

**PHIL5573 Topics in Applied Philosophy:**  
**Environmental Philosophy**

**Mode of Teaching:** Face-to-face Teaching

**Term:** 2023-24 Term 2

**Time :** Friday 18:30-21:30

**Location :** YIA 503

**Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)**

This course will provide students with an introduction to central topics in contemporary environmental philosophy. We will address central ethical issues: Which entities deserve consideration in our moral reasoning? Is classical moral theory adequate to deal with the moral and practical challenges posed by the environmental crisis, or must we draw from alternative traditions and create new ways of thinking? These practical questions entail theoretical ones: What is a living thing? What is an ecosystem? What is the relationship between humans and the environment? What is the human being? As this is a course in applied philosophy, students will learn how to critically assess contemporary environmental discourse and the theoretical and value judgments implied in it. We will ask what it would mean to take environmental ethics into our lives in Hong Kong today.

**Topics/Schedule (Tentative)**

1. Introduction
2. Classical Moral Theory and Environmental Philosophy
3. Who/What has Moral Standing?
  - a. Humans/People
  - b. Animals
  - c. Plants
  - d. Ecosystems
  - e. Pluralism and Moderation
4. Nonwestern Approaches
5. Biophilia
6. Nature and Art
7. Contemporary Applied Issues (Student Choice – e.g., responsibilities to future generations, population and consumption, wilderness preservation, extinction, climate change)

**Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)**

1. Acquire knowledge of the selected topics of the course.
2. Have a solid grasp of the philosophical issues of the selected topics of the course.
3. Demonstrate familiarity with the primary/secondary source texts.
4. Be able to articulate and defend a philosophical thesis of their own.

## Learning activities

### In-class:

- Our three in-class hours will be spent on lectures, discussion, and student presentations.
- Circumstances permitting, we will also have an optional class outing at some point during the semester.

### Out-of-class:

- Reading: Roughly 2-3 hours per week
- Preparing assignments: Roughly 2 hours per week

## Assessment scheme

Task nature	Weight
Essay (3000 words)	60%
Presentation	20%
Participation	20%

## Remarks on Assessment Scheme (if any)

## Grade Descriptor

Please refer to: [http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade\\_descriptors.pdf](http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf) and details of individual assignments

## Details of course website

Relevant announcements and course documents will be posted on Blackboard.

## Recommended learning resources

### General Introductions to Environmental Philosophy

Bassham, Gregory. *Environmental Ethics: The Central Issues*. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2020.

Curry, Patrick. *Ecological Ethics*. Polity, 2011.

Desjardins, Joseph R. *Environmental Ethics*. 5th edition, Cengage Learning, 2013.

Hourdequin, Marion. *Environmental Ethics: From Theory to Practice*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

James, Simon P. *Environmental Philosophy: An Introduction*. Polity, 2015.

### Introduction

#### Required readings

#### Recommended readings

1. Desjardins, Joseph R. 2013. "Ethical Theories and the Environment." In *Environmental Ethics*, 5th edition, 21–46. Cengage Learning.
2. Hubbell, J. Andrew, and John C. Ryan. 2021. "The Anthropocene: A Superhero Species Comes of Age." In *Introduction to the Environmental Humanities*. Routledge.
3. Palmer, Clare. 2002. "An Overview of Environmental Ethics." In *Environmental Ethics*, edited

by Holmes Rolston and Andrew Light, 15–37. Blackwell.

## **Anthropocentrism**

### **Required readings**

1. Clowney, David, and Patricia Mosto, eds. 2009. “The Worldviews of the Abrahamic Religions and the Environment.” In *Earthcare: An Anthology in Environmental Ethics*, 39–92. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
2. Baxter, William. 1974. “A ‘Good’ Environment: Just One of the Set of Human Objectives.” In *People or Penguins: The Case for Optimal Pollution*, 1–13. New York: Columbia University Press.

### **Recommended readings**

1. Jonas, Hans. 1973. “Technology and Responsibility: Reflections on the New Tasks of Ethics.” *Social Research* 40 (1): 31–54.
2. Norton, Bryan G. 2002 [1984]. “Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism.” In *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, edited by Holmes Rolston and Andrew Light, 163–74. Blackwell.

## **Animals**

### **Required readings**

1. Singer, Peter. 2011. “Equality for Animals?” In *Practical Ethics*, 3rd edition, 48–70. New York: Cambridge University Press.
2. Steinbock, Bonnie. 1978. “Speciesism and the Idea of Equality.” *Philosophy* 53 (204): 247–56.
3. Regan, Tom. 1985. “The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights.” In *In Defense of Animals*, edited by Peter Singer, 5:13–26. Blackwell.

### **Recommended readings**

1. Donovan, Josephine. 2006. “Feminism and the Treatment of Animals: From Care to Dialogue.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 31 (2): 305–29.
2. Hursthouse, Rosalind. 2011. “Virtue Ethics and the Treatment of Animals.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, edited by Tom L. Beauchamp and R. G. Frey, 0. Oxford University Press.
3. Korsgaard, Christine M. 2018. “A Kantian Case for Our Obligations to the Other Animals.” In *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to the Other Animals*, 131–55. Uehiro Series in Practical Ethics. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
4. Nussbaum, Martha C. 2023. “The Capabilities Approach: Forms of Life and Respecting the Creatures Who Live Them.” In *Justice for Animals: Our Collective Responsibility*, 80–117. Simon & Schuster.
5. Palmer, Clare. 2011. “The Moral Relevance of the Distinction Between Domesticated and Wild Animals.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, edited by Tom L. Beauchamp and R. G. Frey. Oxford University Press.
6. Zangwill, Nick. 2021. “Our Moral Duty to Eat Meat.” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 7 (3): 295–311.

## **Plants**

### **Required readings**

1. Taylor, Paul W. 1981. “The Ethics of Respect for Nature.” *Environmental Ethics* 3 (3): 197–218.

### **Recommended readings**

1. Lawrence, Natalie, and Paco Calvo. 2023. “Learning to See ‘Green’ in an Ecological Crisis.” In , edited by L. Weir, 167–83. Springer Nature.
2. Rolston, Holmes, III. 2012. “Species and Biodiversity: Lifelines in Jeopardy.” In *A New Environmental Ethics: The Next Millennium for Life on Earth*, 126–57. New York: Routledge.
3. Stone, Christopher D. 2010. “Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects.” In *Should Trees Have Standing? Law, Morality, and the Environment*, 3rd Edition, 1–32. New York: Oxford University Press.

## **Ecosystems**

### **Required readings**

1. Leopold, Aldo. 1968. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
2. Fox, Warwick. 1984. “Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of Our Time?” *The Ecologist* 14:

- 194–200.
3. Naess, Arne. 1986. “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects.” *Philosophical Inquiry* 8 (1): 10–31. <https://doi.org/10.5840/philiquiry198681/22>.
  - 4.

#### Recommended readings

1. Budolfson, Mark Bryant. 2014. “Why the Standard Interpretation of Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic Is Mistaken.” *Environmental Ethics* 36 (4): 443–53.
2. Cahen, Harley. 1988. “Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems.” *Environmental Ethics* 10 (3): 195–216.
3. Callicott, J. Baird. 1983. “The Land Aesthetic.” *Environmental History Review* 7 (4): 345–58.
4. Naess and Callicott on Self-Realization (2 readings):
  - a. Naess, Arne. 2008b. “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World.” In *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, edited by Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, 81–96. Berkeley: Counterpoint.
  - b. Callicott, J. Baird. 2017. “Notes on ‘Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World.’” *Worldviews* 21 (3): 235–50.
5. Naess on Joy and Beautiful Action (2 readings):
  - a. Naess, Arne. 2008. “The Place of Joy in a World of Fact.” In *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, edited by Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, 123–32. Berkeley: Counterpoint.
  - b. Naess, Arne. 2008. “Beautiful Action: Its Function in the Ecological Crisis.” In *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, edited by Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, 133–39. Berkeley: Counterpoint.
6. Bookchin, Murray. 2013. “What Social Ecology?” In *Environmental Ethics*, edited by Michael Boylan, Second Edition, 46–58. Wiley-Blackwell.

#### Moderation and Pluralism

##### Required readings

1. Bassham, Gregory. 2020. “Moderate Ecocentrism.” In *Environmental Ethics: The Central Issues*, 106–20. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

##### Recommended readings

1. Callicott, J. Baird. 1990. “The Case Against Moral Pluralism.” *Environmental Ethics* 12 (2): 99–124.
2. Stone, Christopher D. 1988. “Moral Pluralism and the Course of Environmental Ethics.” *Environmental Ethics* 10 (2): 139–54.
3. Weston, Anthony. 2004. “Multicentrism: A Manifesto.” *Environmental Ethics* 26 (1): 25–40.

#### Nonwestern Approaches

##### Required readings

1. Clowney, David, and Patricia Mosto, eds. 2009. “Asian, Native American, and Western Secular Worldviews and the Environment.” In *Earthcare: An Anthology in Environmental Ethics*, 93–95. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

##### Recommended readings

1. Callicott, J. Baird, and James McRae, eds. 2015. *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*. State University of New York Press.
2. Hanh, Thich Nhat. 2021. *Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet*. HarperOne.
3. Rose, Deborah Bird. 1988. “Exploring an Aboriginal Land Ethic.” *Meanjin* 47 (3): 378–87.
4. Fixico, Donald. 2003. “American Indian Circular Philosophy.” In *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World*, 41–61. New York: Routledge.
5. Sioui, Georges E. 1992. “The Sacred Circle of Life.” In *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic*, 8–19. Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

#### Biophilia

##### Required readings

1. Fleischner, Thomas Lowe. 2019. “Natural History as a Practice of Kinship.” *Minding Nature* 12 (3): 12–15.
2. Fleischner, Thomas Lowe. 2017. “Our Deepest Affinity.” In *Nature, Love, Medicine: Essays on Wildness and Wellness*, edited by Thomas Lowe Fleischner, Illustrated edition. Salt Lake City, UT:

Torrey House Press.

Recommended readings

**Nature and Art**

Required readings

1. Powers, Richard. 2019. *The Overstory* (Chapter 1). Reprint edition. New York London: W. W. Norton & Company.
2. Oliver, Mary. "Wild Geese." ([here](#)).
3. Smith, Maggie. "First Fall." ([here](#)).

Recommended readings

1. Abram, David. 2004. "Storytelling and Wonder." <https://www.davidabram.org/essays/storytelling-and-wonder>.
2. Buell, Lawrence, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber. 2011. "Literature and Environment." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 36 (1): 417–40.

**Contemporary Applies Issues**

(Readings TBA, based on student topic selection)

**Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)**

<b>Teacher</b>	
Name:	Prof. Hayden Kee
Office location:	FKH 430
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**Academic honesty and plagiarism**

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

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