

Department: Philosophy

Course number: PHIL 216W

Title: Environmental Ethics

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Donald Baxter

Catalog Copy: -216W. Environmental Ethics

Either semester. Three credits. Prerequisite: At least one of PHIL 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106. Bontly, Lehmann

Inquiry into obligations to, or concerning, the environment, particularly the moral standing of animals, species, ecosystems, and natural objects.

Course Information: Goals: This course investigates the nature and ground of our moral obligations to nonhuman animals and the broader environment, as well as various contemporary environmental issues (e.g., the moral dimensions of the burgeoning human population). Course objectives include familiarizing students with basic moral theory, investigating how moral theory applies to particular environmental issues, enhancing students' abilities for critical and analytical thought, and developing the ability to produce clear argumentative writing.

Requirements: Course requirements vary by semester but would typically include (1) three argumentative essays to total at least 15 pages, each revised for content, clarity, style, and mechanics; (2) at least one in-class presentation; (3) a final examination; and (4) assigned readings from professional philosophers, economists, and environmental scientists on moral theory and environmental issues.

Major themes include: (1) the nature of moral theory (Utilitarianism, Kantianism, virtue ethics); animal issues (hunting, animal experimentation, moral vegetarianism); the interests of plants and ecosystems (Can plants/ecosystems be benefitted or harmed, independent of the effect on humans?); and particular environmental issues (e.g., land use, sustainable development, human population growth, ecoterrorism).

W Criteria: - The writing assignments in 216W consist of argumentative essays addressing central issues in environmental ethics. They generally require explaining and critiquing views about the nature of moral theory and its application to specific environmental issues, thus building directly on the content of lectures, readings, and discussions. The essay assignments require lucid exposition and clear argumentation, thus practicing the skills necessary for philosophical writing and writing in general. Assignments would ordinarily consist of three essays of five pages each, all redrafted for content and clarity. The writing component would normally determine 75%-85% of the student's final grade. (The remainder is determined by performance on a final examination and participation during in-class discussions and presentations.) THE STUDENT CANNOT PASS THE COURSE WITHOUT PASSING THE W

COMPONENT. STUDENTS WILL BE SO NOTIFIED ON THE SYLLABUS. Writing instruction includes detailed feedback on the content and clarity of written assignments, the presentation of papers in class, peer-review sessions where students comment on each other's writing, and readings and discussions on the craft of argumentative writing. Each five page paper will be revised in light of instructor's comments and/or feedback from fellow students.

Role of Grad Students: - Graduate students will not participate in the teaching of PHIL 216W.

Supplementary Information: -PHIL 216 already exists as a non-W course. The present proposal is merely to add a W-version.