Course Description

The course will begin with an introduction to the topic of environmental ethics consisting of three components: an overview of the condition of the world environment, clarification of the necessity of a properly philosophical perspective on environmental issues and the relation of this perspective to scientific and economic approaches, and an examination of the crucial role our conception of nature and of our relation to it has played and continues to play in the current environmental crisis. The philosophical, historical, and theological roots of this conception of nature will be examined in the second part of the course. The third part of the course will consider major positions in environmental ethics, with special emphasis on deep ecology, ecofeminism, and a variety of cultural and religious perspectives. Finally, in conjunction with literary essays which suggest a new perceptual relation with the natural world, we will examine the "phenomenological" approach to our relation with nature as presented in David Abram's recent book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*. We will evaluate Abram's combination of anthropological and phenomenological evidence for the "turning inside-out" of consciousness and the "sentience" of the Earth, and the ethical injunctions he sees as consequences of our embodiment. Our goal throughout will be to explore the possibility of a conception of nature true to our experiences while free from apocalyptic consequences.

Course Requirements

50% five 500-word response papers (10% each)
40% two 1500-word papers, midterm and final (20% each)
10% participation

Five typewritten response papers of at least 500 words will be based on the readings and class discussions. In these short papers, I will be looking less for a polished essay than an authentic attempt to grapple with the philosophical issues posed in the course. The midterm and final paper will be 1500-word typewritten responses to questions distributed in advance and will draw on material covered through that point in the course. The final paper is due on the date set for the final exam. Attendance and participation in class
discussions is expected. Missing three or more classes will result in a full grade reduction.

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**Texts**


Reading Packet including:
- Don E. Marietta, Jr., "Changing Perspectives on Nature"
- Donald VanDeVeer & Christine Pierce, "An Introduction to Ethical Theory"
- Lester R. Brown, "Overview" and "Environmental Features" from Vital Signs 1997
- St. Thomas Aquinas, selection from *Summa Contra Gentiles*
- René Descartes, selections from *Discourse on Method* and *Philosophical Letters*
- Catherine Roach, "Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation"
- Roderick Frazier Nash, "The Greening of Philosophy"

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**Tentative Reading Schedule:**

*[This ambitious schedule is subject to alteration as we proceed. Specific assignments will be made in each class in accordance with our progress.]*

**Week 1: Introduction to Environmental Ethics**
- Course mechanics
- FILM: *Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance*
  - Introduction (1-5)
  - Marietta, "Changing Perspectives on Nature" (packet)
- Donald VanDeVeer & Christine Pierce, "An Introduction to Ethical Theory" (packet)

**Week 2:**
- Brown, "Overview" and "Environmental Features" (packet)
- Woodward & Goldstein, "Conduct, Misconduct, and the Structure of Science" (12-23)
- Wilson, "The Little Things that Run the World" (32-34)
- Rolston, "Environmental Ethics: Values in and Duties to the Natural World" (71-85)

**Week 3: Historical Perspectives on our Conception of Nature**
- Aquinas, selection from *Summa Contra Gentiles* (packet)
- Descartes, selections from *Discourse on Method* and *Philosophical Letters* (packet)
- Kant, "Duties to Animals" (312-313)
- White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" (204-9)
- Hughes & Swan, "How Much of the Earth is Sacred Space?" (162-170)

**Week 4:**
- Roach, "Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation" (packet)
- Evernden, "Nature in Industrial Society" (184-193)
  - FILM: *Animax Mundi*
  - FILM: *Unnecessary Fuss*

**Week 5: Contemporary Approaches to Environmental Ethics**
- Nash, "The Greening of Philosophy" (packet)
- Leopold, "The Land Ethic" (412-421)
- Rodman, "Four Forms of Ecological Consciousness Reconsidered" (422-425)
Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Perspectives" (437-447)
Guha, "Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation" (296-303)

Week 6:
Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism" (471-8)
Mies & Shiva, "Introduction to Ecofeminism" (480-9)
Fox, "Creation Spirituality" (228-234)
Ip, "Taoism and the Foundation of Environmental Ethics" (290-5)

Week 7:
Momaday, "A First American's View" (252-6)
Callicot, "African Biocommunitarianism and Australian Dreamtime" (271-283)
Thoreau, "Walking" (99-108)
Dillard, "Seeing" (114-121)

Week 8:
Nabhan, "The Far Outside" (141-6)
Mills, "The Wild and the Tame" (146-151)
Abram, The Spell of the Sensuous (3-29)

Week 9:
Abram, 31-72
Abram, 73-135.

Week 10:
Abram, 137-223.
Abram, 225-274.