

**Syllabus for Fall '21, Philosophy 1108E:  
Environmental Philosophy  
Instructor: Chris Rahlwes**

“Now I have lost myself. Do you understand that?”  
-*The Zhuangzi*

Class Time: MoWeFr 10:10-11:00

Class Location: HPL 139

Study Session: TBD

Office Hours: by appointment

E-mail: christopher.rahlwes@uconn.edu

(always include ‘PHIL 1108’ in the subject if you send me an email)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is an introductory course to philosophy through the lens of environmental philosophy. We will deal with metaphysical, aesthetic, and ethical issues dealing with the environment. We entire this discussion through the intersection of science and religion, local and global, and individual and social. The major guiding focus is environmental justice and as such we will engage with movements such as deep ecology, ecofeminism, and traditional ecological knowledge. The final project of this class allows students to research environmental issues that they are concerned with while engaging with the theoretical framework of a global environmental perspective. This course meets CA 1, as well as UConn’s Environmental Literacy requirement.

**COURSE GOALS:**

- Be able to reflect on value conflicts and ethical dilemmas regarding the environment.
- Gain a working knowledge of important writers and texts concerning environmental philosophy.
- To communicate (orally and in writing) the ideas and arguments presented in the readings as well as your own.
- To gain an understanding of what is philosophy and various traditions of philosophy.
- Understand the impact of the environmental crisis and what that means for the future of mankind & the Earth.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

- Content Quizzes (40%)
- Paper 1 (15%) 750 Words
- Paper 2 (15%) 750 Words
- Paper 3 (20%) 1500-2000 Words.
- Group Assignments (10%)

**Letter grade cut-offs:**

A 93%	C 73%
A- 90%	C- 70%
B+ 87%	D+ 67%
B 83%	D 63%
B- 80%	D- 60%
C+ 77%	F below 60%

These are cut-off points:  
decimals will not be rounded up.

Temporary grades: **N** (no basis for grade), **I** (incomplete grade),  
**X** (final assessment absence)

## POLICIES AND GENERAL NOTES:

1. **Disabilities:** *The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020, or <http://csd.uconn.edu/>.*
2. **Academic Integrity:** *This course expects all students to act in accordance with the Guidelines for Academic Integrity at the University of Connecticut. Because questions of intellectual property are important to the field of this course, we will discuss academic honesty as a topic and not just a policy. If you have questions about academic integrity or intellectual property, you should consult with your instructor. Additionally, consult UConn's [guidelines for academic integrity](#).*
3. **Against Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence:** *The University is committed to maintaining an environment free of discrimination or discriminatory harassment directed toward any person or group within its community – students, employees, or visitors. Academic and professional excellence can flourish only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an academic and work environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination or discriminatory harassment. In addition, inappropriate amorous relationships can undermine the University's mission when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their authority. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment, as well as inappropriate amorous relationships, and such behavior will be met with appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the University. Additionally, to protect the campus community, all non-confidential University employees (including faculty) are required to report sexual assaults, intimate partner violence, and/or stalking involving a student that they witness or are told about to the Office of Institutional Equity. The University takes all reports with the utmost seriousness. Please be aware that while the information you provide will remain private, it will not be confidential and will be shared with University officials who can help.*
  - a. **Etiquette:** Differing opinions and arguments are encouraged. You should never feel embarrassed or ashamed about your opinion, concern, or question, but you must put it forth in a respectful manner. **Do not mock someone for their opinion. Do not speak when someone else is speaking. Do not use slurs.**
4. **Copyright:** *My lectures, notes, handouts, and displays are protected by state common law and federal copyright law. They are my own original expression and I've recorded them prior or during my lecture in order to ensure that I obtain copyright protection. Students are authorized to take notes in my class; however, this authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use and no other use. I will inform you as to whether you are authorized to record my lectures at the beginning of each semester. If you are so authorized to record my lectures, you may not copy this recording or any other material, provide copies of either to anyone else, or make a commercial use of them without prior permission from me.*
5. **COVID Policies (Subject to Change Based on University Guidelines)**
  - a. **Social Distancing**
    - i. **Outside:** Social distancing will not be required outside of buildings.
    - ii. **Inside, for vaccinated individuals:** Social distancing will not be required for students, faculty, and staff inside buildings including residence spaces, offices, laboratories, or classrooms since student vaccinations are mandatory.
    - iii. **Inside, for unvaccinated individuals:** For their own protection, unvaccinated individuals are requested to maintain 6 feet social distancing space from others when inside offices, classrooms, laboratories, and other buildings.

- b. **Masking [subject to change based on UConn’s policy]**
    - i. **Outside:** Masking will not be required outside of buildings. However, those who are not vaccinated are strongly encouraged to continue to wear masks outside.
    - ii. **Inside (policy):** Masks are required when indoors. This includes classrooms and laboratories, and applies to both vaccinated and unvaccinated students, faculty, and staff.
    - iii. **Inside (exceptions):** Previous exceptions are rescinded except for those working alone in an enclosed space, such as an office, lab, or other workspace with walls that are five feet tall or higher.
  - c. **Illness (COVID-19 or otherwise)**
    - i. If you become sick, do not come to class. Email me ([Christopher.rahlwes@uconn.edu](mailto:Christopher.rahlwes@uconn.edu)) and we will figure out a way for you to catch up on material.
6. **Late Policy:** Late work will be accepted but you must reach out to me before the due date asking for an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date and time has passed.
7. **Issues with Submitting Assignments: Quizzes** throughout the course should be graded instantly. If you are missing a grade after submitting a quiz, contact me immediately. **Papers** throughout the course are not graded instantly but HuskyCT does provide a submission receipt via email. If you do not receive a submission receipt via email contact me immediately. If you don’t contact me immediately (within at least a 24-hour period) when you suspect that a quiz or assignment is not uploaded correctly and if the quiz or assignment was not uploaded, **you will receive a zero for that assignment.**

**READINGS:**

- Required and recommended readings will be posted on HuskyCT.

**Tentative Schedule (Subject to Change)**

**Week   Date                      Topic / Assigned Reading**

1        8/30                      **Introduction to the Course**  
           9/1, 3                    **What is the Environment?**  
                                  Vogel (2009) “Why ‘Nature’ Has No Place in Environmental Philosophy”

**Value Conflict 1: Factory Farming**

2        **9/6**                        **Labor Day (No Class)**  
           9/8, 10                    **Intro. to Normative Ethics & Factory Farming**  
                                  Singer (1975/2001) “Down on the Factory Farm” from *Animal Liberation*  
                                  Rawles (2008) “Environmental ethics and animal welfare: re-forging a necessary alliance” from *The Future of Animal Farming*

**Module 1: The Value of the Ecosystem**

3        9/13, 15, 17            **American Transcendentalism & the Environment**  
                                  Thoreau (1854) *Walden*, selections  
                                  Emerson (1836) “Nature”

4        9/20, 22, 24            **Aesthetics of Nature**  
                                  Brady (2013) “The Environmental Sublime”  
                                  Mikkonen (2018) “Knowledge, Imagination, and Stories in the Aesthetic Experience of Forests”

- 5      **9/27**                      **No In-Person Class** (see recording instead)  
           9/28, 30                    **Biodiversity**  
                   Baard (2021) “Biocentric Individualism and Biodiversity Conservation”  
                   Díaz (2019) “Why care about nature? A pluralistic agenda for biodiversity”  
                   Heise (2019) “Toward a new narrative: from biodiversity conservation to multispecies  
   justice”  
                   *Convention of Biological Diversity*, U.N. (Recommended)  
   <https://www.cbd.int/convention/text/>

**Value Conflict 2: Invasive Species**

6.      10/4,6,8  
                   Thresher (2020) “When Extinction is Warranted: Invasive Species, Suppression-Drives,  
   and the Worst-Case Scenario”  
                   Seymore (2013) “‘Support Your Local Invasive Species’: Animal Protection Rhetoric  
   and Nonnative Species”  
                   Noll & Davis (2020) “The Invasive Species Diet: The Ethics of Eating Lionfish as a  
   Wildlife Management Strategy” (Recommended)

**10/6                      Quiz 1 Due**

**Module 2: Environmental Ethics**

- 7      10/11,13,15    **Land Ethic**  
                   Leopold (1949), *A Sand County Almanac*, Selections  
                   Callicott (1993) “The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic”  
                   Millstein (2018) “Debunking myths about Aldo Leopold’s land ethic”
- 8      10/18, 20,22    **Deep ecology & Jainism**  
                   Naess (1986) “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects”  
                   Naess (2008) *Ecology of Wisdom*, Selections  
                   Tuminello (2019) “Jainism: Animals and the Ethics of Intervention”
- 9      10/25,27,29    **Eco-Feminism**  
                   Plumwood (1991) “Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental  
   Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism”  
                   Carfore (2021) *Ecofeminist Theology: Intersectional Justice and Plumwood’s  
   Philosophical Animism*”  
                   Kaza (2014) “Acting with Compassion: Buddhism, Feminism, and the Environmental  
   Crisis”

**10/27                      Paper 1 Due**

**Value Conflict 3: Population Control & Human Extinction**

- 10      11/1, 3, 5  
                   George (2013) “Environmentalism and Population Control: Distinguishing Pro-Life and  
   Anti-Life Motives”  
                   Finneron-Burns (2017) “What’s wrong with human extinction?”  
                   Palazzi (2014) “Would Human Extinction be Morally Wrong?”

**11/3                      Quiz 2 Due**

### **Module 3: Environmental Ethics (cont.)**

- 11    11/8, 10, 12    **Traditional Ecological Knowledge**  
Kimmer (2013), *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Selections  
Callicott (1994) “Far Western Environmental Ethics” in *Earths Insights*
- 12    11/15, 17, 19    **Daoism and East Asian Buddhism**  
Nelson (2021), *Daoism and Environmental Philosophy*, Selections  
Kalmanson (2017) “Pure Land Ecology: Taking the Supernatural Seriously in  
Environmental Philosophy”
- 11/17            Paper 2 Due**
- 13    **11/22, 24, 26    Thanksgiving Break**
- 14    11/29, 12/1, 3    **African and Australian Environmental Ethics**  
Callicott (1994) “African Biocommunitarianism and Australian Dreamtime” in *Earths  
Insights*  
Terblanché-Greeff (2019) “Ubuntu and Environmental Ethics: The West Can Learn from  
Africa When Faced with Climate Change”

### **Value Conflict 4: The Climate Crisis**

- 15    12/6, 8, 10    **Climate Crisis: The End of Nature**  
Skrimshire (2009) “Points of No Return: Climate Change and the Ethics of Uncertainty”  
Wirth (2013) “Dōgen and the Unknown Knowns”
- 12/8            Quiz 3 Due**
- 16    **FINALS WEEK**  
      **Final Paper due TBD**  
      **(Optional) Final due TBD**