

PHILOSOPHY 346: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Spring 2003

PROFESSOR:	John Nolt	OFFICE PHONE:	974-7218
OFFICE:	818 McClung Tower	HOME PHONE:	573-4135
OFFICE HOURS:	9-10 MWF and by appointment	E-MAIL:	nolt@utk.edu
		WEB PAGE:	web.utk.edu/~nolt

REQUIRED TEXTS

John Nolt, et.al., *What Have We Done? The Foundation for Global Sustainability's State of the Bioregion Report for the Upper Tennessee Valley and the Southern Appalachian Mountains*, Earth Knows, 1997.

Jospeh R. Des Jardins, *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, 3rd ed., Wadsworth, 1997.

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, New Revised Edition, Avon Books, 1990.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, Joseph Wood Krutch, ed., Bantam Books, 1962.

ABOUT THE COURSE

This course is an introduction to environmental ethics. There are no prerequisites. Environmental ethics is a form of *applied* ethics. So the course involves both ethical theory and ethical practice. We will try to ground both in engaged philosophical reflection. The course is divided into four parts.

1. **Regional Environmental Issues**—an assessment of the environmental health of the Upper Tennessee Valley and Southern Appalachian Mountains: environmental science locally applied.
2. **Ethical Theory**—a survey of contemporary philosophical thought on how we ought to treat future generations, sentient animals and the natural world.
3. **Nature, Simplicity and Spirituality**—a discussion of Thoreau's transcendental philosophy.
4. **Group Projects (Ethical Practice)**—hands-on environmental work. Early in the semester, we will divide the class up into small working groups, each of which will study and work toward the solution of some local environmental problem. As part of the class project each of you should spend at least 15 hours during the semester making a hands-on contribution to solving the problem you choose. Some suggestions for group projects are listed below. Once you choose a project, I will help you contact people who can help you do it. At the end of the semester, each group will turn in a written report and also present its experiences, thoughts and conclusions to the class by conducting one class session. Groups should meet frequently as the semester progresses, and they should also confer with contact people in the local community who are acquainted with their problem.

GRADES

Grades will be determined as follows:

First Test	16%
Second Test	20%
Third Test	12%
Reading quizzes	25% total
Group project	25%
Attendance	2%

Tests will consist of essay and short answer questions. Test dates are listed in the course calendar. I will hand out a list of study questions before each test.

Reading quizzes will be given at the beginning of the period on many days. They will consist of five brief questions on the reading for a particular day. Their main purpose is to motivate you to read the assignment for the day carefully before coming to class, but they also serve as a check on attendance. There will be no makeup quizzes, but a small number of the lowest quiz grades will be dropped (the number will depend on how many quizzes we have).

Group project grades are based on the quality of the individual's contributions to (a) the group's community service, (b) a final report jointly authored by the group, and (c) a class presentation near the end of the semester. Individual work within the group will be evaluated both by the group itself and by me.

Though attendance is important at all times, it is crucial when your classmates are giving their presentations. Therefore, attendance will count toward your grade for days when we have group presentations. I do not normally take attendance every day, but if class attendance falls, I may begin recording attendance without advance notice, and this will count toward your grade.

POSSIBLE GROUP PROJECTS

Help Ijams Nature Center to monitor and clean up urban creeks or work on restoration projects at Ijams itself.

Help out at a regional center for sustainable agriculture and sustainable living: Narrow Ridge Center, near Washburn, Tennessee.

Help with activities of the campus group Students Promoting Environmental Action in Knoxville.

Volunteer at the Knoxville Zoo, the Appalachian Bear Center or some other organization working to protect animals.

... or invent your own project (but check with me). Some other projects in past semesters have included: working with the UT Wildlife Society in a bottomlands hardwood restoration project; helping with inner city gardening projects with the Knoxville/Knox County Community Action Committee; promoting recycling on or near campus; helping with a

community-based health survey in low income neighborhoods near a nuclear and chemical waste site; helping to capture, spay and neuter feral cats; restoring the Cumberland Trail or trails in the Great Smoky Mountains; helping TVA with reservoir cleanups; documenting declines in the spruce/fir ecosystem; working with Greenpeace to organize a demonstration against the opening of the Watts Bar nuclear plant; doing environmental presentations in Coker County elementary schools; volunteering at the Humane Society; helping with a hazardous waste roundup; collecting and donating bikes to a homeless shelter; and doing research for the book *What Have We Done?*.

ABOUT ME

I came to UT in 1978 after receiving my Ph.D. from Ohio State with a dissertation in the philosophy of mathematics. Concern about the world in which my children will live led me into environmental activism in the late 80s, and soon thereafter I began working in environmental philosophy. My immediate family includes my wife, Annette Mendola, three children, ranging in age from 5 to 17, and three cats. I enjoy primitive woodworking, rock climbing, hiking, biking and organic gardening.

COURSE CALENDAR

Abbreviations used in the calendar are as follows:

EE	Des Jardins, <i>Environmental Ethics</i>
SINGER	Peter Singer, <i>Animal Liberation</i>
W	Thoreau, <i>Walden</i>
WEBSITE	My website (web.utk.edu/~nolt); go to syllabus for this class on the web and click on the day's assignment to obtain these readings
WHWD	Nolt, et. al., <i>What Have We Done?</i>

Date	Topic	Assignment
1/13	Introduction	—
I. REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES		
1/15	Value and description	WHWD Introduction
1/17	Water	WHWD ch 1
1/20	NO CLASS (MLK Day)	
1/22	Air	WHWD ch 2
1/24	Biodiversity	WHWD ch 3
1/27	Food and agriculture	WHWD ch 4
1/29	Energy	WHWD ch 5
1/31	Waste	WHWD ch 6
2/3	Transportation	WHWD ch 7
2/5	Population and urbanization	WHWD ch 8
2/7	Sustainable living	WHWD ch 10
2/10	FIRST TEST	—
2/12	Organization of Group Projects	WEBSITE
II. ETHICAL THEORY		
2/14	Ethical theory and the environment	EE, ch. 2
2/17	Fundamentals of logic, prescriptive reasoning	WEBSITE (2 web pages)
2/19	Cost-benefit analysis	WEBSITE
2/21	Value assumptions of contemporary	EE pp. 48-63; WHWD ch. 9

Date	Topic	Assignment
	economics	
2/24	Responsibilities to future generations	EE ch. 4
2/26	More on future generations	—
2/28	The principle of equality	SINGER, Prefaces and ch. 1
3/3	Factory farming	SINGER, ch. 3
3/5	Vegetarianism	SINGER, ch. 4
3/7	Ethics and animals	EE ch. 6
3/10	Ethics and the natural world	EE ch. 5
3/12	Biocentric ethics	EE ch. 7
3/14	Ecology and ethics	EE ch. 8
3/17-21	NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK	—
3/24	The land ethic	EE ch. 9
3/26	Deep ecology	EE ch. 10
3/28	Social justice and social ecology	EE pp. 232-249
3/31	Ecofeminism	EE pp. 249-261
4/2	Pluralism and Pragmatism	EE Epilogue
4/4	SECOND TEST	—
III. NATURE, SIMPLICITY AND SPIRITUALITY		
4/7	Transcendentalism and nature	W, pp. 105-135
4/9	Transcendentalism and nature	W, pp. 135-165
4/11	Simplicity and spirituality	W, pp. 165-200
4/14	Simplicity and spirituality	W, pp. 200-233 (skip 234-339)
4/16	Simplicity and spirituality	W, pp. 340-351
4/18	NO CLASS — GOOD FRIDAY	—
4/21	Environmental action	W. pp. 85-104
IV. GROUP PROJECTS		
4/23	THIRD TEST	—
4/25	Group Presentation	—
4/28	Group Presentaton	—
4/30	Group Presentation	—
5/2	NO CLASS—STUDY PERIOD	—
5/5	Group Presentation(s) for 11:15 class 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	—
5/7	Group Presentation(s) for 10:10 class 5-7 p.m.	—

Comment: There was too much time on Thoreau. I used class discussion, which went slowly. (Ye gods, listen to me!)

DISABILITIES: Students who have a disability that requires accommodation should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services (974-6087) to discuss their specific needs and schedule an appointment with me during my office hours.