

## **Environmental Ethics and Politics**

**POT 3503-24FA; Spring 2017**

T 10-11 (5:10-7:05) R11 (6:15-7:05)  
Classroom: Anderson 134

Instructor: Seaton Tarrant, PhD  
Office: Anderson Hall 320

Office Hours: Thursday 4:45-6:10

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### Course Description

Environmental Ethics is the study of human values and relationships with(in) the non-human world. This course will explore possible historical roots of our current environmental situation and contemporary responses from a variety of disciplines and worldviews. We will explore environmental virtues, obligations of environmental citizenship, and “deep” approaches to connecting with the world. We will discuss this body of knowledge with respect to our own personal and collective relationships with the earth, and specifically with regard to climate change, food scarcity, and technological approaches to environmental flourishing.

### Course Objectives

Students taking this course will:

- 1 Gain knowledge of a diverse spectrum of environmental ethics issues and scholarship, including the role of religion and distinct cultural worldviews, the impact of ecological and systems sciences, and different approaches to naming and valuing nature.
- 2 Become familiar a range of environmental discourses.
- 3 Critically assess, evaluate and utilize interdisciplinary knowledge to reflect upon and discuss the most pressing environmental issues of our time.
- 4 Demonstrate effective research and writing skills, articulate and defend their own understanding of environmental ethics as it applies to specific environmental issues.
- 5 Practice learning and thinking critically, constructively and collaboratively about the relationship between humans and the planet we inhabit.

### Required Texts

Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*  
McKibben, *American Earth*  
Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*  
Bailey, *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*

## Course requirements and grading

### Participation and Attendance - 20%

I will take attendance for this class. I will take attendance at the start of class (beginning after the drop-add period). More than three missed classes, as well as arriving late to class more than three times, will result in a drop of a half letter grade. After this, each additional tardy or absence will drop your score another half letter grade. I will be learning the names of those who participate actively in discussion in a way that indicates they have done the reading and are thinking about the issues, and I will shower these students with bonus points and high marks. I am happy to give as many A's as possible to students who show up and do the work.

### Chronology Presentation - 10%

Each student will take one historic moment in American environmental history and present a brief overview of what happened, why this event is significant, and how relevance to this event can be found in a contemporary context. This presentation will take no more than 3 minutes, and include no more than 2 slides.

### Midterm - 30%

On March 2 you will write a review of one of the two films we have viewed, in class, utilizing a single 3x5 card of notes that you will prepare ahead of time. You will be expected to employ extensive reference to the thinkers we have discussed and the concepts we have learned in this film review.

### Final Paper - 40%

On April 18 you will turn in a paper not to exceed 5 pages, double spaced, 12 point times new roman font, with 1" margins. This paper will explain in critical detail the ongoing development of your own personal vision and understanding of environmental ethics and politics, based on the history, concepts, and contemporary literature we have covered in the course.

## Course Policies

While Laptops are allowed in class for taking notes, or reading electronic copies of a book, I reserve the right to revoke this privilege for any student that comes to

class and is obviously distracting themselves and/or others with social media, email, or work for another course. If I have to revoke this privilege, I will do so discretely and privately, so no one is embarrassed.

Please turn off your phone before class, and please leave your phone in your pocket or bag.

Food is allowed in class, and homemade and/or homegrown food for sharing is encouraged. Please bring only non-obtrusive, non-fast-foods to the class. In other words, a sandwich, fruit, nuts, yogurt, a piece of chocolate, and the like are always fine. A huge burrito that fills your desk, a big bag of crinkly potato chips, or any sort of food that makes the classroom smell like the inside of a McChickKing, are not allowed. If you forget this policy, I will politely ask you to save those foods till after class.

If you have a relevant announcement you would like to make to the class, please email me and I will schedule time for you.

You are welcome to get up and head to the restroom whenever you need to, and I will always try to fit in a break during the double block.

## Reading Schedule

This course is reading intensive. You will be reading around 100 pages each week. If you fail to complete the reading, it is unlikely you will have the time to make it up. Please keep this in mind. That said, the reading is not technical or difficult. The readings have been chosen to be enjoyable, meditative, and to assist in finding relevance with the more technical content that I will present during class lectures. In the best case scenario, you will start the reading for the next week on a Friday, and have it completed by the next Tuesday. On Tuesday I will lecture, and then answer questions and engage in discussion. On Thursday we will work as a class to integrate the lecture content with that week's readings.

### January 5 - 10

Snyder - chapter 1, *The Etiquette of Freedom*

Monbiot - Ecological Boredom

Thomas Berry - American College in the Ecological Age

Wendell Berry - Higher Education and Home Defense, The Loss of the University  
(the last three will be provided electronically)

### January 12

Catlin, North American Indian, in AE 37-45

## January 17 - 19

Kimmerer - Planting Sweetgrass and Tending Sweetgrass

## January 24 - 26

Kimmerer - Picking Sweetgrass and Burning Sweetgrass

\*We will watch *The Education of Little Tree* on Thursday, the 26th

## January 31 - February 2

All readings in AE:

Cronin, Seasons of Want and Plenty 632 - 658

Thoreau, selection from Walden, 1-25, plus chapter 2 (provided electronically)

Whitman and Marsh; 62 - 80

Roosevelt 129 - 133

Burroughs 145 - 168 (skip "Nature Near Home")

## February 7 - 9

All readings in AE:

Leopold in AE 266 - 294

Friends of the Earth 500 - 503

Lewis Thomas, 550 - 553

Brower, in AE, 554 - 558

Berry, Human Presence and The Ecological Age (provided electronically)

\*This week you will get your chronology assignment

## February 14 - 16

All readings in AE:

Carson and Baker 366 - 379

LBJ 395 - Phillip k Dick 453

\*Will watch *Avatar* on Thursday, the 16th

## February 21 - 23

All readings in AE:

Walker, Wilson, Chavez, McKibben, and Bullard 659 - 736

## February 28

Excerpts from Klein's *This Changes Everything* (provided electronically)

## March 2

Midterm

## March 14 - 16

Pollan in AE 949 - 960

Katz on wild fermentation (provided electronically)

March 21 - 23

Snyder 27 - 103

March 28 - 30

Snyder 104 - 198

April 4 - 6

Bailey Prologue - 94

April 11 - 13

Bailey 95 - 170

April 18