

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE
LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION
GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE

PHI	170	Environmental Ethics	3-0	3
Course Prefix	Course Number	Course Title	(Lec-Lab)	Semester Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduces philosophical ethical theory and its application to environmental issues. Explores the roots of Western ideas about nature (Greek, Biblical, early Modern), the American environmental discussion, and current positions including development, conservation, preservation and restoration. Considers issues including human-centered vs. life-centered views, whether species or habitats have value, appreciation vs. cost/benefit approaches, and bioregionalism.

TOPICAL OUTLINE

- I. Ethical Theory
 - A. The Nature of Ethics
 - B. Deontological and Utilitarian Approaches
 - C. Rights: Moral and Legal
- II. The Roots of Western Ideas about Nature
 - A. Greek
 - B. Biblical
 - C. Early Modern
- III. The American Background of Environmental Discussion
 - A. Henry David Thoreau
 - B. John Muir
 - C. Gifford Pinchot
 - D. Aldo Leopold
- IV. Current Positions
 - A. Conservation
 - B. Development
 - C. Preservation
 - D. The Land Ethic
 - E. Restoration
 - F. Deep Ecology
 - G. Ecofeminism
- V. Issues
 - A. Anthropocentric and Biocentric Views
 - B. Aesthetic and Cost/Benefit Approaches
 - C. The Organism, the Species, and the Habitat
 - D. Bioregionalism
 - E. Mitigation

METHODS OF PRESENTATION

- 1. Lecture and discussion
- 2. Occasional films
- 3. Case material
- 4. Student panels
- 5. Small group work
- 6. Student debates
- 7. Field trips

STUDENT OUTCOMES: (Upon successful completion of this course, *the student should be able to...*)

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical roots of traditional attitudes toward the earth.
2. Evaluate a range of philosophical positions within environmental ethics on public policy with respect to conservation, energy production, food use and waste, differential impacts on impoverished and marginalized populations, adaptation to climate change.
3. Apply at least three philosophical positions to both personal choices involving environmental impact and current public policy on environmental issues.
4. Write a minimum of 3000 words of college-level writing in support of the above outcomes.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

1. Quizzes
2. Exams (may be oral)
3. Written reading responses
4. Debates
5. Homework
6. Class activities
7. Participation

POSSIBLE TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1949.
Traer, Robert. *Doing Environmental Ethics*. New York: Westview Press, 2009.

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Semester Fall Year 2018