

**PHI3640: Environmental Ethics.****Prof Tony Dennis**

Department of Philosophy

E-mail: [tdennis@fiu.edu](mailto:tdennis@fiu.edu)**Summer B 2015 Ref #: 56588****M/W/F 9:30AM-11:45AM****Room: PC 212**

*Office Hours:* You'll be able to meet with me after (and a little before) class in general, or by appointment.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Environmental Ethics is the study of ethical problems with regard to the relationship between human beings and the natural world. The course will cover a range of issues including the relationship between the human and nonhuman world, whether or not nonhuman nature has inherent rights, Deep Ecology, Social Ecology, Ecological Feminism, Political Action, the problems posed by overpopulation, economic policy and globalization. We will examine a number of key texts in the development of environmental ethics.

**EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS CLASS:**

**From me:** You can expect that I will (1) Be on time, (2) be here unless I'm really sick (e.g. cold, flu, Mad-Cow disease, etc) (3) be excited about the subject matter, (4) help you to understand the material as best I can, (5) make myself available outside of class whether in person or via email to make sure I accomplish (4), (6) treat you with respect, (7) be fair and expeditious with grading (I will try to take no more than a week to get your assignments back to you), (8) be clear in what I expect from you, (9) be organized and use class time well, and (10) inject as much humor as philosophically possible so that we can have fun!

**From you:** I expect you to (1) Do the work (e.g., the reading, summaries, and papers) honestly and promptly, (2) Come to class, (3) Be on time, (4) Participate actively, (5) Ask a question whenever something is confusing or unclear, (6) Respect each other, (7) Support/share with each other, (8) Learn a lot, and (9) Have fun!

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

- (1) *Environmental Ethics: The Big Questions*, **(EEBQ)**, Ed. David Keller, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010
- (2) Other readings and selections assigned by the instructor available via hand-out or online via blackboard.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

By the end of the course students should be able to provide an account of:

(i) specific philosophical questions of environmental ethics, such as what form one's duty towards nature takes, what differing conceptions of nature and its value have been offered, including whether nature is (somehow) good in itself, how resources should be utilized, including what obligations we have to posterity, what moral, aesthetic, and legal recognition ecosystems deserve (e.g. do they have rights?). Are there too many people, or is radical environmentalism misanthropic? Can all values be reduced to cost-benefit tradeoffs? Is Capitalism inherently at odds with environmental stewardship?

(ii) different philosophical perspectives (anthropocentric, non-anthropocentric, Western, non-Western, biocentric, ecocentric, 1st world, 3rd world, on vital problems of the global environment (pollution, hunger, climate change, women's rights, the preservation of species, etc...).

(iii) central concepts and ideas including, what is distinctive that separates living from non-living things, intrinsic and instrumental value, social ecology, fallacies of reasoning (part/whole), sentience, personhood, nature, differing conceptions of moral obligation, including Utilitarianism, Kantianism, Contractarianism.

**By the end of the course** students should demonstrate writing and critical thinking skills enabling them to:

(iv) analyze fundamental ideas and concepts; (v) identify the underlying assumptions or logical implications of different positions or propositions; (vi) explain and critically evaluate arguments and justifications; (vii) identify, explain, and critically evaluate competing explanations and descriptions of global environmental conditions; (viii) develop a research project that addresses a philosophical question or practical problem; (ix) develop and defend a thesis through argumentation and the presentation of evidence, reasons, examples, and responses to objections; (x) explain a thinker or text; (xi) explore a concept or idea or explain a philosophical problem; (xii) contrast different perspectives on a central concept or question relating to an environmental issue; (xiii) practically engage in contemporary debates about the environment

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS (Due dates and requirements are subject to change):**

1. **Attendance:** IS MANDATORY! You have 1 excused absence for **free!** But after that you will have a 20-point penalty for every absence. I don't take documentation for excused absences, so you better save your absences for when you really need to miss class.
2. **Participation in Discussion/Class (The civility evaluation/bonus):** As we shall see, there is a social dimension to philosophy in the giving and taking of reasons. So, I believe it is important that you take part in class discussions, so I grade this dimension of the class as well. The maximum number of points you can gain is 15-20. To get the minimum (5 pts), you need to comment/ask questions in at least 2 different meetings. To get full points, you need to participate in some way in at least 10 class meetings. You could also have points deducted from this total by being tardy often, disturbing class in any of the ways listed in my introduction to the course mechanics lecture, and other such uncivil behavior.
3. **Summaries/Reaction Papers:** I will ask you to write a three page double spaced reaction papers related to a reading, a documentary, and/or other related media (podcast, TV episode, etc...). I use turnitin.com, so please become familiar with it.
4. **The Daily Question:** Every meeting we'll have a question (maybe 2 you can choose from) on the board that relates to the reading you were supposed to do for the day's meeting. As a whole these will count as a test grade (100 points, worth 10 points each). There will be 15-16 of these but you only need to get 10 of them right to get the credit. If you are able to answer more than 10 then you start to accumulate extra credit.
5. **Exams:** There will be three exams worth 100 points each. These usually consist of 7-9 short answer questions and one essay question. I hand out a study guide in class two class meetings before each exam that includes 18-24 possible short answer questions and the essay question. The exams are not cumulative.
6. **Extra Credit:** TBD. This changes every semester and includes all sorts of assignments I concoct to make you more engaged with the material in my lectures and the texts.

Your *final grade* will be based on all assignments receiving a certain point score. Your points will be added together (with any extra credit earned).

**CLASS POLICIES:**

**Absences:** I demand you be in class every day we are scheduled to meet. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences and after that you will have 20 points deducted from your grade for each absence.

**Tardiness/Leaving Early:** Like most other professors, I don't appreciate people being late to my class. If you consistently come late to my class (more than 3 times in a semester), then I will certainly not be sympathetic with

any pleas you'll have later in the semester (this works for absences too). What's the problem with being late? It shows a lack of respect for the class - the teacher and your classmates - if you are habitually late. It breaks the concentration of most everyone in the room, and if you come in and start asking questions of those next to you, they will only miss more of the class as well. **Leaving Early:** Moreover, while bathroom breaks are acceptable, it is not acceptable for you to leave class early without prior notification. If you leave for the last half of class, you will not receive credit for being in class that day.

**Attendance Sheet:** It is completely your responsibility to make sure that you sign in on the attendance sheet. If you are not in the classroom by the time I take roll (pretty quickly as the semester gets rolling), I will not count you as being in attendance for that class period.

**Disability:** Students with documented special learning needs are asked to have the Access Department inform the instructor so that accommodations can be made when necessary for testing, note taking, or paper writing.

**Cell Phones, Computers, & Tape Recorders:** (1) You may not use your phone during class (for calling or texting), unless I specifically give you permission to do so. You may use your phones in our classroom before class starts, however. (2) You may use a computer to take notes for the class; however, I reserve the right to verify that you are only taking notes with your computer – you may not surf the web, do email, or work on other class work (for this class or other classes) during class time. (3) You may tape record the course, provided you obtain my permission beforehand.

**Plagiarism/Cheating:** Do not attempt to plagiarize in writing your papers. **Plagiarism = taking any idea or writing that is not your own and including it in your paper without citing your source.** For example, if you go to a website and take information or sentences from that website and do not cite that website in your paper, you are plagiarizing. You cannot have a roommate write your paper. You also cannot just cite a website and then turn in a whole paper from a website that is not your work. The paper has to be an original work of your own. This also includes using our own textbook, quoting it, or describing a philosopher's view and not citing the page from which you took the information. The first occurrence will garner you a failing grade on the assignment and cheating a second time will leave you with a failing course in the class. I will assume that you now realize what plagiarism is, what plagiarizing in my class results in, and that by continuing in my class you're in effect making a commitment not to plagiarize in this class.

*The syllabus is a contract between the student and the professor, and students are responsible for adhering to the policies in the syllabus, as well as in the FIU Catalog and Student Handbook. I reserve the right to change the syllabus when this is necessary for practical or pedagogical reasons.  
I will notify students of any changes in course requirements or policies.*

Schedule	Readings/Assgn
Week 1: Introduction to the course.	Syllabus, Intro Lecture
Week 2: What is Environmental Ethics?	EEBQ pgs 1-56
Week 3: Anthropocentrism	EEBQ pgs 59-88
Week 4: Nonanthropocentrism	EEBQ pgs 91-142
Week 5: Polycentrism/Biocentrism	EEBQ pgs 149-192
Week 6: Ecocentrism	EEBQ pgs 193-212 and Digital Hand-outs TBD
Week 7: Deep Ecology	EEBQ pgs 223-251
Week 8: Continental Philosophy	Digital Hand-outs TBD
Week 9: Continental Philosophy	EEBQ pgs 257-267 and Digital Hand-outs TBD
Week 10: Asian Philosophy: Buddhism	Digital Hand-outs
Week 11: Social Ecology & Ecofeminism	EEBQ pgs 268-310
Week 12: Science & Environmental Ethics	EEBQ pgs 377-412
Week 13: Political Action	EEBQ pgs 327-336
Week 14: Population/Poverty Debate	EEBQ pgs 415-475
Week 15: Economic Policy	EEBQ pgs 509-558
Week 16: TBD	

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