

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE: Philosophy 355 - Philosophy of the Environment
Course Outline: 1991-92 W

INSTRUCTOR: B.K. Wilson
PHONE: Office: 539-2736 Rm. C401
Home: 539-7385

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to bring both traditional and modern philosophical theories and methods to bear on the environmental issues of today. The primary focus will be on our relationship to the environment: as it was in the past, as it now is and as it might be in the future. Environmental problems such as Pollution, Overpopulation and resource exhaustion and allocation will be considered in the light of their Ethical, Aesthetic and Metaphysical ramifications.

Examination of the topics covered will be through both close textual reading and personal observations as recorded in the form of an Environmental Journal.

The opportunity for an in depth inquiry into the very nature of 'nature' is unique; through this process we will come to understand the inherent difficulty in making sense of a topic which is ordinarily taken for granted. Philosophically delving into the problems attendant to Environmental concerns will expose us all to such interesting topics as: the conflict between self and others, the limits of objective knowledge, the scope of our moral reach, despair in the loss of things other than ourselves and the attenuation of selfhood.

Although nature serves as an exemplar for our moral conduct it is not apparent that its processes properly direct our behaviour. Since it would appear that the ill treatment of nature shows roughly the same forces that act to corrode human relationships, we might properly expect to find moral imperatives greeting us from behind every tree. Students completing this course should be able to evidence a high degree of understanding of the issues involved in a philosophical study of the environment as well as an equally well developed sense of the difficulty of resolution of the problems attendant to these issues.

TEXTS: Collingwood, R.G. The Idea Of Nature London: Oxford University Press, 1972.
Evernden, Neil. The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1983.
Kohak, Erasm. The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature Chicago: The University of

Chicago Press, 1984.

Leopold, Aldo. A Sand County Almanac New York:
Ballantine, 1970.

McKibben, William. The End of Nature New York: Random
House, 1989.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Two fifteen hundred word (approximately) essays, each worth 25% of the final mark. An ongoing environmental journal worth 15% of the final mark, and a three hour sit down final examination worth 35% of the final mark.

GRADING CRITERIA:

1. Though marks on essays are based primarily on philosophical merit, an essay will be penalized for errors in composition since clarity and coherence are of the utmost importance to the exposition of a philosophical position. Conceivably, an essay could receive a failing grade if it were sufficiently poorly written.

2. Rewrite Policy: One rewrite will be allowed contingent upon the original paper being submitted on time. Rewrites will be subject to a demerit of one stanine - thus the maximum mark for a rewrite will be a stanine grade of 8.

3. Late essays will be docked one stanine per day of lateness. Unless extenuating circumstances are proven this policy is final. Essays are due on the date specified in a given assignment.

4. Students showing steady progress throughout the course will be given the benefit of the doubt in the calculation of final grades - ie. should there be a question of a grade falling midway between two stanine possibilities, the progressive student will receive the higher of the two.