-26).

Oct. 14 Discuss reading:

What is Biodiversity? Chapter 2, Species: a Modest Proposal (p. 27- 41).

Due date for first group project

Week 6: The 'species richness' account of biodiversity II.

Oct. 19 Discuss reading:

What is Biodiversity? Chapter 3, Disparity and Diversity (p. 42-59).

Oct 21 Organizational meeting for second group project.

Week 7: The 'species richness' account of biodiversity III.

Oct 26 Select one of the following:

- (1) What is Biodiversity? Chapter 4, *Morphological Diversity* (p. 60-82).
- (2) What is Biodiversity? Chapter 5, *Developmental Diversity* (p. 85-105).
- (3) What is Biodiversity? Chapter 6, *Explorations in Ecospace* (p. 106-133).

Oct 28: open

Week 8: The 'species richness' account of biodiversity IV.

Nov. 02 Discuss reading:

What is Biodiversity? Chapter 7, *The Measurement Problem* (p. 132-149).

Nov. 04 Progress meeting for second group project.

Week 9: The 'species richness' account of biodiversity V.

Nov. 09 Discuss reading:

What is Biodiversity? Chapter 8, *The Evaluation Problem* (p. 149-171).

Nov. 11 Present and discuss preliminary results for second group projects.

Week 10: Why value biodiversity? The aesthetic argument.

Nov. 18 Discuss reading:

Sheppard, S (date unknown) "Beyond visual resource management" (p 149-172).

Nov. 20 Discuss reading:

Parsons & Daniel (2002) "Good Looking: In defense of scenic landscape aesthetics" (43-56).

Week 11: Why value biodiversity? The argument from food, medicines and fuels.

Nov 25 Discuss reading:

Firn, R. (2003) "Bioprospecting – why is it so unrewarding?" *Biodiversity and Conservation* 12: 207-216.

Nov. 27 Discuss reading:

Frisvold & Day-Rubenstein (2007) "Bioprospecting and biodiversity conservation: what happens when discoveries are made" *Arizona Law Review* 50(2): 547-576.

Week 12: Course wrap-up

Dec. 02: Group discussion / course evaluation.

Other important information

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> 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. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

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

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2010 courses, without academic penalty, is **Thursday November 4**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/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.

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins 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. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

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

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>