

# Environmental Philosophy

P107 Philosophy and the Environment

Instructor: Levi Tenen

Fall 2018

MWF 11:15-12:05

Office Hours: Mondays 12:15 – 1:15 and Tuesdays 3:00 – 4:00

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## Course Description

Are species valuable?  
Should we protect nature for its own sake?  
And what exactly *is* nature?

These are among the questions we will raise in this course. For, more broadly, we are interested in philosophical questions about nature, and about whether we should treat it in certain ways. Sometimes you will not have considered the questions we raise. Other times you might have already answered them. In either case, we will approach these issues with fresh eyes, relying on philosophical work in the field of Environmental Philosophy to help us to come to a nuanced understanding of what is at stake in certain debates regarding nature.

More specifically, I have four goals for this course. First, I aim to provide you with an introductory understanding of Environmental Philosophy. Second, I aim to have you relate course content to your own lives and to the world directly around you. Third, I seek to cultivate your philosophical skills, and in particular your analytic writing and your ability to comprehend a variety of different texts. Together, these goals feed into a fourth, overarching goal: I want you to walk away from this class with an appreciation of the complexity of certain land-use decisions, and an ability to analyze what all is at stake in such decisions.

To these ends, I will expect you to do a substantial amount of reading and writing in this course. In addition, this course has a non-standard component: on numerous occasions, we will go on fieldtrips to explore how certain philosophical topics relate to the world around us. All fieldtrips will be held on the IUB campus and will therefore be just as mandatory as our regular class meetings. (The time and location of them are subject to change, so keep an eye out for emails/check the online version of the syllabus periodically.) Although these trips are meant to be fun, I also expect you to treat them seriously and to use them as opportunities to apply philosophy to the world around us.

This course satisfies the Arts and Humanities Common Ground Breadth of Inquiry Requirement (part of the IU General Education Requirements). The course addresses the following General Education Arts and Humanities learning goals (which are more abstract versions of the goals I mentioned above):

1. Gaining knowledge of the cultural, intellectual, and historical contexts through which expressions and artifacts are interpreted
2. Developing the ability to think critically and creatively
3. Developing skills of inquiry and analysis

### Grade Breakdown:

Short Responses: 35%

There will be 7 written responses, **each no longer than one, 1.5-spaced page**. Each response will be worth 25 pts. Although I am not setting a minimum word count, be aware that in general these assignments should be very close to one page in length. If they are substantially shorter, then you likely did not provide sufficient detail.

These assignments come in three varieties. The first type of assignment—*Argument Analysis*—asks you to provide a close analysis of a specified reading. NO thesis should be provided and only ONE quote may be used. Your aim in this kind of assignment is to explain in your own words what the author's thesis or main point is and how they argue for their thesis. You will be graded on how accurately you capture their view.

The second—*Thesis Response*—type of assignment asks you to provide a clear thesis of your own and, second, offer a brief argument in support of that thesis. You will be graded on how clear your thesis is, as well as how well your argument supports that thesis.

The third kind—*Documentation Response*—will appear only once. In it, I ask you to visit a physical site related to your final paper topic (more on this below) and document historic, aesthetic, and moral dimensions to that site. You will be graded on how detailed your documentation is. I advise you to reflect on course readings in order to think about details related to the site, as you will have to do this anyway for the final paper.

#### Worksheets and quizzes: 20%

I assign in-class worksheets and quizzes throughout the semester without advance notice. These are designed to encourage you to engage with course content, and to ensure that you are reading course material.

I excuse family and medical emergencies (with a doctor's note), religious observances, and IU sporting events that you are competing in. If you provide adequate documentation, you may either make up any in-class assignments within 2 days or drop such assignments. The default will be to drop the assignment from your final grade and it will be your responsibility (on each occasion) to say otherwise.

#### Participation: 15%

There are many ways to participate. The most obvious is to have you participate in class by asking questions, telling the class what you think about a topic, and so on. I expect you to at least occasionally participate in this manner. But I also know that some people do not like to speak up much. So, I will also factor in other forms of participation, including visits to my office hours, emails you send me where you ask content-related questions, and the effort you put into your out-of-class assignments and papers. Basically, engaged students succeed in this category.

#### Final Paper: 30%

Your final paper will be the culmination of a semester-long project. In this project, I will ask you to pick some place or site from around Bloomington to research. You could, for instance, pick Lake Monroe, 1-69, Dunn's Woods, the substation in Maple Heights, the water treatment plant... the list goes on (and I will provide a list of 40 ideas to you). You will visit your chosen site and, using course readings to help, you will document aesthetic, historical, and ethical dimensions to the site. You will also look for written history on your place—you might check out the Herald Times, the IDS, government records, or conduct interviews with people. You might search for information on geology, archeology, ecology, or environmental laws relating to your site. Then, drawing from course readings and your independent research, you will write a final paper in which you explain the history of your chosen place and discuss the various considerations that went into, or that *should* have gone

into, the community's decision to use and develop that area. You will use your discussion to argue for a thesis about whether or not the place should have been developed or used in the manner in which it has been developed or used.

At core, you will be graded on three things:

- (1) How well you explore the complexity of your site and the community's reasons for developing it.
- (2) How well you explain course readings and connect them to your site.
- (3) How persuasive your argument is about whether the place should have been developed.

*\*\*\* Absolutely no late assignments will be accepted. \*\*\**

If you are ill or have a family emergency, please provide a doctor's note or the equivalent.

### **Readings:**

All readings are posted on Canvas unless noted otherwise.

### **Electronics:**

Due to past issues, I will not allow students to use personal computers, cellphones, tablets, et cetera in class. The exception is for those who need such things to learn (in which case students should contact Disability Services for Students).

### **Academic Honesty**

I will respond to acts of academic misconduct according to university policy concerning plagiarism; sanctions for plagiarism can include a grade of F for the assignment in question and/or for the course and must include a report to the Dean of Students Office.

Plagiarism constitutes using others' ideas, words or images without properly giving credit to those sources. If you turn in any work with your name affixed to it, I assume that work is your own and that all sources are indicated and documented in the text (with quotations and/or citations).

### **Writing Assistance**

For free help at any phase of the writing process—from brainstorming to polishing the final draft—call Writing Tutorial Services (WTS, pronounced “wits”) at 812-855-6738 for an appointment. When you visit WTS, you'll find a tutor who is a sympathetic and helpful reader of your prose. To be assured of an appointment with the tutor who will know most about your class, please call in advance.

WTS, in the new Learning Commons on the first floor of the West Tower of Wells Library, is open Monday-Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Friday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. WTS tutors are also available for walk-in appointments in the Academic Support Centers in Briscoe, Forest, and Teter residence halls, in the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center, at La Casa, and at the Groups Scholars Program Office in Maxwell. Call WTS or check our Web site for hours.

### **Disability Policy**

IU's disability policy states: "Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities (e.g. mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision neurological, etc.) You must have established your eligibility for support services through the appropriate office that services students with disabilities. Note that services are confidential, may take time to put into place and are not retroactive; Captions and alternate media for print materials may take three or more weeks to get produced. Please contact Disability Services for Students at <http://disabilityservices.indiana.edu> or 812-855-7578 as soon as possible if accommodations are needed. The office is located on the third floor, west tower, of the Wells Library, Room W302. Walk-ins are welcome 8 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday. You can also locate a variety of campus resources for students and visitors that need assistance at: <http://www.iu.edu/~ada/index.shtml>"

### Reading and Assignment Schedule

#### *Week 1—Syllabus and Course Introduction*

M 8.20: Introduction

W 8.22: Char Miller's "A Sylvan Prospect: John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and Early Twentieth-Century Conservation"

F 8.24: The Wilderness Act of 1964

### Unit 1 —Nature and its Properties

#### *Week 2 — What is Nature?*

M 8.27: Helena Siipi's "Dimensions of Naturalness"

W 8.29: Steven Vogel's Ch. 1 of *Thinking Like a Mall*

Argument analysis due Wednesday on Vogel.
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F 8.31: No Reading.

#### *Week 3 —Where is nature; where is pollution?*

M 9.3: Labor Day (No class)

W 9.5: Robert Bullard "Anatomy of Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement"

F: Reading TBA (likely a reading suggested by the First Nations Center).

**Activity: Fieldtrip with First Nations Center. Meet at their center.**

#### *Week 4 — Biodiversity and species*

M 9.10: Andrew Brennan and Yeuk-Sze Lo "Environmental Ethics: Biodiversity"

W 9.12: Lilly-Marlene Russow “Why Do Species Matter?”

Argument analysis for Russow due Wednesday

Special note: Peter Singer will talk on "Ethics and Our Treatment of Animals"  
5.00 p.m., Presidents Hall in Franklin Hall

F 9.14: No reading.

*Week 5 — Ecosystem health*

M 9.17: Katie McShane “Ecosystem Health”

Short test on plant identification

W 9.19: Reading on IU’s invasive species problem. **Activity: Fieldtrip to Dunn Woods.**

**Meet at Sample Gates.**

F 9.21: Dale Jamieson “Ecosystem Health: Some Preventive Medicine”

Final Paper Ideas due Monday

## Unit 2 — Value in Nature

*Week 6 — Anthropocentrism*

M 9.24: “Ecosystem services: Benefits supplied to human societies by natural ecosystems.”

W 9.26: Katie McShane “Anthropocentrism vs. nonanthropocentrism: why should we care?”

F 9.28: Reading on Indiana’s geology. **Activity: Fieldtrip with Indiana Geologic Survey.**

*Week 7 — Is the Environment worth protecting in itself?*

M 10.1: Holmes Rolston III “Value in Nature”

W 10.3: Elliott Sober’s “Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism.”

Argument analysis for Sober due.

F 10.5: Fall Break

*Week 8 — Aesthetic value*

M 10.8: Allen Carlson’s “Aesthetic Appreciation of the Natural Environment”

W 10.10: Yuriko Saito “The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature”

F 10.12: No reading. **Activity: Aesthetics walk with me.**

Thesis response on Monday’s and Wednesday’s readings

*Week 9 — Heritage values*

M 10.15: Janna Thompson’s “Environment Ethics and Cultural Heritage”

W 10.17: O’Neill, Holland, and Light Ch. 9 of *Environmental Values*

F 10.19: No reading. **Activity: Fieldtrip to Glenn Black Archeology Lab.**

Due: Documentation response for final paper.

### **Unit 3: Animals, Plants, and Nature**

*Week 10 — Food ethics*

M 10.22: Excerpt from Elizabeth Harman’s “The Moral Significance of Animal Pain and Animal Death”

W 10.24: Watch video by Daniel Chamovitz.

F 10.26: Jeff McMahan “The Meat Eaters”

Thesis response on McMahan due.

*Week 11— Animal ethics: domestic and wild*

M 10.29: Clare Palmer “What (If Anything) Do We Owe Wild Animals?”

W 10.31:

F 11.2: Dale Jamieson’s “Against Zoos”

*Week 12 — GMOs*

M 11.5: NPR “Should We Be Having Kids in the Age of Climate Change?” and Foreign Policy “As Environmental Catastrophe Looms, ...”

W 11.7: Jonathan Rauch “Will Frankenfood Save the Planet?”

F 11.9: “Stop Bashing on G.M.O Foods, More than 100 Nobel Laureates Say”

And “GMOs Are Safe, But Don’t Always Deliver on Promises, Top Scientists Say”

Thesis response for your final paper due.

### **Unit 4 — What should we do?**

*Week 13— Who is responsible for global climate change*

M 11.12: Melany Banks’ “Individual Responsibility for Climate Change”

W 11.14: No reading.

F 11.16: Chrisoula Andreou’s Environmental preservation and second-order procrastination.

*Week 14—Thanksgiving*

*Week 15 — Geo-engineering*

M 11.26: David Keith “Engineering the Planet”

W 11.28: Clive Hamilton “Ethical Anxieties about Geoengineering”

F 11.30: Liao, Sandberg, and Roache's "Human Engineering and Climate Change"

*Week 16: Nature Restoration*

M 12.3: Robert Elliott "Faking Nature"

W 12.5: Elizabeth Willott "Restoring Nature, Without Mosquitoes?"

F 12.7: No reading.

*Week 17 (finals):*

**\*\*Final Paper Due: 2:30pm on Wednesday December 12<sup>th</sup> by email.**