#### ENVS 410: Environmental Ethics

**Western State Colorado University**

**Spring 2018**

**T/Th 2:00-3:15**

**Hurst Hall 201**

Dr. Hausdoerffer

Office Hours: T/Th 11:00-12:30 *or by appointment*

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## Course Description

This seminar examines environmental ethics from diverse philosophical and cultural perspectives. I have two interrelated goals for this course. First, we will study the central questions and philosophers of traditional environmental ethics. Such questions include: Does “nature” have intrinsic value, worthy of serious ethical concern? From a systems perspective, is anything legitimately an “instrument,” devoid of intrinsic value and ethical consideration? To what extent have the core values of Western society philosophically promoted an exploitative anthropocentric (human centered) ethic? To what extent have such values fostered stewardship and respect for the more-than-human? Is a biocentric or ecocentric ethic (one that prioritizes the more-than-human) the best alternative to anthropocentrism, or is there an ideal ethical space in between, a sustainable and *anthropocentric* human place in “nature”? If so, what individual and social choices might enable humans to inhabit that place? If not, what choices for environmental ethics are available?

The second purpose of this course is to complicate these questions of environmental ethics with those of social justice and cultural theory. What communities constitute “environments” worthy of protection? To what extent do environmental problems (and solutions) emerge from issues of social injustice, gender inequality, and globalization? What might a global, culturally complex environmental ethics look like?

This course will thus introduce you to the interdisciplinary academic fields of environmental philosophy, environmental justice, bioregionalism, and eco-feminism in exploring these questions. Ultimately, you are the crux to the success of this course, as the texts and discussants are the most important teachers of this course. Thus, your conversations and writings will shape these multi-faceted inquiries, as well as solutions that might (we hope) emerge.

## Required Texts

1. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)
2. *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* (2010)
3. *Wildness: Relations of People and Place* (2017)

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify me during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for this course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through Learning Assistance Center, 943-7056. https://www.western.edu/academic-resource-center/disability-services**

**Important Course-Facts:**

* + **PLAGIARISM** involves submitting as one’s own words and/or ideas the work of others without proper and customary acknowledgement of one’s sources. The penalty for violations of academic honesty is FAILURE IN THE COURSE. When in doubt: ASK! You are responsible for the consequences if you do not ask.
  + **Multiple Submissions** is also a violation of academic honesty. Submitting substantial portions of the same work for credit more than once without the explicit consent of the instructor(s) to whom the material is submitted for additional credit.
  + **Attendance policy**: Besides potentially earning a “0” on a quiz when absent, any student missing beyond **TWO classes** will lose **five points** from his or her final grade PER ABSENCE. Only a documented emergency, confirmed through the Student Affairs/Dean of Students Office (x2090), counts as an excused absence (beyond your two “freebies”).
  + **Late policy:** Assignments and papers are due at the BEGINNING of the indicated due date. Any paper handed in after the BEGINNING of the class day on which it is due will lose one grade per day. No late Finals will be accepted.
  + I take the idea of a **respectful, yet critical, learning environment** very seriously. Students who disrupt the ability of other students or the professor to focus in this environment could be excused from class, or even receive an “F” for the semester.
  + You have a responsibility to **check your student email account on a regular basis**. I sometimes announce course changes, reminders, and opportunities over email. There are no excuses for neglecting to check your WESTERN STUDENT email account—you can forward it to your personal email account if you want to.

**Assignments:**

1. Class participation: 25 points=25% (5 for Spring Symposium; 5 for MEM

Project Week; 15 for class)

1. Discussion lead/presentation: 5 points=5 %
2. Quizzes (4 at 5 points each): 20 points=20%
3. The Almanac: 50 points=50 % (25 each per Part I and II)

100 poss. points =100%

**1.** **Class participation:**

**This is not a lecture course, but a 16-week-long “educated conversation.”** This class lives and dies by your *presence*, your reading preparation, your daily energy, your questions and critiques, and your creativity. Your discussion grade will assess the extent to which your contributions reflect reading preparation, stimulate further discussion, respond to lectures, challenge your and others’ assumptions, and show empathetic respect towards the ideas of fellow students.

Also, you will be required to attend the following Spring Symposium events:

* *April 4, 7 PM UC Naomi Orestes (Merchants of Doubt); April 5 12:30-1:45 panel*
* *Must write as part of a five-campus exchange over the Orestes talk. Details TBA.*
* *Must attend three panels or tours during MEM Project week, May 3-5*

**2. Discussion Lead:** Each student is assigned to co-lead with me and a student partner one class discussion, with a compelling question from a chapter in *Moral Ground*. This requires you to:

* Choose a partner, chapter, and a day of *Moral Ground* to lead, and work with your partner to email me three questions (with the quotation that sparked each question) that best open-up conversation on that day’s assigned reading. *I will help you* *narrow it to one question*. Your email to (or meeting with) me must come at least 48 hours before your discussion day.
* Choose one of the authors from that chapter for a “praxis profile,” which you will present in that last ten minutes of that day’s class. The praxis profile will show how your author has turned theory into action, or how one of the ideas from the reading manifests itself in environmental solutions, or how an individual or an organization disagrees with one of the authors in the chapters. More on this later.

3.Readings Quizzes:

On FOUR unannounced occasions, I will ask you to write for fifteen minutes in response to a direct question on the reading assigned for that day. This a) gives me a sense of how carefully and critically you are keeping up with the readings, b) gives you a chance to collect your thoughts before the larger class discussion begins, and c) gets the whole class on the same page, so that we can most effectively inquire together into the reading, issue, or problem of the day.

I will issue these randomly, but you can use your notebook. If you have read carefully, have taken some basic notes from your readings (identify the author’s thesis, quote key supports to that thesis, and your own key observations/questions), and looked them over before class, you should excel. Remember to use specifics from the reading’s main argument and content as the foundation of your answer. I will grade each on a scale of 0-5:

* 0 (0%)=No entry.
* 1-2 (60-70%)=You answered the question, acknowledging the existence of some basic concepts from the reading.
* 3-4 (80-90%)=Your answer reflects that you read and comprehended the entire assignment, using it to contemplate the question.
* 4-5 (90-100%)=You answered the question in a way that reflects *careful* reading. That is, you used central specifics from the reading (including quotations) to support your answer, and pushed the text’s and your own ideas on the topic in thoughtful directions for the discussion to come.

\*\*\*\*\*You cannot make up a quiz, unless under well-documented circumstances\*\*\*\*\*\*

4. The Almanac:

With ENVS 100, you began this program contemplating how environmental history provides lessons that limit or expand the possibility of a sustainable global future. Since ENVS 100, you have learned to evaluate the scientific, historical, technological, economic, social, and policy choices necessary in enacting and complicating this vision for a sustainable future. Now, with ENVS 410 (as a philosophical complement to the applied work you will or did complete in ENVS 400), you will conclude this program with a major research and reflective essay on *your* framework for environmental problems and solutions.

In this 30 page essay, you must “update” Aldo Leopold’s 65-year-old *Sand County Almanac*, using experiences influenced by your time in Gunnison (and elsewhere) in place of Leopold’s Sand County. To help you manage the assignment, I have broken it into two sections. Three weeks before each section is due you will be required to submit a ‘one-pager’ to summarize your idea/content/approach for the section. You also can choose to meet one-on-one with myself or our Teaching Assistant to review your ideas and summary of each section. The two sections are:

1. Part I, due February 16. 20 points + 5 for revision (due February 15). 15-20 pages. Just as Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac* (in Part I) records the ecologically-founded individual experience of a place, so your essay must interpret and communicate the larger environmental implications of your experience of this place, or of other places seen through the environmental lens you have developed in this program. *Part I requires you to pose a compelling question that has stayed with you throughout ENVS and that can be “answered” with a combination of personal story from life and philosophical texts from class*. It might be a question you developed in your time here; it might be a question that brought you here in the first place, yet is still with you; it might be a question you develop this semester and that stays with you through life. In Part I, you must blend personal narrative, Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac*, and at least two other class readings to explore (and perhaps come to a new understanding of) your question. Of course, both the “textual interpretation” and the *“*personal narrative” sides of Part I need not be divided coldly—you should find a fluid way through your stories to blend in textual analysis and narrate your stories of philosophical realizations. One of your narrative experiences has to occur this semester, specifically sought out to find answers to your philosophical question. SEEK!! ATTEMPT!! BUT CONNECT WITH THE IDEAS OF THE TEXT!
2. Part II, due May 3 at 1:00 (yes, you need to be there). 20 points. Almanac becomes 30 pages at this point. Just as *Sand County Almanac* ends with his “Land Ethic,” so your essay must conclude with *your* new “Land Ethic” for the 21st century. To do this, you must show how your land ethic formed in conversation with (even if in disagreement with) the influential ideas of environmental ethics. You must use 5 course readings as a springboard for supporting your 21st Century Land Ethic.

In your final draft, I will count off 1 point for each noticed grammatical or spelling errors beyond two. Feel free to use your favorite *official* bibliographic style, *so long as you are consistent and accurate* (mistakes in citation format will also be considered in the two “errors”).

This Almanac will be researched, contemplated, experienced, and written over the course of the entire semester. *This is meant to stretch you beyond what you believe you are capable of, and then to empower you to become capable of it—astonish yourself!*

**Course and Readings Schedule (subject to change, so pay attention)**

**I. Environmental Philosophy** (negotiating anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism)

**Week 1: January 9 & 11**

**Tues:** Course Introduction.

**Thurs:** What is ethics? Read handout, Kaufman, “Moral Philosophy and the Natural World.”

**Week 2: January 16 & 18**

**Tue:** Read Leopold, Part I

**Thurs:** Read Leopold, Part II

**Week 3: January 23 & 25**

**Tue:** Read Leopold, 165-200 in Part III and *Wildness* Introduction - **A one-page summary of**

**your question and direction for Part I of your Almanac is due at the beginning of class**

**Thur:**. Read Leopold, “The Land Ethic” in Part III; Read *Wildness*, Chapter 20 (Hausdoerffer)

**Week 4: January 30 & February 1**

**Tue:** - **John De Graaf on Beauty.** Read: [www.andbeautyforall.org](http://www.andbeautyforall.org/)

Read: <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/43081-a-national-beautification-campaign-revitalized-communities-in-the-60-and-could-again-today>

**Thurs:** Read McCullough’s critique of Leopold:

<http://www.myxyz.org/phmurphy/dog/Aldo%20Leopold%20Presentations.pdf>

: Read: <http://www.hcn.org/issues/47.1/can-aldo-leopolds-land-ethic-tackle-our-toughest-problems>

: Watch Hausdoerffer (scroll down to the 8th interview):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pntPdEuSF0&t=15s>

**Week 5: February 6 & 8**

**Tue:** Read: Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/phil1200,Spr07/singer.pdf>

: Read: Paul Taylor, “The Ethics of Respect for Nature” (pickup folder)

**Thur:** Read Arne Naess, “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some

Philosophical Aspects” (pickup folder)

**Week 6: February 13 & 15**

**Tue:** Read *Wildness* Chapters 13 (Abeyta)

\* (?) MEM Praxis: Wilderness character as measure of ‘integrity’

**Thur: PART I of ALMANAC (first 15-20 pages) due. Share in class. Choose Moral Ground discussion lead assignments in class (come to class with top three chapter options)**

**II: Environmental Justice, Social Ecology, and Ecofeminism**

**Week 7: February 20 & 22**

**Tue:** Read William Cronon: “The Trouble with Wilderness”:

<http://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Trouble_with_Wilderness_Main.html>

Read *Wildness* Chapter 11 (Watt)

**Thurs:** Read Murray Bookchin, “What Is Social Ecology?”

<http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/socecol.html>

Read *Wildness* Chapter 10 (Pena)

**Week 8: February 27 & March 1**

**Tue:** Read *Wildness* Chapters 14 and 17 (Smith and Bryson/Howard)

**Thurs:** Read Greta Gaard and Laura Gruen“Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and

Planetary Health” (pickup folder)

Read *Wildness* Chapter 23 (Shiva)

**Week 9: March 6 & 8**

**Tue:** Read *Wildness* Chapters 3 and 8 (Salmón and Grignon/Kimmerer); Watch Kimmerer

*What does the Earth ask of us?* **(before class)**

**Thurs:** Read *Moral Ground* Read *Moral Ground*, pages XV-39**;** Chapter 3

**III: Looking Forward—balancing ecocentrism and environmental justice**

**Week 10: March 13 & 15**

**Tue:** Read *Moral Ground* Chapter 4

**Thurs:** Read *Wildness* Chapter 4 and 16 (Meine and Magle) – Watch Drew Lanham *Identity, Birding, and South Carolina* from Humans and Nature **before class**

\* (?) MEM Praxis: Lindsey Lunsford on TULIP and engaging people with ‘their’ space/place/wildness. Thinking about the social dimensions of creating/developing wildness.

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**Week 12: March 27 & 29**

**Tue:** Read *Moral Ground* Chapter 5

**PART I REVISION DUE, CHANGES IN BOLD FONT**

**Thurs:** Read *Moral Ground* Chapter 6

**Week 13: April 3 & 5**

**Tue:** Read *Moral Ground* Chapter 7 **- A one-page summary of your idea and direction for Part II of your Almanac is due at the beginning of class**

**Wed: ATTEND 7 PM NAOMI ORESTES KEYNOTE**

**Thurs:** Attend Naomi Orestes (Merchants of Doubt) Panel 12:30 on April 5

**Week 14: April 10 & 12**

**Tues:** Read *Moral Ground* Chapters 9 & 10

**Thurs:** Read *Moral Ground* Chapter 13 and *Wildness* Chapter 19 (Dunn)

**Week 15: April 17 & 19**

**Tues:** Read *Wildness* Chapters 5 and 9(Salatin and White)

\*MEM Praxis: Lauren Atkinson and Jacob Courkamp on managing for and co-creating wildness in non-pristine systems

**Week 16: April 24 & 26**

**Tues:** Read *Wildness* Chapters 15 and 21 (Van Horn and Hecht)

**Thurs:** Read *Wildness* Chapter 24 and Epilogue

\*MEM Praxis: Maddi Rehn on GPLI as a model for living with Wildness… Cohabitation or Coinhabitation?

## Finals Week: Meet Thursday, May 3 1:00-3:00 PM. 30 page Final Almanac due!

* **ENVS CELEBRATION: MUST ATTEND TWO MEM PANELS BETWEEN MAY 2-4**
* **ENVS Graduation Celebration: May 4 @ 5:00 PM in Taylor Visitors Center**