

Environmental Political Thought

POL 281
Spring 2017

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Class: MW 2-3.15pm in 102 Kirby Hall
Office Hours F 11am-1pm in 307 Kirby Hall

Course Description

Why should we preserve the wilderness, create national parks, concern ourselves with pollution? Answers to these questions depend on how we conceive the human relationship with the wider natural world. Do non-human entities have value in themselves, independent of human beings? Or are they valuable only because they are useful for human beings? Having considered these questions, we will turn to particular issues, such as the preservation of wilderness, sustainable development, the culture of consumerism, and climate change, asking how we should respond through social and individual action.

Course Goals

1. To improve your ability to read attentively
2. To develop your skill to formulate oral and written arguments, in particular arguments about ethical and political ideals
3. To develop your skill to formulate a manageable research question
4. To introduce you to the main political and ethical understandings of the natural world and some of the main environmental issues facing us today

Required Readings

1. eBook excerpts available digitally through the ZSR Library, accessible through the “Course Reserves” link on our Sakai website [marked as “ebook” in the syllabus]
 - i. Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (University of California Press, 2013)
 - ii. Rom L. Beauchamp and R.G. Frey, *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2011)
 - iii. Roger Scruton, *How to Think Seriously About the Planet: The Case for Environmental Conservatism* (Oxford University Press, 2012)
 - iv. Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010)
 - v. Peter Cannavo, *The Working Landscape: Founding, Preservation, and the Politics of Place* (The MIT Press, 2007)

(list continues on p.2)

- vi. Michael Maniates and Thomas Princen, eds. *Confronting Consumption* (MIT Press, 2002)
 - vii. Chris Williams, *Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis* (Haymarket Books, 2010)
2. Articles and chapters available at Course Reserves, accessible through the Sakai class website [marked as “R” in the syllabus]

Participation

We will spend a large part of the class time in discussion. To make this system work, please make sure to read all assignments for the day, think about them, and be ready to discuss them. Always bring the relevant book and/or the article to class. If you prefer to use digital rather than paper versions of the readings, you are welcome to bring your computer to class. Just make sure you focus on the reading and the discussion!

Attendance will be taken. You are allowed three unexcused absences, but attendance is mandatory during the first two weeks of the semester and during the librarian lecture on conducting research (Feb 20).

Course Requirements and Grades

Your participation will count for 20% of the final grade. Essay 1 (7 pages) will count for 20%, “City Responses” group presentation for 10%, research proposal (3-4 pages) for 10%, 2-page comments on your peers’ draft and discussion of their papers for 10%, and research paper (13-15 pages) for 30%.

You are always invited to discuss my comments on your essays or exams. If, after these discussions, you want to contest a grade, please write a 1-page response to my comments and bring it to me within a week of receiving your paper. Please note that I cannot re-grade your final essay, and that the re-grading can result in a lower grade.

Assignments:

- Essay 1:
 - o Topics given out: Feb 15 (class)
 - o Due: Feb 27 (beginning of class)
- Research Paper proposal
 - o Due: Mar 15 (beginning of class)
- **“City Responses” Group Presentation:**
 - o **Date: Apr 3**
- Research Paper Draft:
 - o Due to your peers: Apr 17 (beginning of class)
- Comments on your peers’ papers:
 - o Due to your peers and me: Apr 24 (beginning of class)
- Research Paper:
 - o Due May 4 (2pm in 307 Kirby Hall mailbox)

Late policy

Late papers will be penalized by a notch (from A to A-) for each day of lateness. Saturday and Sunday will count as separate days. To claim exception on the grounds of illness, please present a note from your doctor.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a grave offense against academic standards. A plagiarized work will receive a 0 for the assignment, and the student will be reported to the College Judicial System. Please read about academic integrity and plagiarism here: <http://deanofstudents.wfu.edu/conduct/honor/> and <http://college.wfu.edu/english/course-information/academic-writing/#V>. If you are not sure whether your actions constitute plagiarism, please talk to me or the Writing Center staff.

Course Schedule

1 (Jan 11) Course Introduction

I. Eco-centrism

(Jan 16) No Classes: MLK JR Holiday

2 (Jan 18) Ecological Community: Dependence

Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic" and "Thinking like a Mountain," in *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 237-264, 137-141 [R]

3 (Jan 23) Intrinsic Value: Point of View of Nature

Paul Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, pp. 74-84 [R]

Val Plumwood, "Being Prey," pp. 266-271 [R]

4 (Jan 25) Intrinsic Value: Sentience

Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," in *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, pp. 73-86 [R]

5 (Jan 30) Non-Human Persons

Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think*, Chapter 2: "The Living Thought," pp. 71-100 [ebook]

II. Political Theories and the Ecological Challenge

6 (Feb 1) Liberalism

John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, "Conservation" and "Preservation," pp. 73-79 (end 2nd pp.), 86 (2nd pp.) – 95 (end 1st pp.), 98-107. [R]

Peter Carruthers, "Animal Mentality: Its Character, Extent, and Moral Significance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, pp. 385-399 [ebook]

7 (Feb 6) Libertarianism

Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*, pp. 403-405 [R]

David Schmidtz, "The Institution of Property," in *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*, pp. 406-420 [R]

8 (Feb 8) Socialism

Murray Bookchin, *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, Preface, pp. ix-xii [R]

Janet Biehl, *Ecology or Catastrophe: The Life of Murray Bookchin*, "Social Ecologist" and "Municipalist," pp. 156-177, 205-233 [R]

9 (Feb 13) Conservatism

Roger Scruton, *How to Think Seriously About the Planet*, Chapter 1: "Local Warming," pp. 5-37 [ebook]

10 (Feb 15) Moral Standing of Animals

Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, "Animal Welfare," pp. 83-120 [R]
Essay Topics Distributed

11 (Feb 20) Librarian Lecture: Research in Environmental Political Theory

No reading. Attendance mandatory.

12 (Feb 22) Implications in Practice

David Degrazia, "The Ethics of Confining Animals: From Farms to Zoos to Human Homes," in *Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, pp. 738-763 [ebook]

13 (Feb 27) Moral Standing of non-animal Nature

Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing*, Chapter 1 and Epilogue. pp. 1-12, 16-31, 159-176 [ebook]

Essays Due

III. Wilderness, Preservation: Conceptions of Nature

14 (Mar 1) Wilderness and Its Value

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1 (2015): 7-28 [R]

Robert Elliot, "Faking Nature," in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, pp. 381-389 [R]

Mar 4 (Sat)-12 (Sun) Spring Break. No classes.

15 (Mar 13) The Working Landscape

Peter F. Cannavo, *Working Landscape*, pp. 20-47, 219-251 [ebook]

16 (Mar 15) National Forests
Cannavo, *Working Landscape*, “The Northwest Timber War,” pp. 49-92, 259-278 [ebook]
Research Paper Proposals Due

17 (Mar 20) Urbanization
Cannavo, *Working Landscape*, “Sprawl,” pp. 93-122, 279-289 [ebook]
Groups decide (in class) on topics for their “City Responses” presentation

IV. Consumption and Its Effects

18 (Mar 22) Waste and Social Justice
Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie*, pp. 37-73 [R]

19 (Mar 27) Individual Responses
Darshan Karwat, “All my trash for a year fit into two plastic bags. Here’s How I did it.”
Washington Post, 10/29/2015 [R]
Michael Maniates, “Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World,” in Michael Maniates and Thomas Princen, eds. *Confronting Consumption*, pp. 43-66 [ebook]

20 (Mar 29) Contentedness with what We Have
Freya Mathews, “Letting the World Grow Old: An Ethos of Countermodernity” [R]

21 (Apr 3) In-class “City Responses” Group Presentations
No Reading

VI. Climate Change

22 (Apr 5) Conservatism and Climate Change
Roger Scruton, *How to Think Seriously About the Planet*, Chapter 2: “Global Alarming,” pp. 38-71 [ebook]

23 (Apr 10) Pollution Permits
Bo Shen et al., “California’s Cap-and-Trade Programme and Insights for China’s Pilot Schemes,” *Energy & Environment* 25 (2014): 551-575 [R]

(Apr 12) No Class: Professor at a Conference

24 (Apr 17) Paris Climate Accords
No Reading
Paper drafts due with your peers and me

25 (Apr 19) Socialism and Climate Change

Minqi Li, "The 21st Century Crisis: Climate Catastrophe or Socialism," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 43 (2011): pp. 289-301 [R]

Chris Williams, *Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis* (2010), pp. 145-152 [ebook]

26 (Apr 24) Peer-Paper Critiques (in class)

The written peer-paper critiques due with your peers and me.

27 (Apr 26) Course Conclusion

No Reading

Final Papers due May 4 at 2pm (307 Kirby Hall mailbox)