PHIL 108 – Ecological Philosophy
Experiencing Qualitative Values
Winter 2011

Instructor: Eric Lambert
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Location: Times: 11:50 am – 12:15 pm
Office hrs: TBA

Texts


* The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Edward Abbey

* Nature: Course Notes from the College de France*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty

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 different. While we will pursue normative questions about moral value and obligation, the concepts 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. A central tenet of deep ecology is the rejection of anthropocentrism. Theoretically and practically, deep ecologists insist that human agency and “being in the world” is distorted, even disfigured by the presumptions that only humans possess moral value, and that the totality of the non-human has only 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 so as to analyze and evaluate its normative bases. 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., internally related to the totality of the non-human) they reveal an affinity with such phenomenological philosophers as 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, questions will extend beyond “morality” 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)
40% four (4) short papers (2-3 carefully written pages), worth 10% each
15% participation

Attendance

Attendance is required. Since there are only ten weeks per quarter, each class session matters. Three or more unexcused absences will result in 0.5 points being immediately subtracted from a student’s final grade (if your final grade is 2.75 and you have three unexcused absences, you will receive a 2.25). Lateness should also be avoided. Because tardiness is (usually very) disruptive, excessive lateness (e.g., two or more times arriving late) will result in one unexcused absence.
Late Papers
Unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor, late papers will be marked down 0.25 points each day the paper is late. Late papers will not be penalized only if prior arrangements are made, appropriate documentation is provided, and the reasons comply 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**
Mon: ** MLK Day **


Fri: Donald Worster, “The Shaky Ground of Sustainability” #35 (417-427)
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)  
Discussion of *No Such Thing*

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)

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

Week 8  
**Merleau-Ponty**

Mon: Monika Langer, “Merleau-Ponty and Deep Ecology” (handout)  

Fri: Giorgio Agamben, “Umwelt” and “Tick” (39-47)

**Week 9**

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

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

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

Fri: Discussion of Safe

**Week 10**

**Merleau-Ponty cont’d**


Fri: Peer review: exchange and discuss rough drafts

**Final Essay due:**