PHIL 108
Ecological Philosophy
Spring 2009

Instructor: Eric Lambert
Meeting time: M-W, 10:00-11:35 am
F, 10:00-10:40 am
Email: elambert@kzoo.edu
Location: DE 310
Office hrs: TBA

TEXTS

(Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1995)


COURSE DESCRIPTION

The objective of Ecological Philosophy is to acquaint students with some of the concerns, concepts, and arguments animating ecological thought and practice. Customarily, ecological and environmental discussions have a decidedly moral flavor, posing and trying to answer questions within the framework established by the moral theories of Deontology and Utilitarianism. The design and intent of this course is slightly different. While we will pursue normative questions concerning moral value and obligation, the vocabulary and distinctions we will use derive from Deep Ecology, a form of praxis (i.e., theoretically-informed action) pioneered in the seventies by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. One of the central tenets of deep ecology involves the rejection of anthropocentrism. Theoretically and practically, deep ecologists insist that human agency and “being in the world” is distorted, even disfigured by the dual presumptions that only humans possess moral value and that the totality of the non-human has only a derivative value, if any value at all. For this reason, deep ecologists try to avoid the anthropocentric frame assumed by the Deontology-or-Utilitarianism dyad. During the first half of the course, we will familiarize ourselves with deep ecology in order to analyze and evaluate its normative foundations. Yet deep ecology is not solely, nor even primarily, a moral theory. So far as deep ecologists re-think the way humans are in the world (i.e., are internally related to the totality of the non-human) they reveal an affinity with the tradition of Phenomenology, especially the work of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. During the second half of the course we will examine Heidegger’s account of technology and Merleau-Ponty’s reflection on embodiment and behavior. In this light, the questions extend beyond the moral to include reflection on how properly to understand human experience, relatedness, and being in the world.

GRADING

40% two (2) essays

• First essay (4-6 pages), worth 15% of final grade
• Final essay (8-10 pages), worth 25% of final grade

5% rough draft of final essay and participation in peer review (last class of quarter)
45% six (6) short papers (2-3 carefully written pages), worth 7.5% each
10% participation

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required. Four or more unexcused absences result in 0.5 points being deducted from a student’s final grade (so if your final grade is 2.75 and you have four unexcused absences, you will receive a 2.25). Lateness should be avoided. Since tardiness is usually disruptive, excessive lateness (say, a pattern or habit of arriving late) will result in an unexcused absence.

LATE PAPERS

Unless prior arrangements are made, late papers will be marked down 0.5 points. Late papers will not be penalized only if prior arrangements are made, appropriate documentation is given, and the reasons are consistent with Kalamazoo College policy.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Per the Kalamazoo College Honor System: “The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.” Simply put, do not plagiarize. If you are not sure what plagiarism consists of, talk to me. Plagiarized work will result, at minimum, in a failing grade for that assignment or exam, and possibly in a failing grade for the course.
SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Week 1  Introducing the concept of Deep Ecology

Mon: Introduction

Wed: Thomas Berry, “The Viable Human” #1 (8-18)


Week 2  Deep Ecology: Assumptions, Concepts, Normative Ends

Mon: Arne Naess, “The Deep Ecological Movement” #9 (64-84)

   Arne Naess, “Ecosophy and Gestalt Ontology” #23 (240-245)

Fri: Arne Naess, “Equality, Sameness, and Rights” #21 (222-224)

Week 3  Critique of the concept of Sustainable Development


Wed: Donald Worster, “The Shaky Ground of Sustainability” #35 (417-427)

Fri: Arne Naess, “Politics and the Ecological Crisis: An Introductory Note” #27 (445-453)

Week 4  Ecofeminism

Mon: Freya Mathews, “Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology” (handout)
   Val Plumwood, “Ecosocial Feminism as a General Theory of Oppression” (handout)

Wed: Elizabeth Carlassare, “Essentialism in Ecofeminist Discourse” (handout)

Fri: Warwick Fox, “The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and Its Parallels” #27 (269-289)

Week 5  The Normative Quality of Deep Ecology


Wed: Arne Naess, “The Place of Joy in a World of Fact” #25 (249-258)

Fri: Arne Naess, “Deepness of Questions and the Deep Ecology Movement” #19 (204-212)

Week 6  Eco-Terrorism or Eco-Defense?

Monday – Wednesday: Edward Abbey, The Monkey Wrench Gang

(MWG is a fun, sometimes compelling read. But it is not timeless literature, so don’t get bogged
down reading it. I am going to let you set your own reading schedule. If you want a suggestion, you can breeze through pp. 1-53, which is character
development and background. Then, you might divide the book into two parts, pp. 53-253 and pp. 254-421.)

Fri: Wayland Drew, “Killing Wilderness” #12 (113-120)
   Continue with Abbey’s MWG
Week 7  Heidegger’s Account of Technology as a Mode of Revealing

Mon:  Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” (3-35)

Wed: Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” (3-35)
    Discussion of Koyaanisqatsi

Fri: Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” (3-35)
    Discussion of Koyaanisqatsi

Week 8  Heidegger cont’d, and Merleau-Ponty

Mon: Martin Heidegger, “The Turning” (36-49)

Wed: Monika Langer, “Merleau-Ponty and Deep Ecology” (handout)
    Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “General Introduction: Notes on the Cartesian Conceptions of Nature and Their Relations to Judeo-Christian Ontology” (123-139)

Fri: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “General Introduction: Notes on the Cartesian Conceptions of Nature and Their Relations to Judeo-Christian Ontology” (123-139)

Week 9  Merleau-Ponty’s Conception of Animality and the Human Body

Mon:** Memorial Day **

Wed:Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Animality: The Tendencies of Modern Biology” (139-167)

Fri: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Animality: The Tendencies of Modern Biology” (139-167)

Week 10  Merleau-Ponty cont’d


Fri: Peer review: exchange and discuss rough drafts

Final Essay due:1:00 – 4:00 Tuesday, June 9