

Grande Prairie Regional College
Department of Arts and Education
Winter 2007
Philosophy 3550
Philosophy of the Environment
(Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics)

Instructor: Tom Enders, PhD

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Office hours: Wed. 4-5 p.m./Fri. 3-4:30 p.m.
or by appointment

Room: A211

Time: Mondays 6-8:50 p.m.

Calendar Course Description:

Major environmental issues, such as pollution, overpopulation, resource exhaustion, the rights of future generations and animal rights will be considered in regard to their ethical, aesthetic, or metaphysical ramifications.

Course Description 2007:

Environmental issues raise important ethical questions about human wellbeing. For example, are there so many people using so many resources so quickly that we are endangering the prospects for a satisfactory human life on this planet in the future? Just what is the nature of our obligations to future generations? We will examine some of these questions. We will also explore the question of whether animals, trees and plants, and nonliving parts of the environment have independent moral status or standing. In short, should people treat animals and the natural environment well only because that is in the best interests of human beings - or do nonhuman beings and elements of the natural environment have moral claims on us because they have their own interests, their own rights or their own good independent of ours?

We will address these questions while exploring issues such as global warming, species depopulation and extinction, and vegetarianism. We will look at capitalism - foe or possible friend of the environment? And we will encounter feminist and other radical perspectives on the environment.

Course requirements:

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.....	%
Midterm exam	%
Final exam	%

Marks will be given in percentage figures before conversion to a letter grade.

Conversion table:

A+ 90 - 100	B+ 76 - 79	C+ 67 - 69	D+ 55 - 59
A 85 - 89	B 73 - 75	C 64 - 66	D 50 - 54
A- 80 - 84	B- 70 - 72	C- 60 - 63	F 0 - 49

For conversion of letter grades to the four-point scale see Calendar p. 37

Please note that you are expected to write the final exam when scheduled by the Registrar's Office - with possible exceptions in the case of compelling and urgent circumstances beyond your control.

Also note: You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with College Calendar information pertaining to cheating and plagiarism, for which there are a range of penalties (see pages 44-5). Also note and observe key dates during the term (pp. 15-16).

Required texts:

1. Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce, editors, The Environmental Ethics & Policy Book, 3rd edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003.
2. Internet readings and articles distributed in class.

Topics

- I. Introduction: A brief introduction to philosophy, philosophy of the environment and environmental ethics. Reading philosophy. An overview of the global picture. Are there too many people using too many resources too quickly – and destructively?
- II. Global warming and climate change. What to do and not do. Why. Questions pertaining to international equity, obligations to future generations and obligations to nonhuman entities.
- III. The historical, religious, cultural context for western world environmental outlooks.
- IV. Overview of ethical theory. Consequentialism vs. nonconsequentialism. Natural law theory. Rights. Kantian, social contract and feminist theories. Virtue ethics.
- V. Animal Rights. What does it mean to say that animals have rights? Do they? What qualifies someone or something for rights? Vegetarianism.
- VI. Vitalism and biocentrism.
- VII. The value of species. Holism vs. individualism.

VIII. The Land Ethic.

IX. Deep Ecology. A Third World Critique of Deep Ecology.

X. Free market environmentalism. Are capitalist free markets enemies of the environment – or possible friends and rescuers?

XI. Social ecology. A critical perspective on deep ecology and capitalism.

XII. Eco-feminism. Feminist contributions to environmental ethics.

XIII. Other radical perspectives.

XIV. Conclusion.