

Philosophy 212: Environmental Philosophy (Spring 2015)

Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change.

Professor: Dr. Rachel Fredericks

I prefer to be called Rachel, but you may call me Professor or Doctor Fredericks if that makes you more comfortable.

Classes: Mondays and Fridays, 2:00–3:40 p.m. in Colgate 304

Email Address: rachel.fredericks@colby-sawyer.edu

I prefer to be contacted by email rather than telephone. If you send me an email, I will usually be able to respond within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend.

Office Hours: M & W 11:00 a.m.-noon, T 1:45-2:45 p.m., & F 3:45-4:45, and by appointment

Office Location: Colgate 234

Office Phone: 603 526 3422

Course Description and Goals

This survey course is designed to help students understand and respond to a variety of ethical challenges that all humans face, given that we cannot help but interact with the natural environment in various ways. We develop our philosophical skills by grappling with questions about how to conceptualize the natural world, what its value is, and our proper place in it. We may or may not arrive at firm convictions about how to answer such questions, but we will gain a more sophisticated understanding of why reasonable people disagree at times about how to do so.

Our focus will be on environmental ethics, and we begin by outlining how and why environmental ethics has developed as a distinct philosophical subfield in recent decades. We ask, for instance, whether we should assign value to natural entities as individuals or as collectives and whether the value of non-human natural entities is intrinsic or only instrumental. Then we examine and criticize a variety of schools of thought in environmental ethics, including deep ecology, ecofeminism, and environmental pragmatism. At the end of the course, we investigate specific environmental issues (as chosen by the students) with an eye to the ways that philosophers can influence relevant policy, activism, and the everyday lives of students and others.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have learned to:

1. Define and use key concepts relating to the natural environment and its value, such as intrinsic value, anthropocentrism, individualism, holism, deep ecology, ecofeminism, environmental pragmatism, wilderness, environmental restoration, etc.,
2. Recreate and analyze arguments about the natural environment, its value, and the morality of our behavior relative to the environment that are advanced in both academic philosophy and in contemporary American public debates to demonstrate

- understanding of why people support different policies and practices relative to the environment,
3. Evaluate both the content and structure of arguments about the natural environment, its value, and the morality of our behavior relative to the environment, and
 4. Develop individual views that explain how we should behave (individually and/or collectively) relative to the natural environment, support those positions using the best and most persuasive reasons possible, and recognize how those views demand and/or forbid certain types of action in our lives outside the classroom.

Required Book

Light, Andrew and Holmes Rolston III, eds. *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. Print.

Additional required readings (not from this books) are available online via Moodle and are marked on the schedule with a *. All the readings on the schedule are required unless marked otherwise.

You should have all required readings done before class on the day for which they are scheduled, and you should always bring a copy (paper or electronic) of them with you to class on the day for which they are scheduled!

Recommended Books

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2007.

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. 4th ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009.

More recommended readings are available via Moodle. Pay attention to which resources on Moodle are required and which are recommended!

Schedule

All groups of students are different in their interests, needs, and talents, so I reserve the right to make changes to this schedule (although I try to do that as little as possible and give as much warning as possible if and when I do).

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

1/23: Introduction to the Course

Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, "Syllabus"*

1/26: Introduction to Philosophical Arguments (**Add/drop deadline**)

Required reading: John D. Mariana, "How to Read Philosophy"*

Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, "Guide To Philosophical Reading And Questioning *

Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, "Guidelines for Submitting Assignments Electronically via Moodle"*

Recommended reading: Ali Almosawi, "An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments"*

- 1/30: Presentation about Franklin Falls Sustainable Learning Initiative
Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, "Guide to Philosophical Note-Taking"*
Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, "Guide to Learning from Comments on Your Assignments"*
Recommended reading: Sharon Rupp, "Be Employable. Study Philosophy"*
Recommended viewing: Greg Ganssle, "Argument and Evidence"*

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS?

- 2/2: Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston, "Introduction: Ethics & Environmental Ethics," pp. 1-11
Recommended viewing: Kelley Schiffman, "Normative & Descriptive Claims"*
2/6: Clare Palmer, "An Overview of Environmental Ethics," pp. 15-37 AND Rachel Fredericks, "Guide to Philosophical Writing"*
2/9: Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," pp. 38-46 AND Richard Sylvan (Routley), "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?" pp. 47-52

WHO/WHAT COUNTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS?

- 2/13: Peter Singer, "Not for Humans Only: The Place of Nonhumans in Environmental Issues," pp. 55-64
Recommended viewing: Jeff Sebo, "Moral Status"*
2/16: **Winter Recess (no classes!)**
2/20: Tom Regan, "Animal Rights: What's in a Name?" with a brief extract from *The Case for Animal Rights*, pp. 65-73
2/23: Eric Katz, "Is There a Place for Animals in the Moral Consideration of Nature?" pp. 85-94
2/27: Gary Varner, "Can Animal Rights Activists Be Environmentalists?" pp. 95-113
Recommended viewing: Tyler Doggett, "Killing Animals for Food"*

IS NATURE INTRINSICALLY VALUABLE?

- 3/2: Holmes Rolston III, "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value," pp. 143-153
Recommended viewing: Kelley Schiffman, "Intrinsic vs Instrumental Value"*
3/6: Eugene Hargrove, "Weak Anthropocentric Intrinsic Value," pp. 175-190
Recommended listening: Radiolab, "How Do You Put a Price Tag on Nature?"*
3/9: Bryan Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," p. 163-174
3/10: Essay 1 DUE

SHOULD WE BE MONISTS OR PLURALISTS?

- 3/13: Christopher Stone, "Moral Pluralism and the Course of Environmental Ethics," pp. 193-202
Recommended reading: J. Baird Callicott, "The Case Against Moral Pluralism," pp. 203-219
3/16 – 3/20: Spring Recess (no classes!)
3/23: Peter Wenz, "Minimal, Moderate, and Extreme Moral Pluralism," pp. 220-228
3/27: Andrew Light, "The Case for a Practical Pluralism," pp. 229-247

WHAT ALTERNATIVE THEORIES EXIST?

- (Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism, & Environmental Pragmatism)
3/30: Warwick Fox, "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of Our Time?" pp. 252-261

- 4/3: Arne Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects" pp. 262-274
4/6: Anthony Weston, "Beyond Intrinsic Value: Pragmatism in Environmental Ethics," pp. 307-318
4/10: Ben Minteer & Robert Manning, "Pragmatism in Environmental Ethics: Democracy, Pluralism, and the Management of Nature," pp. 319-330
4/13: Greta Gaard & Lori Gruen, "Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health," pp. 276-293
4/17: Karen Warren & Jim Cheney, "Ecological Feminism and Ecosystem Ecology," pp. 294-305
4/17: Essay 2 Due

PARTICULAR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

(Options include: climate change, environmental justice, food ethics, environmental restoration, wilderness, human population, & many more)

4/20: Students' Choice: TBD

4/21: **Scholars' Symposium (No regular classes, but stay tuned for relevant events!)**

4/24: Students' Choice: TBD

4/27: Students' Choice: TBD (Review Session?)

Final Exam

The final exam will be on Monday, May 4th from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in our regular location, Colgate 304.

Assignments & Assessment

Your grade will be based on:

Participation: 25 points

Homework & in-class assignments: 75 points total

Essay 1: 50 points

Essay 2: 50 points

Final Exam: 50 points

Total: 250 points

Attendance and active participation in class discussions is crucial to success in mastering the course material and developing your philosophical skills. You are expected to come to class with informed questions about the relevant readings. The quality and quantity of your contributions to discussion will be the primary basis for this aspect of your grade, but the quality and quantity of (a) your participation in office hours, (b) your email exchanges with the professor, and (c) your questions and comments on the in-class notecards will also be considered.

If you miss five classes without communicating an adequate justifying or excusing reason to me, I may initiate an administrative withdrawal to remove you from the course, based on your performance in the course so far and my best estimation of whether you will be able to successfully complete the course.

All assignments (other than those completed during class time) must be typed (double-spaced) and submitted electronically via Moodle. All assignments will be processed using Turnitin, a plagiarism-detecting technology that also allows me to efficiently give you individualized, legible comments on your work. Thus every assignment must include appropriate citations for all quotations and paraphrases, as well as a complete list of bibliographic references at the end. You must use the MLA style guide to format your citations and references, but contrary to the MLA style guide, you do not need to put the Works Cited section on a separate page, and you do need to provide the URL for any source materials found on the Internet.

You must always submit your assignments as Microsoft Word documents. To ensure consistent, correct formatting, I have posted an assignment template on the Moodle site for the course for you to use as the starting point for each assignment.

There will be small homework assignments (usually worth 5 or 10 points) often in this course, which will always be due at 1:30 p.m. (half an hour before class starts) via Moodle on days that we have class (Mondays and Fridays). Occasionally, we may do an activity in class that will count toward your homework grade.

Late homework will NOT be accepted unless (a) arrangements have been agreed upon with the professor in advance, which requires both planning and good reasons, or (b) in case of documented illness or other emergency beyond the student's control. If the latter, the student must contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

I recognize that *occasionally* one will have a good reason for not being in class and/or completing a homework assignment on time. Therefore, I will assign approximately 85 points worth of homework and in-class assignments, even though I will calculate grades as though there were only 75 points worth of homework (that is, you only need 75 points to get 100% for this portion of the class, though there will be about 85 points possible). Thus, if you forget or botch an assignment or two, you can still get a high score for the homework portion of the course (though you should plan to attend class every day and complete all the in-class and homework assignments). This means that it is possible for students to earn more than 100% of the available homework points.

You will be required to write two short argumentative / persuasive essays (approximately four pages double-spaced). You must begin your essay with a thesis statement that tells the reader exactly which claim you will argue for in the paper. The body of the essay must include both (a) description / interpretation of part of an assigned text from the course and (b) evaluation, application, defense, or criticism of that bit of text as it relates to some specific, concrete environmental problem, debate, policy, or practice. Thus you will be advancing a position from the first person perspective and supporting that position with reasons (an argument), with the aim of persuading your audience to agree with you about a specific claim and/or to take a specific kind of action. In writing these papers, students will be making progress toward all the learning outcomes for this class (as listed above).

Since philosophy papers tend to be an unfamiliar and challenging form of writing for students, I recommend that you devote some quality attention to (a) the detailed assignment prompts I give you, (b) the detailed writing guidelines and tips that I post to Moodle, (c) the written feedback

that you receive from me on your homework assignments, and (d) our in-class discussions about philosophical writing.

Essays will always be due at 11:59 p.m. via Moodle. Late essays will be accepted (via email), but they will be penalized 5% for the first minute they are late and an additional 5% for each day that passes between the deadline and submission.

Your final exam will be comprehensive (that is, cumulative), and will be taken without your books or your notes. Questions on the exam will be divided into two sections according to how long your answer should be: answers that require 1-5 complete sentences as compared to answers that require short essays. You will have some choice of which questions you answer, although you must answer a fixed number of questions from each section. If you answer more questions than I ask you to, you will not receive credit for the surplus answers. A much more detailed explanation of what to expect on the final exam will be provided via Moodle.

Final letter grades will be determined by the number of points that students earn throughout the term; one needs at least the number of points in the right hand column below in order to earn the corresponding letter grade. I will not “round up” the sum of points that you earn, and I do not grade on a curve.

A = 95% = 238 points	C = 73% = 183 points
A- = 90% = 225 points	C- = 70% = 175 points
B+ = 87% = 218 points	D+ = 67% = 168 points
B = 83% = 208 points	D = 63% = 158 points
B- = 80% = 200 points	D- = 60% = 150 points
C+ = 77% = 193 points	F = <60% ≤ 149 points

In general, written assignments will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Structure and Organization

- a. Is the assignment well organized?
- b. Does it have a clear introductory paragraph, thesis statement, and concluding paragraph?
- c. Are there clear transitions between paragraphs and sections of the assignment?

2. Exposition and Interpretation

- a. Do you give a clear, accurate, and charitable interpretation of the view(s) under consideration?
- b. Do you make clear the underlying assumptions of the view(s) as well as their implications?
- c. Do you support your interpretations with relevant citations to the text?

3. Argument and Critical Evaluation

- a. Do you provide rational arguments for the claims you make? Is it obvious what they are?
- b. When critiquing a view, do you consider possible responses to that critique?
- c. Do you show that you have thought independently about the problem in question?

4. Writing Style

- a. Is your prose style clear and easy to understand?
- b. Are there any recurring grammatical or spelling errors?

- c. Do you avoid awkward and confusing sentence structures?

Student Conduct

A respectful, civil environment is crucial for learning any subject, but especially so for philosophy, which involves questioning, defending, and criticizing the beliefs and practices that mean the most to us. Conduct that interferes with other students' ability to learn or my ability to teach is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. In particular, students should not interrupt other students or me, otherwise dominate class discussion, disparage or otherwise disrespect the ideas and beliefs of others (which does not mean that one cannot or should not respectfully provide reasons to disagree), habitually arrive late or leave early, make or receive phone calls, text, surf the internet, or use other technology that is not directly related to course goals.

Schedule Conflicts

Students are responsible for meeting all of their academic obligations, even if they are engaged in college-sponsored activities, i.e. theatre, athletics, or field trips. There are no excused absences for such activities. In the case of a scheduling conflict between two classes, students should make appropriate arrangements with the course instructors, being mindful that a regularly scheduled class has the higher priority.

Colby-Sawyer acknowledges that religious practices differ from tradition to tradition and that the demands of religious observance in some traditions may cause conflicts with student class schedules. If religious observance will cause a student to be absent from class or otherwise affect his or her ability to complete academic assignments, he or she must notify the instructor in advance and make necessary arrangements to complete the course materials.

Academic Integrity

All Colby-Sawyer College students are expected to understand the meaning of academic honesty and to behave in accordance with the college's policies on academic honesty as published in the Code of Community Responsibility. To read these policies, see the links found at: <http://www.colby-sawyer.edu/campus-life/conduct/honesty/index.html>

Plagiarism is the use of creations, ideas, or words of others without formally acknowledging the author or source through appropriate use of quotation marks, references, and the like. Plagiarizing is presenting someone else's work or thought as one's own original work or thought, whether it is intentional (on purpose) or unintentional (an accident).

More detailed resources explaining what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarizing are posted on the Moodle site for the class. If, after investigating those resources, you have questions about how to cite appropriately, please contact me *as soon as possible*. It is much better for everyone involved if a student gets help clearing up any confusion right away, before turning in the assignment, rather than waiting and having to deal with the bigger problem of plagiarism.

If I discover that a student has plagiarized or cheated in any way, the student will receive a score of zero for the assignment in question (and this may be sufficient to cause the student to receive a failing grade for the course overall). Whenever a student receives a score of zero for this reason, I arrange a meeting with the student so I can explain why the assignment constitutes plagiarism (or another form of academic dishonesty) and answer the student's questions. The main purpose of these meetings is to ensure that the student understands how to avoid similar problems in the future. After the meeting, I document my findings about the assignment and the content of our discussion in a letter, and send copies of that letter and the related evidence both to the student and to Dean Burton Kirkwood. The student is then asked to sign a copy of the letter (indicating that it is an accurate representation of what has occurred) and return the signed copy to Dean Kirkwood. Generally, for a first offense, no further penalties are assigned beyond the grade penalty on the specific assignment, but decisions about such things are in the hands of the dean, since only he has access to information about whether the student has been reported for a similar infraction before.

Disability Accommodations

Students who have a documented disability will be provided with reasonable accommodations. They are encouraged to contact Access Resources (accessresources@colby-sawyer.edu) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. All accommodations must be approved by CSC Access Resources.

Concerns or Problems

If you have a concern or problem relating to any aspect of the course or your performance in it, get in touch with me, the professor, as soon as possible. I want to be able to help you, but if I do not know about your concern, I cannot address it. If discussing your concern with me (and implementing any plan we agree upon) does not resolve the issue, your next step would be to contact the chair of the department, Prof. Tom Kealy.