

PHIL 356-01 Environmental Ethics  
Spring 2019  
Social Sciences & Cultural Studies  
Pratt Institute  
Tuesdays 9:00am – 11:50am  
North Hall 110

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office hours: Tuesdays 12:30pm – 2:30pm

## **SYLLABUS**

### **OVERVIEW**

#### **Brief Description**

The course introduces students to key questions in environmental philosophy. It provides a strong theoretical foundation for the critical assessment of the most pressing environmental problems today.

#### **Detailed Description**

Environmental Ethics is a manifold philosophical inquiry pertaining to our practical involvement with, and impact on, the terrestrial earth and the plenitude of non-human life-forms inhabiting it. In this course we will approach the subject dialectically, through critical examination of writings by philosophers, naturalists, and social theorists on a variety of intersecting topical issues. A major focus will be the difficult dilemmas arising in the context of modern human interactions with wild animals that are believed to endanger humans, domesticated animals, or else the environment itself – as in the case of predators such as wolves, or ecologically-destructive herbivores such as elephants or deer. Other issues discussed will be the values of wilderness and wildness for human flourishing, and the question of personal and political responsibility for human ecological devastation.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Recognize ‘anthropocentric’, ‘biocentric,’ and ‘ecocentric’ conceptions of the value and purpose in conserving or preserving wild nature, and the tensions among these conceptions in contemporary discussions of various ‘environmental’ problems and concerns;
- Discern the contours of ethical challenges arising in the context of human beings’ manifold direct and indirect interactions with wildlife;
- Recognize the social and political dimensions of human practices that contribute toward depleting or polluting the natural environment, or that harm or destroy forms of life.

## TEXTS

Two required books are available for purchase via the online Pratt Bookstore:

- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford, 1968 [original 1947]. ISBN 9780195007770
- Michael Nelson, *Heart and Blood: Living with Deer in America*. Vintage, 1998. ISBN 9780679736868

All other assigned readings will be made available digitally, via the LMS site for this course.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Written work will consist primarily in **two essays** of 7-10 pages each, due on March 1 and May 13, respectively.

As this is primarily a discussion-based course, **regular attendance and class participation** are essential for successful completion of the course. Students will be asked to provide brief, informal presentations on selected reading assignments, on a rotating basis.

In addition to the regularly-held class sessions, students are to take part in, and produce a documentary record pertaining to, a group **field trip** (within New York City, to be scheduled in April. (Several small field trips will be scheduled, to ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate.) **The documentary record** may take the form either of a written narrative, or an artwork in some other representational medium.

## GRADING

Attendance & Participation (including informal presentations): 20%

Field Trip Participation & Documentary: 20%

First Paper: 30%

Final Paper: 30%

## COURSE POLICIES

### Electronic Devices

In order to sustain a vital and dynamic classroom experience, the use of laptops, tablets, smartphones, or other electronic devices is permitted in the classroom during class periods.

### Attendance & Punctuality

Regular & punctual attendance is a requirement for this course. Students are permitted up to 1 absence with no penalty to their course grade. Further absences, regardless of the reason, may adversely affect your grade for attendance & participation. Three or more unexcused absences constitute grounds for failing the course.

### Written Work

Papers submitted after the designated due date & time will normally be subject to a penalty for lateness. *If you are unable to submit your work on time – for whatever reason - you are nonetheless expected contact the instructor by email, stating when the work will be submitted; failure to do so within 24 hours of the deadline will result in a further penalty.*

## COURSE CALENDAR & SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

The schedule of reading assignments may be subject to modification as the semester proceeds. Updates will be posted on LMS.

- Jan 22** [Introductory session]
- Jan 29** Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*: Part I [pp. 3-92]; Part II: “Marshland Elegy” [pp. 95-101], “Thinking Like a Mountain” [pp. 192-133]
- Feb 5** Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac* Part III [pp. 165-226]
- Feb 12** Annie Dillard, “Fecundity”  
Val Plumwood, “Being Prey”
- Feb 19** Rolston Holmes, “Duties to Endangered Species”  
Ned Hettinger & Bill Throop, “Refocusing Ecocentrism”  
Colleen Clements, “Stasis: The Unnatural Value”
- Feb 26** Arne Naess, “Philosophy of Wolf Policies”  
Ian Whyte, “The Elephant Management Dilemma”  
David Schmitz, “When Preservationism Doesn’t Preserve”

### ***First Paper Due Friday March 1***

- March 5** Michael Nelson, *Heart and Blood*: Prologue, chs. 1-3 [pp. 3-121]

### ***[Spring Break]***

- March 19** Michael Nelson, *Heart and Blood*: chs. 4-7 [pp., 122-248]
- March 26** Michael Nelson, *Heart and Blood*, chs. 8-10, epilogue [pp. 249-352]
- April 2** Jack Turner: “The Abstract Wild”  
William Cronon, “The Trouble With Wilderness”  
J. Baird Callicott, “The Wilderness Idea Revisited”
- April 9** Freya Mathews, “Letting the World Grow Old”  
Steve Hinchliffe et al., “Urban Wild Things”
- April 16 [no class session – field trips week]**
- April 23** Ty Raterman, “Bearing the Weight of the World”  
Michael Maniates, “Individualization”
- April 30** Steve Vogel, “Democracy & the Commons”  
Murray Bookchin, “Social Ecology”

### ***Final Paper Due Monday May 13***

## ***Pratt Policies and Procedures***

A full policy and procedures document and related institute policies and procedures can be found online ([www.pratt.edu/policies](http://www.pratt.edu/policies)) or in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Main Building, Lower Level.

### ***Academic Integrity Policy***

At Pratt, students, faculty, and staff do creative and original work. This is one of our community values. For Pratt to be a space where everyone can freely create, our community must adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity.

Academic integrity at Pratt means using your own and original ideas in creating academic work. It also means that if you use the ideas or influence of others in your work, you must acknowledge them.

At Pratt,

- We do our own work,
- We are creative, and
- We give credit where it is due.

Based on our value of academic integrity, Pratt has an Academic Integrity Standing Committee (AISC) that is charged with educating faculty, staff, and students about academic integrity practices. Whenever possible, we strive to resolve alleged infractions at the most local level possible, such as between student and professor, or within a department or school. When necessary, members of this committee will form an Academic Integrity Hearing Board. Such boards may hear cases regarding cheating, plagiarism, and other infractions described below; these infractions can be grounds for citation, sanction, or dismissal.

### ***Academic Integrity Code***

When students submit any work for academic credit, they make an implicit claim that the work is wholly their own, completed without the assistance of any unauthorized person. These works include, but are not limited to exams, quizzes, presentations, papers, projects, studio work, and other assignments and assessments. In addition, no student shall prevent another student from making their work. Students may study, collaborate and work together on assignments at the discretion of the instructor.

Examples of infractions include but are not limited to:

- 1) Plagiarism, defined as using the exact language or a close paraphrase of someone else's ideas without citation.
- 2) Violations of fair use, including the unauthorized and un-cited use of another's artworks, images, designs, etc.
- 3) The supplying or receiving of completed work including papers, projects, outlines, artworks, designs, prototypes, models, or research for submission by any person other than the author.
- 4) The unauthorized submission of the same or essentially the same piece of work for credit in two different classes.
- 5) The unauthorized supplying or receiving of information about the form or content of an examination.
- 6) The supplying or receiving of partial or complete answers, or suggestions for answers; or the supplying or receiving of assistance in interpretation of questions on any examination from any source not explicitly authorized. (This includes copying or reading of another student's work or consultation of notes or other sources during an examination.)

For academic support, students are encouraged to seek assistance from the Writing and Tutorial Center, Pratt Libraries, or consult with an academic advisor about other support resources.

### ***General Pratt Attendance Policy***

Pratt Institute understands that students' engagement in their program of study is central to their success. While no attendance policy can assure that, regular class attendance is key to this engagement and signals the commitment Pratt students make to participate fully in their education.

Faculty are responsible for including a reasonable attendance policy on the syllabus for each course they teach, consistent with department-specific guidelines, if applicable, and with Institute policy regarding reasonable accommodation of students with documented disabilities. Students are responsible for knowing the attendance policy in each of their classes; for understanding whether a class absence has been excused or not; for obtaining material covered during an absence (note: instructors may request that a student obtain the material from peers); and for determining, in consultation with the instructor and ahead of time if possible, whether make-up work will be permitted.

Consistent attendance is essential for the completion of any course or program. Attending class does not earn students any specific portion of their grade, but is the pre-condition for passing the course, while missing class may seriously harm a student's grade. Grades may be lowered a letter grade for each unexcused absence, at the discretion of the instructor. Even as few as three unexcused absences in some courses (especially those that meet only once per week) may result in an automatic "F" for the course. (Note: Students shall not be penalized for class absences prior to adding a course at the beginning of a semester, though faculty may expect students to make up any missed assignments.)

Pratt Institute respects students' requirements to observe days of cultural significance, including religious holy days, and recognizes that some students might need to miss class to do so. In this, or other similar, circumstance, students are responsible for consulting with faculty ahead of time about how and when they can make up work they will miss.

Faculty are encouraged to give consideration to students who have documentation from the Office of Health and Counseling. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities will continue to be provided, as appropriate.

### ***Students with Disabilities***

The instructor will make every effort to accommodate students with both visible and invisible disabilities. While it is advisable that students with disabilities speak to the instructor at the start of the semester if they feel this condition might make it difficult to partake in aspects of the course, students should feel free to discuss issues pertaining to disabilities with the instructor at any time.

Depending on the nature of the disability, and the extent to which it may require deviations from standard course policy, documentation of a specific condition may be required, in compliance with conditions established by the campus Learning Access Center, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who require special accommodations for disabilities must obtain clearance from the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. They should contact Elisabeth Sullivan, Director of the Learning Access Center, 718-636-3711.

### ***Religious Policies***

In line with Pratt's Attendance Policy, Pratt Institute respects students' requirements to observe days of cultural significance, including religious holy days, and recognizes that some students might need to miss class to do so. In this, or other similar, circumstance, students are responsible for consulting with faculty ahead of time about how and when they can make up work they will miss.