

# Environmental Ethics (Phil 215)

## Spring 2012

Instructor: Dr. Williams  
Office: Daniel 208  
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Office Hours: MW 1-3; T 5-6:30 or by apt.  
Class Time/Location: 10:30-11:20 or 11:30-12:20/Main 222

### Course Description

The course offers students an introduction to the philosophical issues underlying environmental controversies. We will raise philosophical questions about what we as human beings value, about the kind of beings we are (or should be), the kinds of lives we should live, our place in nature, and the kind of world in which we might flourish. We will attempt to formulate good responses to these questions and evaluate environmental case studies by way of various ethical theories.

### Required text/readings

- *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, Joseph DesJardins, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2006.
- E-reserves

### Learning Outcomes

Students are expected to:

- acquire a basic understanding of philosophical ethics and the debates within environmental philosophy;
- improve their critical thinking skills;
- acquire a deeper understanding about our relationship to the natural world;
- to develop their communicative skills in both written and oral forms.

### Methods of Evaluation

- **Midterm exam**: an in-class exam on traditional ethical theories and their application to certain environmental issues.
- **Current event report** (2-3 pages): students evaluate a current environmental debate and take a position. Class presentation required.
- **Wofford sustainability proposal** (2-3 pages): students propose an environmental sustainable project that Wofford could implement. Class presentation required.
- **Short writing assignments** (1-2 pages): I will assign these periodically during the semester to complement our readings and/or class discussions.
- **“True Price” researched argument** (6-8 pages): an analysis paper where students evaluate the effects (on the environment, animals, other people) of a common household product and determine whether it is worth the “true price” (the effects).

### Distribution of Graded Work

- Midterm exam: 20%
- Current event paper: 15%
- Wofford sustainability project: 15%
- Short writing assignments: 20%
- “True Price” Researched Argument: 30%

**Grading Scale\*** (percentage): A =100-94; A- = 93-90; B+ = 89-87; B =86-84; B- =83-80; C+ = 79-77; C =76-74; C- =73-70; D =69-60; F =below 60

\*Grades in this course are based on academic achievement and competence.

### **Late Work/Missed Tests**

If you know in advance that you will not be attending class when an exam is scheduled, you must see me as soon as possible so that we can make necessary arrangements. If I don't hear from you by the next class period you will have forfeited the exam grade. All work is due at the beginning of class. For every day an assignment is late, a letter grade will be deducted.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required in this class. You are allowed three absences with no grade reduction, thereafter three points off your final grade for every unexcused absence. I will record attendance at every class meeting. You are required to arrive at class on time and remain for the entire period in order to be counted as present. I have the right to drop you from the course in the event of excessive absences.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance to Wofford's honor code, which can be found at [http://www.wofford.edu/studentlife/honor\\_code.pdf](http://www.wofford.edu/studentlife/honor_code.pdf)

### **Disability**

If you have a disability that requires my attention please let me know as soon as possible so that I may accommodate you.

## **Reading schedule** (subject to change)

### **Week 1 – Feb. 6 Ethical Theories**

Introduction

Chapter 1: Science, Ethics, and the Environment

Chapter 2: Ethical Theory and the Environment

### **Week 2 – Feb. 13 Religion and the Environment**

**E-reserve:**

Lynn White: "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis"

Patrick Dobel: "The Judeo-Christian Stewardship Attitude to Nature"

Lewis Moncrief: "The Cultural Basis of Our Environment Crisis"

### **Week 3 – Feb. 20 Implications of Ethical Theory**

Chapter 3: Ethics and Economics: Managing Public Lands

Chapter 4: Responsibilities to Future Generations

### **Week 4 – Feb. 27**

**E-reserve:** Garrett Hardin: "Lifeboat Ethics" and Peter Singer: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Chapter 5: Responsibilities to the Natural World

### **Week 5 – March 5 The Animal Question**

Chap. 5 (cont.)

**E-reserve:** Michael Fox: "Vegetarianism and Treading Lightly on the Earth"

Video: *Life Behind Bars*

### **Week 6 – March 12**

**E-reserve:** Brian Luke: "Justice, Caring, and Animal Liberation"

Catch up/review

**Midterm exam**

**Week 7 – March 19 In search of a more comprehensive environmental philosophy**

Chapter 6: Biocentric Ethics and the Inherent Value of Life

**Week 8– March 26**

Chapter 8: The Land Ethic

Chapter 9: Deep Ecology

**Week 9 – April 2 Spring Break**

**Week 10 – April 9**

**•Current event report**

Student presentations

**Week 11 – April 16**

Chapter 10: Environmental Justice

**Week 12 – April 23**

Chapter 11: Ecofeminism

**Week 13 – April 30**

Chapter 12: Pluralism, Pragmatism, and Sustainability

**Week 14 – May 7**

**•Wofford sustainability proposal**

Student presentations

**Due Wed., May 16 at 2 pm (10:30 class) or Tues., May 15 at 2 pm (11:30 class)**

**•Final Paper “True Price” Researched Argument (6-8 pages)**

*This assignment counts as your “final exam.”*