

**PHIL/ENVIR ST 441: Environmental Ethics**  
**Syllabus, Spring 2007**  
**© 2007 Robert Streiffer**

**A. Administrative Information**

Instructor: Professor Robert Streiffer

Lectures: 147 Education, MWF, 12:05-12:55

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00-2:00 in my philosophy office, and also by appointment

Philosophy Office: 5123 Helen C. White Hall; 263-9479

Bioethics Office: 1411 Medical Sciences Center; 262-7490

E-mail: [rstreiffer@wisc.edu](mailto:rstreiffer@wisc.edu); Home page: <http://philosophy.wisc.edu/streiffer/>

Teaching Assistant: John Basl

E-mail: [basl@wisc.com](mailto:basl@wisc.com)

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00 -12:00

Office: 5160 Helen C. White

**B. Course Description**

The primary goal of this course is to prepare students to understand and critically evaluate various ethical perspectives on human beings' interactions with nature and these perspectives' applications to environmental issues. A secondary goal of the course is to familiarize students with the historical sources of these perspectives and with contemporary manifestations of them in the political arena. The principal ethical perspectives studied will usually include anthropocentrism, animal welfare and animal rights views, biocentric individualism, and environmental holism. We will study representative descriptions and defenses of these perspectives and consider their application to contemporary environmental issues such as hunting, the preservation of endangered species, the use of biotechnology, wilderness preservation and management, and the place of the poor and the third world in the environmental movement. P: 3 cr. Philosophy enviro studies, or Grad st. in IES.

**B. Materials:**

- *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, available from the UW bookstore or on-line sources such as Borders, Barnes and Noble, and Amazon.
- Reading packet available for purchase at Bob's Copy Shop in University Square (257-4536).
- Handouts and news articles distributed in class
- For additional materials on the web, some good sources are:  
<http://www.cep.unt.edu/>  
<http://ethics.sandiego.edu/Applied/Environment/index.asp>  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/>

**C. Grading Plan:**

The breakdown for grades is as follows:

Lecture Attendance	10%
Discussion section attendance	15%
Discussion section participation	15%

Paper 1	20%
Paper 2	20%
Paper 3	20%

I use the following grading scale, with your final grade rounded to the nearest letter grade:

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalent
A	4
AB	3.5
B	3
BC	2.5
C	2
D	1
F	0

Attendance: The TA will be taking attendance for the lectures and discussion sections. You are entitled to 2 unexcused absences from the lectures and 1 unexcused absence from the discussion sections without any penalty. Any excused absence for reasons other than an emergency must be cleared by the TA in advance of the class missed. For all excused absences, you must send the TA an e-mail stating the date and the reason so that he will have a record of it when it comes time to calculate your final grade. Any unexcused absences over the ones to which you are entitled will affect your attendance grade for lecture or discussion as follows:

1 lecture absence	AB
2 lecture absences	B
3 lecture absences	BC
4 lecture absences	C
5 lecture absences	D
6 lecture absences	F

1 section absence	B
2 section absences	C
3 section absences	D
4 section absences	F

Discussion section participation: The TA will grade your participation both in terms of quality and quantity:

Excellent participation	A
Good participation	B
Poor participation	C
No participation	F

**D. Requirements:**

- Write three papers: 1750-1850 words (6 pages) in length. See the schedule for dates. You must hand in all the papers in order to pass this course. You may not elect to opt out of a paper and receive an F on it. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Papers handed in during class but after the beginning of class will be bumped to the next letter grade or half-letter grade down (e.g., from an A to an AB, from a C to a D.) After that, the penalty is one full letter grade per 24 hours. Any non-emergency extensions must be requested prior to the due date, and will be granted only in rare circumstances. Although you are encouraged to discuss your papers with friends and classmates, no group work is allowed. I will fail any papers not in compliance with the UW rules governing academic misconduct, found at <http://www.wisc.edu/students/resources/misconduct.htm>. The UW Writing Center also has helpful guidelines on avoiding plagiarism at [http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QPA\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html). Ignorance of what counts as plagiarism is not an acceptable defense. More severe penalties may also be used, if appropriate. In a philosophy class, your grade is not determined by the details of the substantive view you defend (i.e., you won't get penalized for disagreeing with my views or the author's conclusions); rather, you will be graded on how well you articulate and defend your view and how well you relate relevant parts of the readings and lectures to the paper topic.
- Read all of the assignments before the lecture. Since the readings form the basis of the intellectual content of this course, read them carefully and read them critically. Although the average amount of reading per class is not very much, many of the readings are quite dense and will require that you read them more than once in order to fully understand the argument. Current scholarship on study skills suggests that most students should spend three hours outside of class studying for every hour of class, and that students who do well spend even more time.
- Read the news articles passed out in class. These will give you opportunities to reflect on the relevance of the readings and the lectures to recent or current events. They will also provide additional topics for discussion during the discussion sections.
- Attend all of the lectures. My lecture style includes many opportunities for students to respond to the arguments under discussion, and you will find that being an active listener and participant will greatly increase the amount you learn from this class. Current scholarship on study skills strongly suggests that students who actively listen and respond to lectures learn much more from them, and in the past, the attendance grade has, on average, improved student grades.
- Attend and participate in all the discussion sections.

**E. Additional Class Policies**

Academic misconduct: Please note that the imposition of any penalty for any kind of academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, trying to get credit for a class you didn't attend, etc.) results in a permanent note that goes into your academic file, and that UW will disclose the fact that you were penalized for academic misconduct to interested parties who request that information.

Exceptions to the rules: I will not grant anyone an exception to the rules outlined in this syllabus unless that exception is granted to everyone. This means, for example, that since I can't commit

to allowing everyone the option of rewriting their paper, I can't allow anyone the option of rewriting their paper.

Classroom Etiquette: You are expected to behave in ways that are appropriate and respectful to the professor, the teaching assistant, and the other students. This includes, but is not limited to

1. Arriving on time. Students who walk into the classroom late create a distraction.
2. Refraining from private conversations with classmates during lecture or discussion.
3. Being patient and courteous to other students when they ask a question or make a comment.
4. Expressing disagreement with the comments of others in a respectful manner.
5. Removing sunglasses and hats.
6. Staying awake.
7. Refraining from reading any non-course-related material.
8. Refraining from packing up until class is completely over.
9. Turn any beepers or cell phones off when entering class.

#### **F. Outside Resources for Help**

The Writing Center has several classes and numerous handouts on academic writing. They will also provide individual writing instruction. Appointments can be made by stopping in at 6171 Helen C. White or calling 263-1992. Their web site is [www.wisc.edu/writing](http://www.wisc.edu/writing). They can be much more effective if you approach them early in the writing process.

Study Skills: UW, as well as many other universities, have on-line materials available on how to improve your study skills as an undergraduate, and I encourage you to take a look at the URLs below and try to benefit from them.

<http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/SS/sshome.htm>

[http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/uac/resources/study\\_skills.html](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/uac/resources/study_skills.html).

Students who need accommodations should notify me by the end of the second week of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made. Please bring your documentation from the McBurney Center (<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>).

Jim Pryor has a very helpful page on how to read philosophy papers at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>.