Philosophy 108: Ecological Philosophy  
Kalamazoo College  
Spring 2016

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Ahern  E-mail: patrick.ahern@kzoo.edu
Meeting Location: Dewing Room 311
Meeting Times: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:50am-1:05pm
Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 1:15pm-2:15pm (and by appointment)
Office Location: Humphrey House 202

Course Objectives: Ecological philosophy has grown to include a scope of topics that go well beyond traditional concerns of environmental ethics. This course will reflect upon traditional issues such as animal rights, our relation to nature, and questions of anthropocentric or bio-centric perspectives regarding questions that permeate our engagement with our environment. Ecological philosophy, however, bears these concerns in mind while opening up the scope of ecological concerns to questions such as: What does it mean to be a human being in and/or of nature? How do we understand ourselves in light of the role of technology in human development? What role does human intellectual activity have in our ability to reflect, respond, or even cause ecological dilemmas and crises? To what extent are questions regarding our social and political organization interwoven into ecological concerns? And how do the emancipatory demands for social justice regarding race, class, sex and gender need to inform environmental or ecological debates and resolutions? In this course, we will begin a dialogue to address some of these issues that confront ecological philosophy today.

Texts:
- Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings, ed. by David Farrell Krell; Harper Collins
- Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason, Continuum Publishing

Suggested Text (possibly to be included for our final readings):

Grading: The grades will be earned through a combination of two papers, journal reflections, a civic engagement activity and reflection, and class participation. The breakdown is as follows:

Two papers (30% each)
Journal reflections (15%)
Civic engagement activity and reflection (15%)
Class participation (10%).
**Reading and Journal Reflections:** It is crucial that you complete the readings on the assigned day and that you have given the text careful consideration before coming to class. Since it will take more than one reading of the texts to familiarize yourself with the ideas presented, you should have the initial reading of the material for the following week done by Monday of the assigned week. The reading schedule will serve as a guide. However, we may adjust the pace of the assignments to provide for more in-depth analysis and in the interest of opportunities for learning. You will be expected to write a journal entry for each reading that reflects upon the readings assigned for that day’s class. These journal entries will periodically reviewed and graded. You should keep these journals in a notebook for review. Each entry should be *at least* four pages written. For each of the readings, you will be expected to find three questions or points of interest from the text that may be addressed in class discussion. Journals will not be accepted late when they have been accepted and graded. These journals should provide for an opportunity to delve into your own insights regarding the readings. I will not be grading in terms of ‘correctness’ of an interpretation, but rather that you have shown a careful reading and depth of engagement with the reading of the day.

**Essays:** You will be required to write two papers of at least five typed pages each. The topics will be distributed in class. I will be available to meet with anyone who seeks individual assistance with your paper, and I *strongly* encourage you to take advantage of this extra assistance in writing your papers. Essays that are late (i.e. not handed in at the time that they are due in class) are subject to a full grade reduction for each day that the essay is late. Exceptions will be made only for extreme circumstances (death, serious illness, etc.) and must be granted in advance.

**Attendance and Participation:** Active participation in class discussion is key to drawing as much as possible from the readings and the course in general. The class will involve a mixture of lecture and discussion, and you are expected to come to class with questions and comments about the reading. You are entitled to two unexcused absences before your grade is reduced by one step (A to A-, B+ to B, etc.).

**Civic Engagement Activity and Reflection:** There will be several opportunities to engage in civic activities that respond to issues regarding the relation to nature and the environment. This will include engaging in an environmental “workday” and reflecting on the mission and goal of the civic engagement that you perform. I will provide details of what these opportunities will involve as we confirm them with the respective organizations. The reflections will be at least three pages typed and you will be expected to draw from specific issues and questions that arose as a result of the readings for the course as you reflect upon your civic engagement.

**Classroom Policies:**

- This class will be treated as a collaborative effort and, to that end, it is absolutely required that you treat everyone in the class with respect. Any
demeaning, dismissive, or insulting behavior toward anyone in the class will be treated very seriously. All are here to learn and the class environment will be one where mistakes will be seen as opportunities, and the ability to ask questions and identify what is challenging about the material will be both fostered and encouraged.

- Cell Phones are prohibited. They must be off and packed away so that they are out of sight. They are distracting to all in the class, and besides, we all know that you don’t like to stare at your lap that much.
- Computers will need to be put away unless stated otherwise.

Disabilities:

If you have a disability requiring special accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible so that the necessary arrangements can be made.

Final Note:

I view this class as a collaborative effort where as a group we will be engaging with these thinkers and texts. To that end, I encourage feedback from you regarding anything in the class that you find most or least helpful to your understanding or interest in the material. While I am aware that many of the ideas in the class will be challenging, it is my hope that the classroom atmosphere will be conducive to lively discussion and encourage you to take risks in your own thinking. You may even surprise yourself!
Tentative Reading Schedule (All assignments subject to change):

(Readings are from Pojman & Pojman, Environmental Ethics, 6th Edition unless otherwise noted)

Week One (March 28, 30 and April 1): Introductions; Immanuel Kant, “Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth” (pp. 60-62); Holly L. Wilson, “The Green Kant: Kant’s Treatment of Animals” (pp. 62-70)

Week Two (April 4, 6, 8): Peter Singer, “A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation” (pp. 71-80); Tom Regan, “The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights” (pp. 81-89); John Stuart Mill, “Nature” (pp. 122-129)

Week Three (April 11, 13, 15): Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecological Movement” (pp. 129-133); Arne Naess, “Ecosophy T: Deep Versus Shallow Ecology” (pp. 133-142); Bill Devall and George Sessions, “Deep Ecology” (pp. 143-148)

Week Four (April 18, 20, 22): Murray Bookchin, “Social Ecology Versus Deep Ecology” (pp. 165-176); Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster, “What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism” (pp. 691-712)

Week Five (April 25, 27, 29): Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” (Basic Writings, pp. 307-342)

Week Six (May 2, 4, 6): Excerpts from Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment (Handout); Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason (Chapter III, “Revolt of Nature,” pp. 63-86)

Week Seven (May 9, 11, 13): Herbert Marcuse, “The Catastrophe of Liberation” (Handout); Discussion of the film, “Koyaanisqatsi”

Week Eight (May 16, 18, 20): Peter S. Wenz, “Just Garbage: The Problem of Environmental Racism” (pp. 530-539); Karen J. Warren, “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism” (pp. 589-605); Ynestra King, “Feminism and The Revolt of Nature” (Handout)

Week Nine (May 23, 25, 27): TBA (Possibly drawn from suggested reading, Christof Bonneuil & Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us)

Week Ten (May 30, June 1, 3): Memorial Day Holiday (No class); TBA