

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2024-25

PHILOSOP 2033A
Introduction to Environmental Philosophy

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

One can hardly look at the news on any given day without being reminded that we are facing numerous environmental challenges. Most of them are linked to human activities such as pollution of all kinds, mining, deforestation, industrial size fisheries, and it is increasingly clear according to experts that climate change is exacerbating the situation. Natural habitats, species, and human populations are of course suffering from all this, but in an unequal and unjust way. Navigating the complex network of causes and effects of these environmental issues, as well as their moral ramifications can feel rather daunting. The bravest of us sometimes venture in looking for solutions, but here again, the picture seems unclear. What is the best way to protect and restore natural habitats? Some suggest that putting fences to keep humans out of nature is the only way, while others seem to think that technological progress and a more efficient use of natural resources is the best avenue. Are these approaches compatible? In what ways are they conflicting and why does it matter? Some groups think that we have a duty to restore degraded habitats, while others think that restoration is too late given climate change. How can they know this? Who gets to decide? Why? What environmental values and worldviews are most adequate in making these decisions? This introduction to environmental philosophy will be the occasion for students to ponder such difficult questions and to develop critical reflections on various pressing environmental issues.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Throughout the semester, students will be exposed to foundational texts in environmental philosophy and more contemporary frameworks. They will read and discuss the primary sources as well as critical reflections by contemporary philosophers. Students will learn about central philosophical topics and issues arising in biological conservation projects and sustainability studies. These include: What is biological conservation? What is biodiversity? Why is it central to conservation? What is sustainability in the context of conservation? What perspectives on the world and morality are framing the different attitudes toward environmental actions and regulations? The perspectives that will be contrasted include anthropocentrism, biocentrism (as developed in the land ethic and deep ecology), ecofeminism, resilience thinking, and some indigenous perspectives.

The course includes weekly group discussions during which students will play an active role as

leaders and participants. Students will thus learn to prepare structured discussions and bring their classmates to identify relevant topics and constructively discuss issues arising from the readings. Students are expected to read the relevant material ahead of time so that these activities can go beyond a mere exchange of opinions. This is a great exercise for improving understanding, listening, and communicative skills.

TEXTS

Leopold, Aldo. 1986. *A Sand County Almanac: With Essays on Conservation from Round River*.

Millstein, Roberta. 2024. *The Land Is Our Community: Aldo Leopold's Environmental Ethic for the New Millennium*. (A free electronic edition will come out in July 2024. For those who prefer physical books, you can also pre-buy a copy on the website of University of Chicago Press: <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/L/bo219284936.html>)

METHOD OF EVALUATION

- Weekly entry ticket (20%) 2pts each, best 10 out of 12
- Preparing and leading a discussion twice in the semester (20%)
 - Discussion 1 (10%): between weeks 2-6, date TBD with student
 - Discussion 2 (10%): between weeks 8-12, date TBD with student
- Participation (10%)
- Mid-term exam (25%). In class, during week 7
- Final exam (35%)

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

No aids are permitted for exams. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and

preliminary research purposes. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration; however, students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. **Assignments should reflect the students' own thoughts and independent written work.** By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and allows them to produce original written contributions.

If plagiarism or unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments after the assignment has been submitted. Students must keep all notes and first drafts until the assignment is returned to them.

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of

registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.