Philosophy Department

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE
1200 Academy St. Kalamazoo, MI 49006

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

SPRING, 1999

PROFESSOR: Chris Latiolais
Humphrey House #202
Phone # 337-7076
Offices Hours:
1) Mon. 2:00 - 3:45
2) Tue. 10:30 - 11:30
3) By Appointment.

TEXTS:


3. Handouts:

FILMS:

1. Kooyansquatsi.

2. Poyansquatsi.

COURSE GOALS:

This course introduces students to a few basic issues in environmental philosophy. In the first part of the course, we will examine how the environmental movement has criticized and rejected central tenets of traditional Western ethical theories, which are alike accused of "anthropocentric" biases. Environmental
ethicist raise fundamental questions regarding the ethical standing of animals, plants, things and ecosystems within a more widely-conceived concept of moral consideration and human responsibility. Do plants and animals have "rights" that derive from the common condition of being alive? Do humans have ethical responsibilities to ecosystems as such and not simply as the circumstances presupposed for human interaction? Do the ethical systems of Western philosophy suffer from patriarchal gender biases that denigrate and occlude an otherwise fuller, less dominating relation to the world environment, as "deep ecologists" and "ecofeminists" would have it? Will a mature evolutionary biological science clarify such issues for us, or are the natural sciences themselves implicated in a distinctively Western form of environmental domination and violence that parades under the guise of rationality and knowledge? These are the ethical questions that drive environmental ethicist to criticize, even more radically, the metaphysical and ontological assumptions of Western religion and philosophy. More specifically, in the second part of the course, we will examine recent efforts to demonstrate how different concepts of nature might contribute to an expanded concept of moral responsibility. Accordingly, we will devote a considerable amount of time to a critique of the philosophical conceptions of nature that arose in connection with the modern Western sciences. Finally, we will examine a variety of recent attempt to "re-enchant" nature and to thereby restore to it the ethical standing it enjoyed before technological-scientific domination.

**EVALUATION:**

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, fidelity to an academic journal, two midterm examinations and a final paper.

Class Participation Seminar presentations and discussion 30%
Midterm examinations 2 @ 15% each 30%
Biweekly Quizzes 5 at 5% each 25%
Journal Required though ungraded
Final Paper 10-12 pages 15%

**POLICIES:**

Open, respectful, critical discussion is crucial to this course. Throughout the course, small groups of students will be responsible for presenting articles before the entire class by clarifying central concepts, explaining basic issues, and detailing arguments and counter arguments. The journal, consisting of "briefs" of arguments and critical commentary, prepares students for classroom deliberation, and paper assignments offer students the opportunity to explore a single issue in depth. Journals will be collected every three weeks. The final paper is due on the date scheduled for the final examination. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction.

**READING SCHEDULE**

**INTRODUCTION:**
TUE., MARCH 29TH.  
1. The Spell of the Sensuous [Begin reading and continue throughout term].

A. TRADITIONAL WESTERN ETHICAL THEORIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.

WEDNESDAY EVENING FILM: Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance [8:00 PM, Dew 103].

THUR., APRIL 1ST.
2. Introduction, xv - xx.

TUES., APRIL 6TH.  

WEDNESDAY EVENING FILM: Poyaanisqatsi [8:00 PM, Dew 103].

THURS., APRIL 8TH.
2. Quiz #2.

B. WIDENING THE CIRCLE OF ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY:

TUE., APRIL 13TH  
2. "The Question Concerning Technology," Martin Heidegger [Handout]

WEDNESDAY EVENING FILM: Poyaanisqatsi.

THURS., APRIL 15TH.
2. Quiz # 3
TUE., APRIL 20TH.

1. Midterm Examination # 1.

C. CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

THURS., APRIL 22ND.

1. "Approaches to Conflict Resolution," 171 - 211.

D. DEEP ECOLOGY AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY:

TUE., APRIL 27TH: WEEK FIVE


THURS., APRIL 29TH.


2. Quiz # 4.

E. ECOFEMINISM:

TUES., MAY 4TH. WEEK SIX


THURS., MAY 6TH.

1. "Ecofeminism," 246 - 296 (Cont.).

TUES., MAY 11TH. WEEK SEVEN

1. Midterm Examination #2.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY:

THURS., MAY 13TH.


TUES., APRIL 18TH. WEEK EIGHT

1. "From the Commons to Property," 417 - 464.
THURS., APRIL 20TH.


TUES., MAY 25TH.

1. "Preserving Biodiversity," 464 - 529 (Cont.)

2. Quiz # 6.

G. VARIETIES OF ACTIVISM:

THURS., MAY 27TH.


TUES., JUNE 1ST.

1. Review.

THURS., JUNE 3RD.

1. Student Evaluations.

FINALS WEEK