

## **PHI 380: Environmental Ethics (Sec 1 and Sec 2)**

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, Spring 2020

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**Office Hours:** T/R 7-8pm by appointment



Aldo Leopold's "shack" from *A Sand County Almanac*

**Course Description:** This course will explore a variety of possible ethical relationships humans have to the natural world. For example, should we be concerned about the health of the environment out of concern for human well-being or for its own sake? Do we have ethical commitments to species, particular animals, organisms, or ecosystems? The goal of this course is to familiarize students with many of the major approaches to environmental ethics along with exploring a few particularly interesting environmental issues. Students will appreciate and understand the complexity and intricacy of the arguments involved in adopting one approach or position over another.

**How This Semester Will Function:** Given that this is an online class that will be run asynchronously, you will be able to complete this class somewhat on your own schedule. We will have live Zoom meetings on Thursdays (and Tuesdays, when we have exams on Thursday), but they will be optional. During the live meetings we will discuss the material, address questions, and do many of the things which make in-person classes successful.

I have found that a consistent and clear schedule fosters student success in online courses, so I've developed this schedule with that in mind. The readings are typically assigned on Mondays and Tuesdays, but the only graded portion for a typical week is a quiz on Friday. In a normal semester, I would have the readings spread out a bit more during the week, but I am allowing students to do this on their own this semester. I've reserved most Thursdays for a live discussion, but you need not complete all of the readings to attend. The readings should simply be finished each week by Friday, in order to take the quiz.

### **Essential Questions**

- Can ecology inform our ethical systems?
- What kind of moral obligations, if any, do we have to the natural world?
- What is the difference between valuing species, animals, organisms, and ecosystems?

### **Enduring Understandings**

*You will come to understand that:*

- There are objective criteria to evaluate philosophical arguments.
- Opinions differ from beliefs.
- There are a variety of ethical perspectives.

### **Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions**

*You should be able to:*

- Recognize critical thinking as a process of identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and constructing reasoning in deciding what conclusions to draw or actions to take.
- Understand a variety of philosophical concepts, questions, and positions.
- Defend your own philosophical positions against criticisms.
- Read and comprehend challenging philosophical works.
- Appreciate and respect differing points of views.

### **Required Texts:**

1. Louis Pojman, *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. (Text Rental)
2. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Purchase)
3. All readings will also be posted on Canvas

**Office Hours:** I will have office hours scheduled for Monday and Wednesday evenings from 7-8pm. This time is set aside for student meetings, but if you plan to meet with me, you will have to schedule it with me. I realize that this time will not work for some students, and I can meet at other various times throughout the week, just contact me to set up a time that works. You can find the link to the office hours meeting room in the course information module.

**Graded assignments will include:** Three Exams (60% total), Two Short Essays (20% total), and Ten Quizzes (20% total)

**Quizzes:** Quizzes will cover the readings for that week. They will be due by the end of the day on Friday. Typically, quizzes will be around five questions and five minutes in length, though I reserve the right to occasionally change the quiz format. No notes, readings, or outside sources are allowed on quizzes.

**Short Essays:** Short essays will be 750-1000 word essays summarizing a reading or responding to a particular question. Essay prompts will be provided. Essays will be checked for “originality” via “Turnitin.com.” Details and suggestions on writing essays, as well as grading criteria, will be distributed in class.

**Exams:** There will be three exams. Exams will consist of multiple-choice and true/false questions. Exams will not be cumulative. The dates for the exams are listed in our schedule. You may take the exam anytime during the day it is assigned – you do not need to take it during our scheduled class time. No notes, readings, or outside sources are allowed on exams.

**Final grades will be determined on the following scale:**

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

**Late Policy:** Quizzes cannot be made-up. Short assignments will be docked 10% off per class late. Exams cannot be made-up without a university approved absence notification (e.g. a note from a health care provider explaining why the student couldn’t be there). Furthermore, you need to contact me immediately in order to reschedule the exam as early as possible. If this condition is not met, you may not be able to re-take the exam.

**Academic Honesty:** If you commit any acts of academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism on written work or cheating on an exam) you will earn a zero for that work (and possibly other disciplinary actions). Please refer to the Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures for more information (<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf#page=11> ).

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement:** The ADA is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP’s policies, see: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>.

If you require *classroom and/or exam accommodations*, please register with the **Disability and Assistive Technology Center** and then contact me at the beginning of the

course. For more information, please visit the Disability Center's office, located at 604 LRC or their webpage at: <http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>.

**Schedule:** Schedule is subject to change. Readings in Pojman's *Environmental Ethics* are listed as (Poj); reading in Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* are listed as (Leo). All readings will also be available on Canvas.

M Jan 25 T Jan 26 R Jan 28	Introduction <b>and</b> Rachels: A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy Palmer: Contested Frameworks in Environmental Ethics Zoom Discussion
M Feb 1 T Feb 2 R Feb 4	<b><u>The Causes of Ecological Crises</u></b> White: The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crises (Poj: 19-25) Penn: The Evolutionary Roots of Our Ecological Crises Zoom Discussion
M Feb 8 T Feb 9 R Feb 11	<b><u>Leopold's Land Ethic</u></b> Leopold: Wisconsin (Leo) & Leopold: Thinking Like a Mountain (Leo) Leopold: The Land Ethic (Leo) Zoom Discussion
M Feb 15 T Feb 16 R Feb 18	Film: Fierce Green Fire Norton: The Constancy of Leopold's Land Ethic Zoom Discussion
M Feb 22 T Feb 23 R Feb 25	<b><u>Deep Ecology</u></b> Naess: Ecosophy T: Deep Versus Shallow Ecology (Poj: #23) Live Zoom Review <b>EXAM</b>
M Mar 1 T Mar 2 R Mar 4	<b><u>Animal Ethics</u></b> Singer: A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation (Poj: #7) Rolston: Higher Animals Zoom Discussion
M Mar 8 T Mar 9 R Mar 11	Varner: Can Animal Rights Activists be Environmentalists? Jamieson: Against Zoos (Poj: #10) Zoom Discussion
M Mar 15 T Mar 16 R Mar 18	<b><u>Biocentric Ethics</u></b> Taylor: Biocentric Egalitarianism (Poj: #15) Rolston: selections from chap 3 Zoom Discussion
22-26	<b>Spring Break!</b>
M Mar 29 T Mar 30 R Apr 1	<b><u>Challenges to Environmental Ethics</u></b> Gould: The Golden Rule (Poj: 248-253) Tierney: Betting on the Planet Zoom Discussion
M Apr 5 T Apr 6	<b><u>Environmental Ethics and Pandemics</u></b> Williams, How Animals May Cause the Next Big One Quammen, We Made the Coronavirus Epidemic and Live Zoom Review

R Apr 8	<b>Exam</b>
M Apr 12 T Apr 13 R Apr 15	<b><u>Food Ethics and Global Hunger</u></b> View the film <i>Food Inc.</i> and Pollan: The Omnivore's Dilemma – Selections Laudan: A Plea for Culinary Modernism Zoom Discussion
M Apr 19 T Apr 20 R Apr 22	Thompson: The Fundamental Problem with Food Ethics Rolston: Feeding People versus Saving Nature? Zoom Discussion
M Apr 26 T Apr 27 R Apr 29	<b><u>Wilderness</u></b> Cronon: The Trouble with Wilderness Marris: Designer Ecosystems and Conservation Everywhere Zoom Discussion
M May 3 T May 4 R May 6	<b><u>Climate Change and Global Concerns</u></b> Oreskes: The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change Shue: Global Environment and International Inequality Zoom Discussion
M May 10 T May 11 R May 13	Steffen, et. al.: The Anthropocene Continued Live Zoom Review

EXAM III – Look to the schedule in Course Modules to find the time for your section.