

PHIL 148: Philosophy of the Environment

Professor: Karen Kovaka

Winter 2023

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Office Hours: Tues 11am-1pm

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Class Hours: Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:50am

Class Room: Warren Lecture Hall 2115

Course Description

The natural world: what is it like? What do we *want* it to be like? And what changes to the natural world are right—or wrong—for us to try to make? These questions will guide us in Philosophy of the Environment. By the end of the quarter, you will have a better understanding of the central ideas in modern environmentalist thought. You will also become more adept at analyzing and critiquing claims about how we should or shouldn't treat the environment. Most importantly, you will be well on your way to developing your own views about the topics in this course, which range from the meaning of biodiversity, to the ethics of ecosystem restoration, to environmental justice.

Course Structure

We will meet for in-person class sessions twice a week (Tues/Thurs). You will complete the required reading before each class. Our classes will build on the assigned texts, rather than repeating them. An essential component of this course is active participation and small-group discussions. There is no substitute for active engagement from everyone during our time together. You will have a small writing assignment due each week, as well as three additional homework assignments due throughout the quarter. At the end of the quarter, there will be a take-home-style exam in open-note, short-answer format. Both your homework assignments and final exams will be available for you to work on one week before they are due.

Evaluation

1. Weekly Journal Entries 20%
2. Homework Assignments: 45%
 - (a) Assignment 1 (due 1/26): 15%
 - (b) Assignment 2 (due 2/16): 15%
 - (c) Assignment 3 (due 3/9): 15%
3. Final Exam (due Tues, 3/21): 25%
4. Participation: 10%

Grading Scale

I will assign letter grades, which correspond to the following percentages:

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| • A+: 97-100 | • B+: 87-89 | • C+: 77-79 | • D+: 67-69 |
| • A: 93-96 | • B: 83-86 | • C: 73-76 | • D: 60-66 |
| • A-: 90-92 | • B-: 80-82 | • C-: 90-72 | • F: <60 |

Fine Print

- **Attendance:** I expect you to come to every class session except when illness or other personal circumstances prevent you. I will keep track of attendance each week and forgive up to two absences with no questions asked. This means you do not need to contact me to explain your first two absences. After two absences, I will start deducting points from your final grade for each additional absence. If circumstances require you to miss more than this many classes, you and I need to speak in person about alternative ways for you to participate in the course.
- **Participation:** Attendance is necessary but not sufficient for earning full participation credit. Everyone who makes regular, thoughtful contributions will get full credit. Speaking up in class is best, so that everyone else can benefit from what you have to say. But if that really doesn't work for you, you can participate in other ways, such as visiting office hours or sending thoughts over email.
- **Late Work:** I can grant extensions on assignments *if you request them in advance*. If you turn in work late without requesting an extension, we may reduce the grade of an assignment by 5% per day late. In general, however, we are happy to adjust deadlines in response to your circumstances. If you are experiencing difficulties turning in work, please talk to us proactively, rather than waiting until things pile up.

- **Accessibility:** We all learn differently, and I am committed to making this course accessible to everyone. Please come talk to me if some aspect of the course isn't working for you: we can collaborate on alternatives that suit your needs, interests, and learning style. If you have a disability (or think you might), it's also a good idea to contact [Services for Students with Disabilities](#).
- **Technology:** Our phones, tablets, and laptops are crucial tools for learning, yet they are also notorious distractions. I will leave it to you to regulate your technology use. But my expectation is that during class and discussion sessions, you do not check your email, message people, or use the Internet for things that aren't course-related.
- **Academic Integrity:** I take academic integrity very seriously. It's important that all the assignments you complete are your own work and that you know how to credit and cite sources appropriately. If you have any questions about my expectations for a particular assignment, be sure to talk to me! I also recommend you read the [UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship](#).
- **Changes to the syllabus:** I may adjust the course readings and schedule as the quarter goes along. It is your responsibility to pay attention to Canvas and your email so that you are aware of any changes.

Texts

All of the required reading for the course will be posted on Canvas.

Reading Schedule

1 The Science of Saving the Planet

Many of our ideas about how we *should* treat the environment come from our scientific theories about *what* the environment is like in the first place. In this unit, we will explore key ideas in conservation biology and ecology. We will also see how influential values are in these sciences and consider how this effects the conclusions they come to.

Date	Content
Tues 1/10	The Aims of Conservation Biology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: None
Thurs 1/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Jay Odenbaugh, "Values, Advocacy, and Conservation Biology"
Tues. 1/17	What Is Biodiversity? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Sahotra Sarkar, "Biodiversity and Systematic Conservation Planning for the 21st Century"
Thurs. 1/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Carlos Santana, "Biodiversity Eliminativism"
Tues. 1/24	Ecology and Ecosystems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: James Justus, <i>The Philosophy of Ecology: An Introduction</i>, ch 2
Thurs. 1/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: James Justus, <i>The Philosophy of Ecology: An Introduction</i>, ch 3

2 Humans and Nature

Concepts like the "natural" and the "wild" have been very important to the environmentalist movement. Yet there are deep questions about what these concepts mean, and about whether they are valuable or useful. Depending on how we answer these questions, we might develop different views on key issues, such as whether we should try to restore ecosystems to their past states, whether invasive species are always bad, or whether we should do our best not to interfere with nature.

Date	Content
<p>Tues 1/31</p> <p>Thurs 2/2</p>	<p>Naturalness and Wildness: Some Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Steven Vogel, "Why 'Nature' Has No Place in Environmental Philosophy" <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Mark Woods, <i>Rethinking Wilderness</i>, ch, 9
<p>Tues. 2/7</p> <p>Thurs. 2/9</p>	<p>Turning Back the Clock: Rewilding and Restoration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Eric Desjardins, "Historicity and Ecological Restoration" <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Andrea Gammon, "The Many Meanings of Rewilding"
<p>Tues. 2/14</p> <p>Thurs. 2/16</p>	<p>Accepting the Future: Novelty and Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Emma Marris <i>Rambunctious Garden</i>, ch. 5-6 <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Emma Marris <i>Rambunctious Garden</i>, ch. 7-8
<p>Tues. 2/21</p> <p>Thurs. 2/23</p>	<p>Reckoning with Interference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Elizabeth Kolbert, <i>Under a White Sky</i>, selections <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Evelyn Brister, J. Britt Holbrook, and Megan Palmer, "Conservation Science and the Ethos of Restraint"

3 Management Challenges

A final set of questions in environmental philosophy has to do with the ethical implications of how we treat the non-human world *for other people*. We will end the course by thinking about how we might pursue environmental conservation in a way that aligns with the demands of justice and democratic ideals.

Date	Content
Tues 2/28	<p>Scarce Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: California’s Water Supply Strategy
Thurs 3/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: TBD
Tues. 3/7	<p>Fair Distribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Henry Shue, <i>Climate Justice</i>, selections
Thurs. 3/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Kyle Powys Whyte, "Is It Colonial Déjà Vu?"
Tues. 3/14	<p>Public Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: TBD
Thurs. 3/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: None