**HCOL 86 Ethics and Philosophy of the Environment – Spring 2018**

Course Syllabus

**Course and Instructor Information:**

*Instructor*: Michael Ashooh

 e-mail: Michael.Ashooh@uvm.edu

phone: 656-4042

*Office Hours:* Monday 1:00 – 3:00

 (and by appointment)

Office Location: Philosophy Department: 70 S. Williams Ave

**Course Description:**

This course surveys a number of philosophical themes related to the environment and our understanding of it. The course will be divided into roughly two categories of questions. On the one hand, we will ask: What do we mean by “the environment” and nature generally; what exactly are we referring to? What do the various sciences tell us about the state of the environment? How accurate and reliable is our knowledge of the environment? We will explore some philosophical and scientific approaches to answering these questions. We then explore our moral obligations to the environment broadly construed. What are our moral obligations to ecosystems, animals, species, future generations, and to the just treatment of those disproportionately affected by environmental threats? By investigating these issues, the course aims to investigate the intersection of environmental ethics and environmental philosophy.

**Required Texts:**

All of the reading for the course are available through our Blackboard site.

**Assignments and grades:**

**150 points** -- **Homework**. Before the start of each week, students will be assigned some form of written homework, sometimes in the form of journal entries, sometimes as part of the Eli Peer Review process and sometimes in the form of questions posted to the discussion board on Blackboard. Regarding the latter, the class will be divided into 4 groups. At various points throughout the term, I will ask one of the groups to post a question to the discussion board and another group to respond by weeks end to those questions. The questions are simply ones that you think would make for good discussion in class, or that you need help understanding, or that you want to talk about, or that you are interested in etc. At other times, I will ask you to post “reading quiz” questions with answers. These will be used to generate in-class, random reading quizzes

**200 points** -- **Random Quizzes**. There will be 4 random reading quizzes (50 pts each). These are quizzes designed to appraise your comprehension of the readings and the course material. These could be short multiple choice or short answer exams, or they could be short writing assignments in response to a prompt. All quizzes are open note quizzes, meaning that you can use any notes that you have written in a notebook. Therefore, you should take notes in something that you can use on a quiz, such as a spiral or bound notebook, and you should take lots of notes.

**200 points** -- **Analyses papers.** You will write two (2) short papers at roughly the 1/3 points for the course. Each will be worth 100 points. These will be 500-700 words, and will aim to provide a succinct and focused critical analyses of a reading, issue or concept that we will discuss in class. These will emphasize critical reasoning and careful explication of the concept or theory under review. A detailed description and discussion of this assignment will be given when assigned. They will involve peer review through the Eli program.

**100 points** -- **Discussion Leader.** Each student will sign up to lead a class discussion of a paper, chapter or topic for discussion from the syllabus. The goal of this assignment is to summarize and analyze a paper or topic assigned on the syllabus, and then facilitate an interesting and useful discussion of that topic or paper by relating it to questions, themes or issues that we are discussing in the class. The presentation will be accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. These should be no longer than 15 minutes, and will ideally launch or segue into our class discussion on that day.

**200 points -- A Final Research Paper**. A 10-page research paper that develops one of the two short papers in more detail. Students will have to submit a paper revision plan and prospectus that explains how you will develop your paper into a research paper, improvements that you will make, the research question or thesis that you will pursue and 5 – 7 sources. The revision plan will be a homework assignment. The final research paper will be due at the time of the final exam scheduled for the course. There is a Library Research Guide set up for this class and linked in the Blackboard page. We will also meet with a librarian specialist to discuss how to approach this assignment.

**150 points** -- **Participation**. I expect everyone to participate in class discussion. This requires coming to class prepared and ready to actively involve yourself in the material, the discussion, and the ideas. A grade will be calculated for this and the percentage for this grade will be applied to the 150 points. Some days, I will base this grade simply on attendance, other days I will base it on questions, responses and in-class discussion – you will not necessarily know how I am calculating the participation on any given day. Attendance is required. This will count toward your participation grade. You may and should use the online area to supplement or continue in-class discussions, ask questions, seek clarifications, etc.

**Total Possible Class Points = 1000 points**

**Grading scale: (The same percentages apply to individual item grades)**

**A = 1000 – 920 points (100% - 92%)**

**A- = 920 – 900 points (92% - 90%)**

**B+ = 880 – 900 points (88% - 90%)**

**B = 820 – 880 points (82% - 88%)**

**B- = 800 – 820 points (80% - 82%)**

**C+ = 780 – 800 points (78% - 80%)**

**C = 720 – 780 points (72% - 78%)**

**C- = 700 – 720 points (70% - 72%)**

**D+ = 680 -- 700 points (68% - 70%)**

**D = 620 – 680 points (62% - 68%)**

**D- = 600 – 620 points (60% - 62%)**

**F = below 600 points (Below 60 %)**

**Some Class Policies**:

* **Attendance in this class is part of the grade. I expect everyone to attend class and to participate.** If you have to miss class, you need to let me know *prior to class* either by e-mail or phone that you cannot attend. **I will only allow students to make-up quizzes or other assignments if they have notified me before class or *if they can demonstrate* other reasonable circumstances.**
* **If you miss more than 15 minutes of class, I will count this as an absence.**

Incompletes are only granted by the Dean of Arts and Sciences

* Come to class with the assigned reading completed and questions or notes for discussion, and be prepared to discuss the material.
* Please try to be on time. If you are late, be courteous and minimize distractions. Chronic tardiness is unacceptable and will result in a loss of points.
* If I am not in class after 15 minutes, you can assume that something unforeseen came up and we will consider the class cancelled.
* I don’t mind food or drinks in class, but please don’t make a scene and if you spill it, you clean it up.
* Religious Holidays: Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Each semester students should submit in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester. Faculty must permit students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance to make up this work.
* **Do not sleep in this class**!! This is incredibly rude and annoying and I take it personally. If you need to get up, use the restroom and walk around, please do this instead. Otherwise, I will ask you to leave.
* Exemplify behavior appropriate to a classroom setting. This seems simple, but slouching, having feet up, rolling your eyes, huffing, puffing, nodding off, goofing off, doodling, having annoying sidebar conversations, jokes, etc.… are inappropriate. Be engaged and alert.
* Plagiarism of any sort in this class will result in an automatic “F” and full prosecution under UVM policies! I am absolutely intolerant of any sort of plagiarism. There are many opportunities to copy work off the internet or other places. There will be opportunities to use the work of other students. Do not do it! It is easy to catch and I am unforgiving of plagiarism.
* If a cell phone goes off during class I will confiscate it and repeatedly make hour long calls to my friends in Europe and Asia. Make sure your cell phones are off.
* Please don’t talk when others are talking, including me.
* **I do not offer extra-credit work**. The only way to shore up a sagging grade is to work harder!
* **I generally do not accept late work or offer makeup work**, *unless* there is a legitimate reason for having failed to turn in the assignment. I don’t consider failure to plan ahead a legitimate reason for not turning in an assignment. If you feel that you have a legitimate reason for missing an assignment, we can always talk it over. You can always email me an assignment as backup.
* **If you are given the opportunity to make up missed assignments, this must be completed as soon as possible.**
* I do not allow computers or mobile devices to be used during class time. If you have some special circumstance that you would like to discuss, please do and we may be able to make other arrangements.

**Course Schedule:**

Preliminaries and Advice: This is the outline of the reading and a (rough) description of the topics we will be covering.  Here are some points to remember.  Read the material before the class or week in which we will discuss it.  Take notes and write down questions, and think about the topics. During the week in which we are discussing the assigned readings, you suggest a brief review and re-reading to integrate class discussions and lectures into your understanding of the topics.  Remember, also, that any notes you write in your notebook you can used on any of the Quizzes.  This is to encourage you to take good notes not only in class, but while you are studying the material.  This Schedule is subject to change depending on any number of factors.

**Module 1: Traditional Sources for Contemporary Views** *(weeks 1 and 2)*

1. Charles Darwin, from *On the Origin of Species*
2. John Muir, "Anthropocentrism and Predation"
3. Aldo Leopold, from "The Land Ethic"
4. Henry David Thoreau, from "Walking"
5. John Stuart Mill, from "On Nature”

**Module 2: What is “the environment” in Environmental Philosophy?** *(weeks 3 and 4)*

1. Bernard Williams, "Must a Concern for the Environment be Centered on Human Beings?"
2. Katie McShane, “The Environment: How to Understand it and What to do About it” from *The Environment: Philosophy, Science, and Ethics*
3. Robert N Brandon, “The Concept of the Environment in Evolutionary History” from *The Environment: Philosophy, Science, and Ethics*
4. Brian K Stevenson, “Systems Theory and the New Eco-Philosophy” from *The Environment: Philosophy, Science, and Ethics*

**Module 3: An Environmental Ethics** *(weeks 5 and 6)*

1. Elliott Sober, (1986) “Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism,”
2. Richard Routley, "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?"
3. Kenneth Goodpaster, from "On Being Morally Considerable”
4. Robert Elliot, "Normative Ethics"
5. Ronald Sandler, "Environmental Virtue Ethics"
6. Paul W. Taylor, from *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*

**Module 4: Is Nature Intrinsically Valuable?** *(week 7)*

1. John O’Neill (1995) “The Varieties of Intrinsic Value,” Monist 75: 119-137.
2. Holmes Rolston “The Value of Nature and the Nature of Value,”
3. Elliot, R. (1990) Metaethics and environmental ethics. Metaphilosophy 16, 103-117.

**Module 5: Animals and their value *(****week 8 and week 9)*

1. Peter Singer, “Animal Liberation,” The New York Times Review of Books, April 5, 1973.
2. Lori Gruen, "The Moral Status of Animals"
3. Tom Reagan, “The Case for Animal Rights,” (1985) in In Defense of Animals (ed.) Peter Singer, Oxford: Basil
4. Gary Varner, (1998) “Can Animal Rights Activists Be Environmentalists” pgs. 98-120, in In Nature’s Interests, Oxford University Press.
5. Mark Sagoff, "Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce"

**Module 6: Biocentrism and the Land Ethic** *(week 10)*

1. Paul W. Taylor, “The Ethics of Respect for Nature,” Environmental Ethics Vol. 3, No. 3, pgs. 197-218.
2. Gary Varner, “Biocentric Individualism” selections from In Nature’s Interest, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Aldo Leopold, (1949) “The Land Ethic,” from A Sand County Almanac
4. J. Baird Callicott, from *Beyond* *the Land Ethic*

**Module 7: Ecosystem values** *(week 11)*

1. Eric Katz (1996) “Utilitarianism and Preservation,” from Nature as Subject: Human Obligation and Natural Community, New York: Rowman and Littlefied Publishing.
2. Mark Sagoff, “On the Value of Natural Ecosystems: The Catskills Parable,” Philosophy & Public Policy Quarterly 22: 10-16 College Park: University of Maryland.

**Module 8: Population Growth and Future Generations** *(week 12)*

1. Joel Cohen (1995) “Population Growth and Earth’s Human Carrying Capacity,” Science, New Series, 269: 341-346.
2. Derek Parfit selections from Reasons and Persons.
3. Ernest Partridge, “Rights of Future Generations,” in D. Scherer (ed.), Upstream/Downstream: Issues in Environmental Ethics, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. (1990)

**Module 9: Climate Change, Moral Responsibility, and Discounting** (*week 13 and 14)*

1. Stephen M. Gardiner, "Ethics and Climate Change"
2. Eric A. Posner and Cass R. Sunstein, from "Climate Change Justice"
3. William Nordhaus. *A Question of Balance: Weighing the Options on Global Warming Policies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008) Extracts from Chapter 9.
4. John Broome. *Counting the Cost of Global Warming* (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 1992). Extracts from Chapters 2 and 3.
5. Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*: *Third Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 216-38