



GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE
Philosophy 3550
Philosophy of the Environment
Winter 2013
3 (3-0-0) UT 45 Hours

Instructor: Tom Enders, PhD
Office: C303
Office Hours: Wed. 4-5:20 p.m.; Thurs. 2-3:20 p.m. and by appointment

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Prerequisite: There is no prerequisite for taking this course.

Required Readings:

1. Louis Pojman, Paul Pojman editors, Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application, 6th edition. Boston, MA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2012.
2. Readings posted on Moodle, class handouts, and internet and database readings.

College 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 introduction 2013:

Environmental issues raise important ethical questions about human wellbeing. For example, what sacrifices, if any, do people need to make in response to climate change? What is a just and equitable response to it taking into consideration who contributes most to global warming and who feels the greatest impacts? Also, are so many people using so many natural resources (e.g. forests, fresh water and fish) 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?

Many questions also arise about the wellbeing of animals and the natural environment itself. What kinds of obligations and responsibilities do we have to them, if they have intrinsic worth (that is, value apart from their usefulness to human beings)? What moral claims do they have on us because they have their own interests, their own rights or their own good, independent of ours?

The topic area is vast. Competing ethical, economic and political perspectives can help us try to make sense of many issues. Some outlooks are more conventional, some are more radical. This course will introduce you to various ways of attempting to deal with a variety of issues which directly affect our lives - and our choices - daily.

Contact Hours:

This is a three credit course with three hours of instructional time a week.

Delivery Mode:

Classroom time will be used for lectures and discussions. Some video material will be presented.

Course objectives:

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of the environment. It is intended to familiarize you with:

1. relevant background information about philosophy and ethical theory
2. basic concepts, ideas and perspectives used by philosophers in this subject area including ones pertaining to human beings, animals, living things in general and the natural environment
3. general topics and debates in the field.

Ultimately, as an introductory course, the main goal is to equip you with basic knowledge of the field, and assist you in being philosophical about related topics, whether on your own or in conjunction with further studies.

Transferability: UA, UC, UL, AU, AF, AF, GMU, KUC

* The grade of D or D+ may not be accepted for transfer to other postsecondary institutions. You are cautioned that it is your responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability.

Please be informed that it is not the instructor’s policy to allow exams or assignments to be rewritten, or extra work done to increase marks. You are welcome, however, to consult with the instructor prior to exams and assignment due dates.

Course requirements:

Attendance and participation	10%
First short paper.....	15%
Second paper.....	20%
First exam	15%
Second exam	20%
Final exam	20%

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 the GPRC calendar.

Student Responsibilities:

* You are expected to devote time in the classroom to the class itself. Use of cell phones and use of laptops for non-class purposes is unacceptable. It is also not acceptable to socialize or do work on other courses during the class.

* You are strongly advised to keep a copy of your own of any work you submit for grading at least until you have your work returned to you.

** Students who miss an excessive number of classes (i.e. more than six, without reasonable justification such as illness) may be denied the opportunity to write the final exam, as stated in the Calendar.

**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. Take this into account when making any travel plans. Also note and observe other key dates during the term as provided in the Calendar.

Statement on Plagiarism and Cheating:

* You are required to reference sources fully and properly for written assignments. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with College Calendar information (on pages 48-49 and on-line) pertaining to cheating and plagiarism, for which there are various penalties depending on the severity of the offense. These include, among others, a reduced mark, a zero for the assignment, a record kept with the Department, a forced withdrawal from the course or even from the College, etc.

Please note: Details of this course outline are subject to change. Any changes will be discussed in class.

Tentative Topic Schedule

10, 15 January

I. Introduction. A brief introduction to philosophy and reading philosophy.

17, 22, 24 January

II. Some introductory reflections on human perspectives and priorities.

29, 31 Jan., 5 February

III. Overview of ethical theory and related concepts. Consequentialism vs. nonconsequentialism. Natural law theory. Natural rights. Kantian, social contract theories. Feminist perspectives. Virtue ethics.

Thursday 7 February: first exam

12, 14 February

IV. Religion, animals and the environment.

26, 28 February

V. Animal liberation, rights and wellbeing.

5, 7 March

VI. Food Ethics. Commercial agriculture. Vegetarianism.

12, 14 March

VII. Biocentric and holistic approaches. The value of species.

19 March: second exam

21, 26, 28 March

VIII. Climate change and energy policy. International justice. Obligations to future generations.

2, 4 April

IX. Capitalism and the environment.

9, 11, 16 April

X. Deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism and other radical perspectives.

The course reading list is being provided separately...