

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2016-2017**

**Philosophy 2033B: Introduction to Environmental Philosophy
Previously Philosophy110**

**Winter Term 2017
MWF 9:30–10:30
AHB-1B02**

**Instructor: Wayne C. Myrvold
wmyrvold@uwo.ca
Office: Stevenson Hall 4143
Office Hours: MW 12:30–13:30, or by
appointment**

DESCRIPTION

We live in a time in which environmental issues are very much in the news; climate change is one prominent issue.

This course is about how to think about such things. How are we to react to sometimes contradictory information in the media? Once we believe we know what is happening, what are the causes and solutions? Is environmental degradation an inevitable by-product of the presence of more than 7 billion human beings, or is it rooted in some fact about our culture? Is it the Western attitude towards the natural world? Is it something about our economic system? If we want to protect our environment, what is it that is worth saving, and why? Do we have a duty to protect Nature which is independent of its benefits to human beings? Is governmental regulation the answer, or should we let markets take care of things? This course is an invitation to think about and discuss these philosophical questions and others, and to investigate what others have said about them.

TEXTS

Assigned readings available on the course OWL site.

OBJECTIVES

This course has three main objectives. The first is to give a broad overview of the sorts of environmental issues that are facing us today. The second is for students to become familiar with the main schools of thought in approaching such issues. The third, and most important, is for students to develop a set of skills that will help them make up their own minds about environmental issues in a changing political and social context.

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and active participation in class discussion; three short (2–3 pp) written assignments; 2 tests.

- Written Assignments:

# 1 (Due Jan. 20)	10%
# 2 (Due Mar. 24)	10%
# 3 (Due Apr. 7)	10%
- Tests:

Midterm (Mar. 1)	30%
Final (TBA, exam period)	40%

Assignments are to be handed in by 3:45 PM on the due date. If you are unable to hand your assignment directly to the instructor, place it in the Philosophy Department drop-off box, which is on the first floor of Stevenson Hall. *Make sure that your student number and the instructor's name are on your assignment.* Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day late.

In conformity with departmental policy all written assignments must be submitted to turnitin.com for plagiarism checking by the due date. Assignments not submitted to turnitin by the due date will be counted as late, and students will not receive credit for written assignments not submitted to turnitin.com.

No written work will be accepted after the last day of classes, Apr. 7, 2017.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/proceduresappeals.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Philosophy 2033b
INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY
Winter 2017

The topics that we will discuss are divided into a series of modules.

Midterm (March 1): Modules I–V

Final (Exam period): Cumulative, with emphasis on Modules VI–VIII

In what follows, “S&D” refers to Suzuki and Dressel, *From Naked Ape to Superspecies*.

I. Introduction

The nature of philosophy. How does a philosophical approach to an issue differ from other approaches, such as a scientific or a literary approach? Philosophical arguments: how to recognize them, and to construct them. Ethical issues distinguished from other issues.

II. The State of the World (1 week)

A brief introduction to the state of our environment.

Readings: S & D, Ch. 3, “Bigfoot”

III. The Roots of our Environmental Crisis (2 weeks)

How did we get into this mess? Is our current environmental crisis traceable to an attitude of domination of nature inherent in Western culture? Or is there another cause?

Readings:

Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of our Environmental Crisis.”

Clive Ponting, “Ways of Thought,” Ch. 8 of *A Green History of the World*.

Aldo Leopold, “Thinking Like a Mountain,” and “The Land Ethic,” from *A Sand County Almanac*.

Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons.”

IV. In Wildness is the Preservation of the World? (1 week)

Environmentalism often includes as a goal that of preserving at least some part of the world in a wilderness state. We often take it for granted that we know what this means, and that the reasons for doing so are clear. In this section we will talk about the concept of wilderness, and what reasons there might be for preserving it.

Does anyone recognize the quotation at the head of this module?

Martin H. Krieger, “What’s Wrong with Plastic Trees?”

Eric Katz, “The Call of the Wild”

Andrew Light, “Ecological Restoration and the Culture of Nature”

William Devenan, “The Pristine Myth”

V. Beyond Anthropocentrism (2 weeks)

Should moral consideration be extended beyond the human? If so, how? Do non-human animals have rights?

Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”

Christopher Stone, “Should Trees Have Standing?”

Mark Sagoff, “Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce”

Midterm covers modules I-V.

IV. Information and the Media (2 weeks)

We rely on the media for information about environmental issues. This module is about how to be well-informed in the face of often conflicting messages.

S&D Ch. 4 Sez Who?

Rampton and Stauber, “The Third Man”

Excerpts from *Climate Cover-Up*

VII. Corporate Social Responsibility, and Free-Market Environmentalism (2 weeks)

Corporations care about what consumers think, and consumers can use this to put pressure on corporations. Most corporations nowadays spend time, money, and effort on being more socially responsible. Can consumer activism, leading to greater corporate responsibility, lead to real change?

Noreena Hertz, “Shop, Don’t Vote,” and “All That Glitters...”

Milton Friedman, “The Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits”

Debate on Social Responsibility of Business

Anderson & Leal, “Free Market Environmentalism”

VIII. Towards a new economy? (2 weeks)

Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins, “Making Markets Work” and “The Next Industrial Revolution”

S&D Ch. 7, “Follow the Money”

Naomi Klein, “Capitalism vs The Climate”