

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

Philosophy 2035F: Nature, Ecology and the Future



**Fall Term 2016
MWF 10:30-11:30
SSC 3006**

**Instructor: Prof. Gillian Barker
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Our changing relationship to the natural world, and our newly amplified ability to affect Earth's future, bring urgent and difficult philosophical questions with real-world implications. This course draws on ideas from ethics, political philosophy, and philosophy of science as well as biology, psychology and economics to explore the moral and epistemological dimensions of climate change, species extinction, and biotechnology. We will explore the interplay between ethical thought, our conception of ourselves and of the natural world, scientific knowledge, and technological and political action in debates on these topics. The course takes a practical attitude, seeking ways that philosophy can help clarify our thinking about what we should and can do, and applying them in real-world settings through community-engaged projects. Teaching tools include journals, online discussion, group projects, and opportunities to do 'field philosophy' in our local natural environment.

TEXTS

The following are the required texts. (Further readings will be supplied as we go along):

The End of Nature- Bill McKibben

At Home on the Earth: Becoming Native to Our Place- Edited by David Landis Barnhill

Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update- Donella H. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, Dennis L. Meadows

The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power- Joel Bakan

No-One Makes You Shop at Wal-Mart: The Surprising Deceptions of Individual Choice
Thomas Slee

OBJECTIVES

This course aims to provide a transformative learning experience, by giving students tools for confronting and rethinking deep ethical and epistemological problems about the future, and applying them in practical engagement with a community partner. Several concrete objectives serve this overall aim. These include:

- Giving students a basic understanding of several theoretical frameworks for analyzing global environmental problems, and the interrelations and limitations of these frameworks.
- Providing students with models and opportunities for practicing honest and careful exploration of and response to difficult conceptual, ethical and epistemological problems.
- Encouraging the integration of the intellectual insights from the course material with students' emotional, social, practical and creative lives through journaling, blogging, theatre exercises, group projects and field excursions, and community collaborations.
- Training students in effective articulation and communication of their thinking in both formal and informal writing, in discussion, and in designing and performing group presentations.

REQUIREMENTS

Classes will combine lecture, group work, community engagement, and class discussion, with an emphasis on student participation. Students will keep journals throughout the semester, contributing excerpts from the journal and additional posts to an online discussion weekly. Two short papers will be assigned (one about midterm, one close to the end of term). Each student will also participate in a community-engaged group project and a presentation of the project to the class.

These elements will be weighted as follows:

Journal:	15%
Online Discussion	15%
Paper I:	15%
Paper II:	15%
Group Project:	30%
Participation:	10%

AUDIT

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

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

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/policies.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.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.