

New Jersey Institute of Technology
Dept. of Humanities

EPS 660

ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Spring 2009

FMH 203

M 6-9

Prof. David Rothenberg,

This course is an examination of contemporary environmental problems from the philosophical perspective. Do we have a moral obligation to the natural world? If so, is it to individual living things or to nature as a whole? How do moral positions influence environmental policy and activism? Are traditional theories within moral philosophy of any help in these problems, or must we develop a radically new conception of the relationship between humanity and nature? What are the different ways we can perceive and value the natural surrounding world? We will start from our immediate personal experience of the environment and move outward to consider suburbia, the city, the wilderness, and the world.

Why should we preserve natural diversity? Should we increase it artificially? How has our attitude toward nature developed as part of the suburbanization and commodification of our culture? Can business help solve our problems, or is it the problem? What kind of role do activists play in making us aware of the situation? How do we listen to them, how do we join up, and how do we make a difference? What is the connection between the built environment and the way we conceive the environment? Can our society really live in any way closer to nature than we do now – or is nature just an idea that we made up, which we change whenever we need to? We'll see.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

A course reader, available for download from the professor.
John McPhee, *Encounters with the Archdruid*, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1971.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

One five page paper on an assigned topic. One substantial research paper, twenty pages, on the topic of your choice approved by me. Both papers need to be substantially researched, based on original thought, not mere collages of cut-and-paste web page snippets. One in-class thirty minute presentation per student. Regular class attendance and participation in class discussion.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan. 26	The Land Ethic Meets Suburbia
Feb. 2	Deeper Ethics and the Regional Plan
Feb. 9	<i>no class</i>
Feb. 16	<i>Encounters with the Archdruid</i>
Feb. 23	How to Argue for a Better Way of Life The Basics of Ethical Theory first paper assignment given...
Mar. 2	Tragedy of the commons, Hardin. Everglades Case Study.
Mar. 9	Hydropower Case Study. Wind Power Case Study. first paper due second paper assigned
Mar. 16	<i>Spring Break</i>
Mar. 23	Garrett Hardin Botkin Wilderness: Turner, Soule
Mar. 30	<i>no class</i>
Apr. 6	Population. McKibben?? E.O. Wilson, the global context of biodiversity. Ethics of Climate Change
Apr. 13	What's Wrong With Environmentalism today?
Apr. 20	The new sense of community...
Apr. 27	to be announced
May 4	Final presentations... Second paper due.

COURSE READER

from Affordable Copies, 49 Halsey St., Newark

<i>New York Times Magazine</i> 2004 Special on Suburbia	1
David Orr, "A World That Takes Its Environment Seriously," from <i>Earth in Mind</i> , Washington: Island Press, 1994.	28
Jim Motavalli, "Sprawling Out: Highways to Nowhere," <i>Breaking Gridlock</i> , San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2001.	39
Robert Yaro and Tony Hiss, <i>A Region at Risk: The Third Regional Plan for the New York Metropolitan Region</i> , Washington: Island Press, 1996, excerpts.	48
"Rutland Walmart," "Smart Suburbs," "The Crossings," "First Suburbs Consortium," "Coast Dairies," "Mountains to Sound Greenway," from Kaid Benfield et al, <i>Solving Sprawl</i> , New York: NRDC, 2001.	84
Eben Fodor, "Where Are You on the Growth Spectrum?," "The Twelve Big Myths of Growth," from <i>Better, Not Bigger</i> , Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1999.	105
Russell Shorto, "A Short Order Revolutionary," <i>New York Times Magazine</i> , Jan. 11, 2004.	117
Christine Gudorf and James Huchingson, "Theory in Environmental Ethics," "Embattled Com- munity in the Everglades," "Hydro-power or Free-flowing Rivers?," from <i>Boundaries: Case Studies in Environmental Ethics</i> , Washington: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2003.	121
Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," from <i>Sand County Almanac</i> , New York: Oxford University Press, 1947.	149
Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" from <i>The Limits of Altruism</i> , Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1977.	157
Garrett Hardin, "Who Cares for Posterity?" from <i>The Limits of Altruism</i> , Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1977.	165
Daniel Botkin, "Oaks in New Jersey: Machine-Age Forests," "The Forest in the Computer: New Metaphors for Nature," from <i>Discordant Harmonies</i> , New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.	171
Elinor Burkett, "A Mighty Wind," <i>New York Times Magazine</i> , June 15, 2003.	192
Roger East, "Blowing Away the Myths," <i>Green Futures</i> , Nov. 2004.	196
Douglas Scott, "A Brief History of Wilderness Time"	200
Thomas Michael Power, "Gifts of Nature in an Economic World,"	208
Michael Soule, "Should Wilderness be Managed?"	218
all from Ted Kerasote, ed. <i>Return to the Wild</i> (Washington: Island Press, 2002)	
Bryan Urstadt, "Unhappy Trails," <i>Harper's Magazine</i> , Feb. 2004	227
Jack Turner, "The Abstract Wild," "In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World," from <i>The Abstract Wild</i> , Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996.	229
Jim Motavalli, "The Reckoning: On Global Warming," <i>E Magazine</i> , Nov. 2003.	246
"Population: General Considerations," from <i>Environmental Ethics Textbook</i>	256
Bill McKibben, "A Special Moment in History: The Challenge of Overpopulation and Overconsumption," from <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> , May 1998.	259
E.O. Wilson, "The Solution," from <i>The Future of Life</i> , New York: Knopf, 2002.	268

Bill McKibben, "Community," from <i>Deep Economy</i> , Times Books, 2007	289
Nordhaus and Shellenberger, from <i>Breakthrough</i> , Houghton Mifflin, 2007	315
Gus Speth, from <i>The Bridge at the End of the World</i> , Yale University Press, 2008	333
James Garvey, from <i>The Ethics of Climate Change</i> , Continuum, 2008	356