

**PHIL 1180**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY**

**COURSE INFORMATION**

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**Class Meetings:** Monday, Wednesday, Thursday (4:35-5:40); Forsyth Building 202

**Instructor:** Getty L. Lustila, Department of Philosophy and Religion  
Ph.D., Boston University, 2019  
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**Office Hours:** Monday, Thursday (11:00-12:00); 420S Renaissance Park (Humanities Center)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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What do we owe to the flora and fauna of the world? Do we have an obligation to preserve and protect the integrity of wilderness? Is our growing population a threat to the environment or is the greater problem our practices of consumption? What can be done about climate change within the scope of our scientific knowledge, technological capabilities, well-considered moral principles, and democratic institutions? How has our way of interacting with nature exacerbated inequality and what can we learn from indigenous communities, who have traditionally enjoyed a closer relationship with nature? We will consider these questions and more in this course. At the end of the 14 weeks, you will walk away with a deeper appreciation of our duties to nature and how we can go about better fulfilling them.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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The primary objectives of the course are to

- Refine your ability to carefully read and analyze texts.
- Develop your skills as a writer – learning to produce clear, coherent prose and craft well-structured arguments.
- Develop your skills as a communicator – learning to receive feedback on your ideas and writing from your peers and to give helpful feedback to others.
- Spark your natural curiosity for philosophical ideas and questions.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

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- Gregory Bassham, *Environmental Ethics: The Central Issues* (Hackett, 2020)
- All other texts will be provided via Canvas

## ASSIGNMENTS

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### 1. Papers (2) – 30% of your final grade

- Instructions for each paper on canvas.
- Each paper will be 1000 words.
- You will be assessed primarily on the structure and clarity of your paper. You will be assessed secondarily on how well you have engaged with the source material. Before finalizing your paper ask yourself: “have I answered the question(s) in the prompt?”, “does my paper exhibit a clear, line of thought?”, “do I make proper use of paragraph structure to advance this line of thought?”, “have I read my paper aloud to see whether it flows?”, “do I accurately characterize the views conveyed in the source material?”, and “does my discussion of this material show that I have engaged with it?”

### 2. Personal Reflections (5) – 50% of your final grade

- Instructions for each reflection on canvas.
- Each reflection will be 750 words.
- You will be assessed primarily on completion. You will be assessed secondarily on the structure and clarity of your reflection. Before finalizing your reflection ask yourself: “have I answered the question(s) in the prompt?”, “does my reflection exhibit a clear, line of thought?”, “do I make proper use of paragraph structure to advance this line of thought?”, and “have I read my reflection aloud to see whether it flows?”

### 3. Participation – 15% of your final grade

How does one participate? There’s the normal way of course – asking questions in class, engaging with others productively when in groups, bringing to class any requested materials (e.g. if we have a workshop day, you will be expected to bring a complete rough draft of your essay or reflection to class). Philosophy works best with your participation since the aim is not for me to deliver content to you (though I will assist you in helping to understand the readings) but to engage with you in conversation about the topics of the readings.

Your participation grade **will be mostly determined by the discussion board**. The expectation is that you post **4x a week** on the discussion board. Each week has a discussion post associated with it. In this post, you will find the reading questions for that week posted at the top. **You are not expected to complete these questions** - the questions are there to **a) help guide your reading and to b) test your comprehension of the material**. If you find that after reading the text, browsing the board, and coming to class that you still cannot answer these questions this is a **good sign you should reach out to me** (you can reach out to me anytime during this process - I'm noting that the questions can be useful for self-testing).

I open posts one week in advance (for example, on the first day of class, both Week 1 and Week 2 will be open) and close them on **Saturday at midnight**. So, to count for credit, your posts must be completed before that time. An original post or a reply to one of your classmates, *equally count* for one of your weekly posts. This is an opportunity for you to engage and get to know one another outside class. Since there is not always the space for community-building in class: treat the board as an extension of the work we do in class.

**No posts are due on Week 1 or Week 12:** there are still reading questions for Week 1 so make sure to look there and feel free to engage with one another - it just isn't expected.

4. Attendance – 5% of your final grade

You are allowed **two unexcused absences** ("unexcused" is defined as you not having emailed me prior to the start of class - exceptions to this rule are made in the case of emergencies). For every unexcused absence *after this second* you sacrifice 1/4 of your attendance grade. When it comes to having to miss class for any reason (job interview, work conflict, or even feeling bogged down) **just shoot me an email before class and all is good**. Communication is key: it's important for me to know where you're all at so I can know how to best help you learn.

### Grade Scale

- A (93-100)
- A- (90-92)
- B+ (87-89)
- B (83-86)
- B- (80-82)
- C+ (77-79)
- C (76-73)
- C- (72-70)
- D+ (69-67)
- D (66-63)
- D- (62-60)
- F (59-below)

### EXPECTATIONS

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What you can expect from me:

- I will grade any and all assignments **within 10 days** of them being turned in.
- I will respond to any and all emails **within 48 hours**.
- I will hold office hours **as scheduled**. If you are unable to attend office hours, you are more than welcome (even encouraged) to set up another time for us to meet.

- I will shift the class schedule as deemed necessary for *your learning*. If we need extra time on a topic or you're collectively interested in pursuing a topic further, I will make any necessary changes to the schedule. **These changes will be communicated via email.**
- I will engage with you – in writing and in person – in a **thoughtful manner**. As I see it, this thoughtfulness has two components. I will be **respectful** of your ideas, and also dedicated to **your improvement** as a thinker and writer. At times, this dedication will require me to be critical in my feedback, which is a sign that I take you seriously.
- I will be **understanding and empathetic** regarding any challenges that you face, either in this class or in your personal lives (to the extent that they bear on your ability to turn work in on time, keep focus, maintain motivation, etc.).

What I can expect from you:

- You will **attend** each class, or notify me of your absence prior to class
- You will attend class having **read** and being prepared to **discuss** the material for that day. My advice is that you a) complete the reading twice and b) make a note of 2-3 questions and 2-3 comments you have. This exercise will cement your understanding of the material and give you a sense of which points you found interesting and/or confusing. Points of interest and/or confusion are the perfect material for discussion.
- You will **complete your work** on time or notify me of your inability to do so.
- You will engage with me and your classmates in a **thoughtful** manner. Show the same dedication to others (and to yourself) that I do to you. For this semester, for three hours a week, you and your classmates are on a journey. The journey will not always be easy, and we will all meet obstacles along the way. Lift each other up.
- You will **not give up on yourself**. At times, the readings and the assignments will be difficult. If you feel like you are slipping or things have stopped making sense, *reach out*. There is nothing honorable about suffering in silence. I am here to help with anything you may require along your journey, but you must always keep pushing.
- You will **stay curious** and **work to improve**. We have a lot to learn from each other and from the material that we will be discussing throughout the class. If you work to maintain your sense of curiosity and desire to improve throughout the course, you will come out of this experience as a better writer and a clearer thinker.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

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Week 1: What is Nature?

9/8 – Introduction

9/9 – Holmes Rolston III, “The Anthropocene! Beyond the Natural?”

Week 2: What Matters, pt. 1: Conscious Beings

9/13 – Lori Gruen, “Conscious Animals and the Value of Experience”

9/15 – Gregory Bassham, *Environmental Ethics*, Ch. 3, “Animal Rights”

9/16 – Lori Gruen, “Eating Animals”

Recommended: David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”

**Reflection 1 Due: 9/19**

Week 3: What Matters, pt. 2: Living Things

9/20 – Albert Schweitzer, *Philosophy of Civilization* (selections)

9/22 – Bassham, *Environmental Ethics*, Ch. 4, “Biocentrism”

9/23 – Clare Palmer, “Living Individuals: Biocentrism in Environmental Ethics”

**Reflection 2 Due: 9/26**

Week 4: What Matters, pt. 3: The Ecosystem

9/27 – Bassham, *Environmental Ethics*, Ch. 5, “Ecocentrism”

J. Baird Callicot, “How Ecological Collectives Are Morally Considerable”

9/29 – Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, “The Land Ethic”

9/30 – Winona LaDuke, “Klamath Land and Life”

Week 5: Central Problems, pt. 1: Preserving Wilderness

10/4 – Bassham, *Environmental Ethics*, Ch. 11, “Wilderness Preservation”

10/6 – Philip Cafaro, “Valuing Wild Nature”

10/7 – LaDuke, “Wild Rice”

Robin Wall Kimmerer, “The Gift of Strawberries”

**Paper 1 Due: 10/10**

Week 6: Central Problems, pt. 2: Population and Consumption

10/11 – **No Class (Indigenous People’s Day)**

10/13 – Elizabeth Cripps, “Population and Environment: The Impossible, The Impermissible, and the Imperative”

10/14 – Bassham, *Environmental Ethics*, Ch. 9, “Population and Consumption”

Week 7: Central Problems, pt. 3: Climate Change

10/18 – Andrew Szasz, “Is Green Consumption Part of the Solution?”

10/20 – Bassham, *Environmental Ethics*, Ch. 13, “Climate Change”

Henry Shue, “Mitigation: The First Imperative of Environmental Ethics”

10/21 – Clare Heyward, “Ethics and Climate Adaptation”

**Reflection 3 Due: 10/24**

Week 8: Central Problems, pt. 4: Emerging Technologies

10/25 – Marion Hourdequin, “The Ethics of Ecosystem Management”

10/27 – Stephen M Gardiner, “Geoengineering: Ethical Questions for Deliberate Social Manipulators”

Ben A. Minteer, “Environmental Ethics, Sustainability Science, and the Recovery of Pragmatism”

10/28 – Closing Discussion of “Basic Problems” unit

Week 9: Horizons, pt. 1: Environmental Justice

11/1 – Dorceta Taylor, “Toxic Exposure”

11/3 – Taylor, “Market Dynamics”

11/4 – Carl A. Zimring, “Out of Waste into Whiteness”

**Paper 2 Due: 11/7**

Week 10: Horizons, pt. 1: Environmental Justice (cont.)

11/8 – Zimring, “We Are Tired of Being at the Bottom”

11/10 – Dina Gilio-Whitaker, “Environmental Justice Theory”

11/11 – **No Class (Veterans Day)**

Week 11: Horizons, pt. 2: Indigenous Perspectives

11/15 –Gilio-Whitaker, “(Not So) Strange Bedfellows”

11/17 – Gilio-Whitaker, “Sacred Sites and Environmental Justice”

11/18 – Brian Burkhardt, “What Black Elk and Iktomi Can Teach Us About Locality”

**Reflection 4 Due: 11/21**

Week 12: Horizons, pt. 2: Indigenous Perspectives (cont.)

11/22 – La Duke, “Food as Medicine”

11/24 – **No Class (Thanksgiving Break)**

11/25 – **No Class (Thanksgiving Break)**

Week 13: Horizons, pt. 3: Environmental Political Theory

11/29 – John M. Meyer, “Sacrifice and the Possibility of Environmental Action”

12/1 – Avner de Shalit, “From Environmental Ethics to Environmental Action”

12/2 – Elizabeth Ellis, “Democracy as a Constraint and Possibility for Environmental Action”

Week 14: Horizons, pt. 3: Environmental Political Theory (cont.)

12/6 – John Barry, “Citizenship and (Un)Sustainability: A Green Republican Perspective”

12/8 – LaDuke, “Recovering Power to Slow Climate Change”

**Reflection 5 Due: 12/12**