

# ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (PHIL 3530)

Spring 2020 (Online)

Department of Philosophy, University of Utah  
Carolyn Tanner Irish Humanities Building (CTIHB), 4th Floor

## THIS IS A DRAFT AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### Instructor Information:

Derek Halm

[derek.halm@utah.edu](mailto:derek.halm@utah.edu)

Office hours are by appointment only.

### Course Description:

This course explores the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary environmentalism and interrogates our moral obligations to the environment, nonhuman animals, and other humans amid a context of ongoing global environmental change. We will explore the motivations for environmentalism, the sources of environmental values, and the ways that people disagree about the significance of those values. In doing so, we will cover various topics including theories of environmental value, wildlife conservation, and climate change.

This material is designed to prepare students to engage in sophisticated discussions about the moral dimensions of contemporary environmental issues and to encourage students to think critically about contemporary environmental debates. While this is an introductory course and no prior background in science or philosophy is required, students may find certain topics challenging; this is by design. The class is meant to develop skills such as the ability to read and respond to difficult material and the ability to analyze and critique various forms of argumentation.

### Expected Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Articulate the foundations of common moral theories and their relationship with the environment.
2. Discuss contemporary environmental issues in sophisticated ways.
3. Apply the skills learned in class on other ongoing moral issues.

### Required Readings:

All required readings will be available through Canvas. There is no textbook for this class.

### Online Etiquette:

This is an online class, which means that the majority of communications will take place via email. Therefore, I ask that you follow these guidelines when reaching out to me:



1. Only use the Canvas page or your University email to contact me. Emails sent from personal emails (e.g., @gmail.com) will be ignored.
2. Ensure that your emails are respectful. You may say “Hey Derek” or “Hi!” as introductions, but please be professional. I will extend to you the same courtesy.
3. Clearly indicate what you are emailing about. I am more than happy to help, but it saves us both time when the issue is clearly articulated from the get-go.
4. Sign your email. Sometimes, it is unclear via Canvas or the University email system who is writing, and I want to make sure I can solve your concerns as quickly as possible.
5. I will try to respond to all emails within 24 hours during the work week and within work hours. I do not respond to emails after 5pm on a weeknight or emails over the weekend. Please keep this in mind if you have urgent questions. If I do not respond during the work week within 24 hours, please send me a polite reminder.

### Grading:

#### Deadlines

Assignment deadlines are strict. If you are unable to complete an assignment on time, please contact me immediately with an explanation and appropriate documentation. Reasonable accommodations may be made at my discretion on a case-by-case basis.

- KEY TERMS (34%)
- QUIZZES (33%)
- SHORT PAPERS (33%)

- A 100-93%
- A- 92-90%
- B+ 89-87%
- B 86-83%
- B- 82-80%
- C+ 79-77%
- C 76-73%
- C- 72-70%
- D+ 69-67%
- D 66-63%
- D- 62-60%
- E 59-0%

### Assignments:

#### Key Terms

Each week you will be asked to contribute key terms about the readings on Canvas. Key terms are words, phrases, ideas, or concepts that are crucial for understanding or navigating a particular topic or issue. Each week you must identify at least **two** key terms from that week’s readings and explain the substance of these terms. To receive full credit,



you must: clearly state what your key terms are; identify the readings in which they appear; define or explain what your key terms mean; and say how or why they are important in the context of the material.

### **Quizzes**

Quizzes will be assigned weekly. Each quiz must be completed by the end of the week that it is assigned. The quizzes are meant to assess your general understanding of the class material and will typically focus on the most important ideas from the readings. Quizzes may vary week-to-week in format and length, depending on the material, but I will try to ensure that they are not onerous.

### **Short Papers**

You are required to write three short papers for this class. You must turn in at least one paper per module (e.g., four weeks). These papers provide an opportunity for you to engage with the class material in ways that suit your own interests and are personally rewarding. Paper topics are flexible, and you may choose any of the options listed below. Papers should be 700-1000 words, or about 3-4 double-spaced pages. Papers will be graded on the depth and detail of your analysis and your use of class material. You must make explicit reference to class material to have a successful paper. You must have *at least two* class resources for each paper.

### **Extra Credit**

You may receive up to an extra 5% added to your grade by completing an additional paper from the options listed. Other extra credit options may become available..

### **Short Paper Options:**

#### **Option 1: In the News**

For this assignment, choose a recent news article on an environmental issue from a reputable news source (e.g., The New York Times, The Guardian, BBC, etc.), and summarize the article in your own words. Then, with the class material in mind, criticize either the author of the article for failing to include something salient that was covered in class, or criticize your instructors for failing to include something the author of the article has considered. In either case, you will be trying to persuade your reader that there is something important missing from the analysis or evaluation of a particular environmental issue. You must include a link to your target article in your paper.

#### **Option 2: Wilderness Philosopher**

Some of the earliest environmentalists developed their views toward the environment through writing personal essays and travelogues (e.g., John Muir, Edward Abbey, Henry David Thoreau, etc.). For this assignment, you are invited to do the same. Explicitly referencing class material, recount an experience you had in the wilderness that was significant for your view toward the environment, and explain how that experience led you to your view. For example, you may write about a moment in which you were struck by

the importance or beauty of the natural world. Alternatively, you may write about when and how you came to believe that environmentalists were overstating or mischaracterizing a particular environmental issue. Note that there are many ways to do this assignment successfully. Please consult with me if you are unsure about how to proceed.

### **Option 3: Book Report**

This assignment provides an opportunity to dig a bit deeper into a particular topic or reading you find interesting and reflect on it. To complete this assignment, you will have to read an entire book and provide a critical analysis informed by class material. This will involve explaining what you think the author was trying to convey and evaluating the merits of their views. If you would like to do this option but are unsure about what to read, I am happy to offer suggestions. If you choose this option, you must let me know beforehand what book you will be writing on.

### **Option 4: Straight-up Philosophy**

For this assignment, reconstruct any argument introduced in class in your own words, and provide an argument in response to the initial argument's premises or logical moves. Keep in mind that your response must be original; reiterating others' views is insufficient. If you are interested in this option, please see the provided Philosophy Writing Guides on Canvas for advice on how to write a philosophy paper.

### **Option 5: Other**

I am cautiously optimistic for novel assignments. Send me a proposal for a different idea and I will happily consider it.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

*NOTE: This is a topic schedule only. It is your responsibility to stay on top of readings, lectures, and assignments as they are posted to Canvas.*

- 1. Part 1: Survey of American Environmental History**
  - a. Week 1: Introduction to Ethics
  - b. Week 2: Conservation
  - c. Week 3: Preservation
  - d. Week 4: The Land Ethic
- 2. Part 2: Wildlife Conservation**
  - a. Week 5: Is Wildlife Important?
  - b. Week 6: The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation
  - c. Week 7: Case Study 1
  - d. Week 8: Case Study 2
- 3. Part 3: Climate Change**
  - a. Week 9: What is Climate Change?
  - b. Week 10: Personal responses
  - c. Week 11: Governmental responses

d. Week 12: Resilience in the face of Climate Change

**University Policies:**

**Diversity and Inclusivity Statement**

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**

Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing on an assignment will receive zero credit for that assignment, and the student's actions will be reported to the Dean. Students are responsible for knowing and understanding the University's Code of Conduct as it pertains to plagiarism: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>. When you draw upon any source (a lecture, an article, a book, a website, etc.), you must cite that source whether you are quoting from it directly or only paraphrasing it. You may draw on someone else's idea(s), but you may not characterize someone else's idea(s) as your own.

**Disability and Access**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice must be given to the Center for Disability & Access (CDA) at 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020 (V/TDD). The CDA will work with you and the instructors to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the CDA.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

**Addressing Sexual Misconduct/Title IX**



Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801- 581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585- 2677 (COPS).

### **Wellness Statement**

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at [www.wellness.utah.edu](http://www.wellness.utah.edu) or 801-581-7776.

### **Names/Pronouns**

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name as well as "Preferred first name" (if previously entered by you in the Student Profile section of your CIS account, which managed can be managed at any time). While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class or on assignments. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun are respected. If you need any assistance or support, please reach out to the LGBT Resource Center. [https://lgbt.utah.edu/campus/faculty\\_resources.php](https://lgbt.utah.edu/campus/faculty_resources.php)

### **Campus Safety**

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit [safeu.utah.edu](http://safeu.utah.edu).

### **Veterans Center**

If you are a student veteran, the U of Utah has a Veterans Support Center located in Room 161 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside resources: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.

### **English Language Learners**



If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language and writing development. These resources include: the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>); the Writing Program (<http://writingprogram.utah.edu/>); the English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli/>).

