

Nature and Environment (PHIL 13 - 001)

MW 10:10 - 11:00 am, 258 Willard, Fall 2019

Course ID: 035296

Course Number: 17532

Instructor: Dr. Ted Toadvine (tat30@psu.edu)
Office Hours: Mondays 1:30 - 3:30 pm and by appointment, 129A Sparks
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Office Hours: Thursdays 2:00 - 4:00 pm and by appointment, 228 Sparks

Discussion sections: Friday, 12:20 - 1:10 pm, Willard 373 (Section 001L-DIS, #19009)
Friday, 1:25 - 2:15 pm, Ford 201 (Section 002L-DIS, #19010)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The meaning and value of nature is one of the oldest questions addressed by philosophy, and one that continues to be central to our lives and the practical decisions that we make every day. What is nature, and what is the appropriate human relationship with it? Does nature have any value apart from the uses that we make of it? What are our obligations toward other living things, such as non-human animals? Are certain groups of people closer to nature than others? Is contemporary industrial society alienated from nature, and, if so, what should be done about this? How obligated are we to live differently in response to environmental challenges? What alternatives for living differently are genuinely available to us today?

To explore these questions, our course traces key insights and turning points in traditional understandings of nature, especially in relation to culture, religion, and science. We then consider critical approaches to these traditional understandings of nature from international, decolonial, and Indigenous thinkers. With this background in mind, we turn to specific areas of environmental debate, including wilderness preservation, population, consumerism, the Anthropocene, and climate change.

This course meets the Bachelor of Arts degree requirements, satisfies the GH requirement, and is geared towards non-Philosophy majors. It may be used to fulfill minor requirements in philosophy.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course are expected to have gained the ability to:

- Articulate a broad understanding of the contributions of philosophy to understanding the human-nature relationship and to critically evaluating environmental issues;
- Present and assess views that differ from one's own, including perspectives related to gender, ethnicity, class, and culture, as these bear on the framing and interpretation of the human-nature relationship and environmental issues;
- Compare, contrast, and critique representative philosophical perspectives on nature and key environmental issues;
- Demonstrate critical thinking, reading, and writing skills relevant to philosophical inquiry into the meaning and value of nature and the environment.

COURSE MATERIALS

This course does not require the purchase of any materials. All assigned texts, as listed on the Assignment Schedule below, will be available on the Canvas site for this course. You are expected to bring hard copies of texts to class to facilitate discussion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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| 1. participation in class discussions, pair-share, and discussion sections | 10% |
| 2. weekly reading assessments (best 10 at 2% each) | 20% |
| 3. two take-home essays (15% each) | 30% |
| 4. midterm and final exams (20% each) | 40% |

- **Class participation:** You are expected to participate actively in this class, which includes attending the lectures, reading all assigned material prior to class, and participating productively and respectfully in your discussion section. Discussion is crucial to this class, and I will do my best to make you feel at ease and welcome to contribute to the conversation. The best way to understand these sometimes difficult and controversial topics is to talk about them with each other, so please feel free to contribute any question, objection, or other thought about the topic at hand when such occurs to you. Although no relevant remark is out of bounds in this class, you will be expected to treat all members of the class with courtesy and respect. The quality and quantity of your participation in class discussion and discussion sections will be evaluated in assigning 10% of your final course grade. Absences from class will negatively affect your participation grade.
- **Pair-Share:** During this class, you will routinely be asked to engage in “pair-share.” I will pose a question to the class and provide you with a few minutes to discuss the question with another member of the class. At the end of the discussion time, I will randomly call on students to share their response or their partner's response to the question. You may also take this opportunity to pose to the class a follow-up question of your own. Please identify your partner for pair-share at the start of each class. Pair-share provides you with an opportunity to think about, articulate, and discuss your own ideas about an issue while also learning from the diversity of other views expressed in the class. Your active engagement in pair-share will be evaluated as part of your class participation.
- **Weekly reading assessments:** Roughly once each week, you will have a brief assessment drawn from the readings assigned for that class. The best way to prepare for these assessments is to read all assigned materials carefully prior to class. Since some assessments may be “open text,” you are encouraged to bring copies of the assigned readings to class. Only the best ten assessment scores will be counted in calculating your final grade; the lowest assessment scores will be dropped. No makeup assessments will be given for any reason. If an assessment is missed due to absence (whether excused or not), late arrival, or early departure, this missed assessment will be treated as one of the grades to be dropped. Your best ten assessment scores will be worth 20% of your final grade.
- **Take-home essays:** You are expected to complete two essays of 900 - 1200 words each (about 3-4 double-spaced pages) in response to essay questions posted on Canvas. Hard copies of essays are due in class on the dates specified on the syllabus. Essays must be **typed, stapled, proof-read, double-spaced, and include your name, discussion section time, and a word-count on the first page.** (Please do not use a cover page.) Essays not meeting these requirements or that are less than the minimum number of words will not be graded. Essays not submitted in class will be treated as late, and late essays will lose one letter grade for each calendar day that they are late. Each essay will be worth 15% of the final course grade.

Grading rubric for essays:

A (90% or above) = Excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B (80% or above) = Good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C (70% or above) = Okay. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D (60% or above) = Poor. Significant errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F (below 60%) = Failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a lack of appropriate effort.

- **Midterm and final exams:** Exams will draw from all material assigned as readings or discussed in class. A list of review terms and concepts will be posted on Canvas at least one week prior to the exam date. Exams will include a mix of question formats that may include true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. The final exam will include only material covered after the midterm exam. Each exam will be worth 20% of the final course grade
- **Course Grading Scale:** Final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale. Grades will not be adjusted to fit a standard distribution curve, nor will “close” grades be rounded to a higher grade.
 - A 93% and above
 - A- 90% or higher but below 93%
 - B+ 87% or higher but below 90%
 - B 83% or higher but below 87%

B-	80% or higher but below 83%
C+	77% or higher but below 80%
C	73% or higher but below 77%
C-	70% or higher but below 73%
D	60% or higher but below 70%
F	below 60%

COURSE POLICIES & UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS

- **Incompletes and extensions** will be given only in the event of documented illness or emergencies.
- **Retaining copies of all returned work:** Please retain the original copy of all work returned to you during the term until the final course grade has been posted. In the event of any question concerning whether grades have been accurately recorded, it is your responsibility to provide these original copies as documentation.
- **Computers and other electronic equipment:** Use of electronic equipment, including cell phones, tablets, and laptop computers, is prohibited during this class. Exceptions to this policy may be requested from the instructor and will be granted only for legitimate academic reasons. Any use of computers for academic reasons will be monitored throughout the term, and failure to restrict their use to this function will result in the revocation of any computer privileges.
- **Inclement Weather:** It is generally expected that class will meet unless the University is officially closed for inclement weather. If, however, it becomes necessary to cancel class while the University remains open, this will be announced on Canvas and through the Canvas email system.
- **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights, and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.
 Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.
 Please review and familiarize yourself with the Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity policies. In accordance with these policies, violations of academic integrity will be met with disciplinary action consistent with the offense, ranging from a warning to failure of the course.
 - University Code of Conduct:
<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>
 - University Academic Integrity Policy: <http://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/G-9-academic-integrity.html>
 - College of Liberal Arts Academic Integrity Policy:
<http://www.la.psu.edu/current-students/student-services/academic-integrity>
- **Disability Accommodation:** Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus (<http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/disability-coordinator>). For further information, please visit Student Disability Resources website (<http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/>).
 In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. See documentation guidelines at <http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.
- **Counseling and Psychological Services:** Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing.

The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

- Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park (CAPS): 814-863-0395, <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>
 - Counseling and Psychological Services at Commonwealth Campuses <http://senate.psu.edu/faculty/counseling-services-at-commonwealth-campuses/>
 - Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400
 - Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741
- **Educational Equity and Reporting Bias:** Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the Report Bias webpage: <http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Subject to revision as we proceed. Specific assignments will be announced in class.

Week 1	8/26	Introduction to the course Snyder, "For All" Levertov, "Tragic Error"
	8/28	Introductory Discussion: What is natural?
Week 2	9/2	No class: Labor Day Holiday
	9/4	Traditional Conceptions of the Human-Nature Relation "A Creation Story of the Boshongo People" Cherokee Creation Story Tagaban, "The Raven Story" (video)
Week 3	9/9	Genesis 1-3
	9/11	Plato, "The Nature of the Soul and its Relation to the Body"
Week 4	9/16	Laozi, selections from <i>Daodejing</i>
	9/18	Francis of Assisi, "The Canticle of Brother Sun"
FIRST ESSAY DUE in discussion sections: 9/20		
Week 5	9/23	Non-Human Animals Descartes, "Animals as Automata"
	9/25	Singer, "A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation"
Week 6	9/30	The Legacy of Christianity White, "The Historical Roots of our Environmental Crisis"
	10/2	Berry, "The Gift of Good Land"
Week 7	10/7	Deep Ecology and Wilderness Preservation Naess, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects"
	10/9	Turner, "In Wildness is the Preservation of the World"
Week 8	10/14	Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation"
	10/16	MIDTERM EXAM
Week 9	10/21	Decolonialism Curtin, "Recognizing Women's Environmental Expertise"
	10/23	LaDuke, "Voices from White Earth"

Week 10	10/28	Population and Consumption Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics" Angus & Butler, "Is the Environmental Crisis Caused by the 7 Billion or the 1%?"
	10/30	Wolf, "Population, Development, and the Environment"
Week 11	11/4	Maniates, "Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?"
	11/6	Wenz, "Just Garbage: The Problem of Environmental Racism"
Week 12	11/11	Sagoff, "Do We Consume Too Much?"
	11/13	NO CLASS: Watch The Story of Stuff [Movie] on your own
Week 13	11/18	The Anthropocene and Climate Ethics Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, "The Anthropocene" Scranton, "Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene"
	11/20	Brannen, "The Anthropocene is a Joke"
SECOND ESSAY DUE in discussion section: 11/22		
Week 14	11/25	No classes: Thanksgiving Holiday
	11/27	No classes: Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 15	12/2	Jamieson, "Ethics, Public Policy and Global Warming"
	12/4	Gardiner, "The Perfect Moral Storm"
Week 16	12/9	Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene"
	12/11	Closing discussion and final review
Finals Week	TBA	Final Exam