PHIL 3010 Environmental Philosophy

Spring Semester 2026, TTh 1-2:15

Instructor: Dr. Gretchen Ellefson
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Classroom: GC 110
Office Hours: M 11-12; Tu 2:30-4; W 11-1:30 and by appointment

Course Description

This class will explore our human relationships with the natural world. In order to do this, we will need to explore questions related to the nature of nature itself: what is the "natural world" in the first place, and how do humans relate to it? We will also explore our moral obligations (to one another, other species, biospheres, or ecosystems) as they relate to the natural world. As we go, we will address a variety of timely environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, consumption, and more.

Course Objectives

Throughout this course, students will:

- Understand and clearly articulate various theoretical frameworks for thinking about environmental issues and environmental values.
- Apply these theoretical frameworks to real world issues.
- Cultivate a sense of curiosity about the environment around us and our relationship to it.
- Critically reflect on individual and collective values and their relationship to environmental values.
- Propose and defend a theoretical and/or practical proposal regarding our obligations to other humans, animals, and/or ecosystems.

Attendance

Attendance is required and graded in this class. Attendance and active participation in class are crucial for classes to function in a way that is most conducive to learning (and enjoyment!). When a student does not regularly attend class, this does not only affect that student; it affects everyone who misses out on their contributions to class, the questions they might ask, etc. I also benefit from regular attendance from all students, as it is easier for me to determine what additional teaching is necessary when students attend regularly; if you've missed many classes, it's hard for me to know if lack of comprehension reflects gaps in my teaching, or gaps as a result of your non-attendance.

You have two no-questions-asked unexcused absences per semester. After that, ever unexcused absence will result in 25% reduction in your attendance grade. After six total unexcused absences, your attendance grade will be zero. If you are more than 10 minutes late for a class, you will count as absent for that day.

Excused absences are, of course, appropriate. If there is any possibility you will need to be excused from classes as a result of disability or mental health issues, be sure to have everything set with the DRC in advance. For other excuses, be in touch with me directly.

Assignments

Attendance (10%): See "Attendance" above.

Participation and professionalization (10%): This will include your participation in the classroom (asking and answering questions; participating in group discussions; engaging respectfully with your peers, etc.) as well as outside of the classroom (sending professional and respectful emails; communicating promptly with questions, when you are absent, etc.).

News/issues presentation (15%): Each student will present once during the semester on an environmental issue and/or news item of interest to them. These need not relate directly to the topic we are discussing at the time in class, but the student should bring in class-relevant discussion. More details will be provided separately.

Reflection assignments (25% total): You will have five reflection assignments of various sorts. Some will ask you to do certain things and reflect on them, others will be more theoretical reflections. Details to come.

Final project (40% total): You will have a final project which will involve a proposal, class presentation, and a reflection paper. I will give you options regarding what kind of project you'd like it to be: it can be a theoretical project (more in line with a traditional philosophy paper); a policy proposal, or other environmental initiative. More details to come.

Grade Scale

A	93-100	C	73-77
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-90	D+	67-70
B	83-87	D	63-67
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-80	F	<60

Late Work

If you expect your work may be late, it is always best to touch base with me sooner rather than later. Unless you make arrangements with me prior to the due date, late work will receive a penalty for each day that it is late. You will lose 5 percent off your assignment's grade each day it is late: 5 percent if it is up to 24 hours late, 10 percent up to 48 hours late, and so on. No late work will be accepted more than 5 days late unless you make specific arrangements with me.

I do sometimes allow for no-penalty extensions, which is (one reason) why you should communicate with me if you think your assignment might be late!

Required Texts

All texts will be provided on Canvas.

Course Schedule

The schedule below is likely not complete, and is subject to change. I would like this class to be somewhat collaborative, so that we can add or change readings or even topics for discussion depending on student interest. Please feel free to let me know if there are topics that you'd like to discuss that you don't see here! I can't promise we'll cover everything, but I'm happy to do some adjusting!

Date	Unit	Topic	Reading	Assignments and evaluation
Week 1: January 8	Introduction	Introduction		
Week 2: January 13 January 15	Frameworks and Theories	Ethics and the Environmental Critique	Kernohan, Chapter 1, *Environmental Ethics*	Reflection I
Week 3: January 20 January 22		Indigenous Frameworks	Burkhart, "Chapter 3: Refragmenting Philosophy through the Land," from *Indigenizing Philosophy Through the Land*	
Week 4: January 27 January 29		Ecofeminism	Karen Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism"	
Week 5: February 3 February 5		Ecocentrism and Deep Ecology	Pack, Chapters 5 and 6, *Environmental Philosophy in Desperate Times*	Reflection II
Week 6: February 10 February 12	Wilderness, "the environment" and value	The Wilderness Debate	Sessions, "Ecocentrism, Wilderness, and Global Ecosystem Protections"	
Week 7: February 17 February 19		The Wilderness Act	Podcast: How Wild (selected episodes) The Wilderness Act: excerpts	Reflection III
Week 8: February 24 February 26		The Wilderness Act and Concepts of Wilderness	Podcast: How Wild (selected Eposdes) Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness," excerpts	
Week 9: March 3 March 5	Pollution, environmental degradation, consumption		Taylor, Chapter 2, *Toxic Communities*	Reflection IV

Spring break: March 9-13				
Week 10: March 17 March 19	Pollution, environmental degradation, consumption		TBD	
Week 11: March 24 March 26	Species and extinction	Sources of Biodiversity Loss	https://www.pnas.org/doi/pdf/10.1073/pnas.2306987120 https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/our-global-food-system-primary-driver-biodiversity-loss	Reflection V
Week 12: (FOE March 31) April 2		Species Loss and Extinction	Podcast: Up First, "The Kiwi and the Predator" Maybe: "Playing Jesus to Save Species" Haring, *Why Biodiversity Loss is Not A Disaster,* excerpts	Presentation proposal due
Week 13: April 7 April 9			TBD	
Week 14: April 14 April 16	Catch up/ Presentations			Presentations
FINALS WEEK: April 20-23				Presentations; paper due April 22

University Required Syllabus Statements:

ACADEMIC CREDIT: According to the federal definition of a Carnegie credit hour: A credit hour of work is the equivalent of approximately 60 minutes of class time or independent study work. A minimum of 45 hours of work by each student is required for each unit of credit. Credit is earned only when course requirements are met. One (1) credit hour is equivalent to 15 contact hours of lecture, discussion, testing, evaluation, or seminar, as well as 30 hours of student homework. An equivalent amount of work is expected for laboratory work, internships, practica, studio, and other academic work leading to the awarding of credit hours. Credit granted for individual courses, labs, or studio classes ranges from 0.5 to 15 credit hours per semester.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM: SUU is operated for the common good of the greater community it serves. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition. Academic Freedom is the right of faculty to study, discuss, investigate, teach, and publish. Academic Freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research.

Academic Freedom in the realm of teaching is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the faculty member and of you, the student, with respect to the free pursuit of learning and discovery. Faculty members possess the right to full freedom in the classroom in discussing their subjects. They may present any controversial material relevant to their courses and their intended learning outcomes, but they shall take care not to introduce into their teaching controversial materials which have no relation to the subject being taught or the intended learning outcomes for the course.

As such, students enrolled in any course at SUU may encounter topics, perspectives, and ideas that are unfamiliar or controversial, with the educational intent of providing a meaningful learning environment that fosters your growth and development. These parameters related to Academic Freedom are included in SUU Policy 6.6.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Scholastic honesty is expected of all students. Dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent (see SUU Policy 6.33). You are expected to have read and understood the current SUU student conduct code (SUU Policy 11.2) regarding student responsibilities and rights, the intellectual property policy (SUU Policy 5.52), information about procedures, and what constitutes acceptable behavior.

Please Note: The use of websites or services that sell essays is a violation of these policies; likewise, the use of websites or services that provide answers to assignments, quizzes, or tests is also a violation of these policies. Regarding the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), you should check with your individual course instructor.

ADA STATEMENT: Students with medical, psychological, learning, or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations, or auxiliary aids will need to contact the Disability Resource Center, located in Room 206F of the Sharwan Smith Center or by phone at (435) 865-8042. The Disability Resource Center determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of services.

If your instructor requires attendance, you may need to seek an ADA accommodation to request an exception to this attendance policy. Please contact the Disability Resource Center to determine what, if any, ADA accommodations are reasonable and appropriate.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT: SUU is committed to fostering an inclusive community of lifelong learners and believes our university's encompassing of different views, beliefs, and identities makes us stronger, more innovative, and better prepared for the global society.

SUU does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, citizenship, sex (including sex discrimination and sexual harassment), sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ancestry, disability status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, genetic information, military status, veteran status, or other bases protected by applicable law in employment, treatment, admission, access to educational programs and activities, or other University benefits or services.

SUU strives to cultivate a campus environment that encourages freedom of expression from diverse viewpoints. We encourage all to dialogue within a spirit of respect, civility, and decency.

For additional information on non-discrimination, please see SUU Policy 5.27 and/or visit: https://www.suu.edu/nondiscrimination.

PREGNANCY: Students who are or become pregnant during this course may receive reasonable modifications to facilitate continued access and participation in the course. Pregnancy and related conditions are broadly defined to include pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, lactation, related medical conditions, and recovery. To obtain reasonable modifications, please make a request to: title9@suu.edu. To learn more visit: https://www.suu.edu/titleix/pregnancy.html

MANDATORY REPORTING: University policy (SUU Policy 5.60) requires instructors to report disclosures received from students that indicate they have been subjected to sexual misconduct/harassment. The University defines sexual harassment consistent with Federal Regulations (34 C.F.R. Part 106, Subpart D) to include quid pro quo, hostile environment harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking. When students communicate this information to an instructor in-person, by email, or within writing assignments, the instructor will report that to the Title IX Coordinator to ensure students receive support from the Title IX Office. A reporting form is available at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?SouthernUtahUniv

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STATEMENT: In case of an emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the mySUU portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at https://www.suu.edu/emergency.

HEOA COMPLIANCE STATEMENT: For a full set of Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) compliance statements, please visit https://www.suu.edu/heoa. The sharing of copyrighted material through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, except as provided under U.S.

copyright law, is prohibited by law; additional information can be found at https://my.suu.edu/help/article/1096/heoa-compliance-plan.

You are also expected to comply with policies regarding intellectual property (SUU Policy 5.52) and copyright (SUU Policy 5.54).

SUUSA STATEMENT: As a student at SUU, you have representation from the SUU Student Association (SUUSA) which advocates for student interests and helps work as a liaison between the students and the university administration. You can submit MySUU Voice feedback by going to https://www.suu.edu/suusa/voice. Likewise, you can learn more about SUUSA's Executive Council at https://www.suu.edu/suusa/executive-council and about all of SUUSA's Student Senators at https://www.suu.edu/suusa/senate. If you have any specific concerns regarding any of your courses, please contact the SUUSA *VP of Academics* at: suusa_academicsvp@suu.edu.

Thriving Thunderbirds: Mental health is essential for your academic success. If you are struggling with mental health issues, SUU provides resources, support, and services to help you. Please visit https://www.suu.edu/mentalhealth for access to these valuable resources.

If you need assistance navigating any of the resources, please contact Counseling and Psychological Services, the Dean of Students' Office, or the Health and Wellness Center.

DISCLAIMER STATEMENT: Information contained in this syllabus, other than the grading, late assignments, makeup work, and attendance policies, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.