I. OVERVIEW

The following information will appear in the 2009 - 2010 catalog

PHILO-135 Environmental Ethics 3 Units

How ought we to relate to the rest of nature? What, if anything, is the value of wilderness and wild animals? Are we morally bound to use technology in an ecologically responsible manner? Course will address questions and issues such as these that arise when considering the relationship between human beings and the environment. Topics include animal rights, land use policy, sustainability, bioengineering, climate change, environmental justice. Theoretical approaches include deep ecology, anthropocentrism, ecofeminism, and pragmatism. Field trips might be required. Course is applicable to the associate degree. General Education:

CSU-GE - C2
IGETC Category: IGETC - 3B

II. LEARNING CONTEXT

Given the following learning context, the student who satisfactorily completes this course should be able to achieve the goals specified in Section III, Desired Learning:

A. COURSE CONTENT

1. Required Content:

   a. Introduction to Ethical Theory
      i. Divine Command
      ii. Utilitarian
      iii. Deontological
      iv. Natural Law
      v. Virtue Ethics

   b. Western Philosophical and Religious Roots and Perspectives on Environmental Ethics
      i. Ancient
      ii. Medieval
      iii. Modern/Enlightenment
      iv. Abrahamic religious perspectives

   c. Moral Standing and Considerability of Natural Entities
      i. Animals
a. Extension of interests, individuals vs. speciesism
b. Sentience and moral standing
c. Animal liberation, rights, and welfare

ii. Plants and biodiversity
iii. Ecosystems and bioregions
d. The Value of Nature – basic frameworks
i. Instrumental Value
ii. Non-instrumental value (Intrinsic value)
iii. Value subjectivism
iv. Value objectivism
v. Individualism vs. Holism (biocentrism/ecocentrism)
vi. Ethical monism vs. ethical pluralism
vii. Anthropocentrism
viii. Weak/Enlightened anthropocentrism
e. Environmental Ethics – schools of thought
i. Deep ecology
ii. Land ethic
iii. Social Ecology
iv. Ecofeminism
v. Evolutionary ethics
vi. Social construction of nature
vii. Environmental pragmatism
f. Applied Environmental Ethics: Environmental Policy
i. Wilderness, Conservation, Preservation, and Restoration
ii. Climate change
iii. Sustainability and Intergenerational justice
iv. Lifeboat ethics
v. Loss of biodiversity
vi. Geo-engineering (nanotechnology, genetically modified organisms, etc)
2. **Recommended Content:**

   a. Nonwestern philosophical perspectives

      i. Eastern philosophical approaches to the environment.

         a. Hinduism
         b. Buddhism
         c. Taoism

      ii. African philosophical approaches to the environment.

B. **HOURS AND UNITS**

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C. **METHODS OF INSTRUCTION (TYPICAL)**

   Instructors of the course might conduct the course using the following method:

   1. Lectures
   2. Discussion
   3. Seminar
   4. Socratic questioning
   5. Group work
   6. Review of key texts and concepts followed by in-class meetings

D. **ASSIGNMENTS (TYPICAL)**

   1. **EVIDENCE OF APPROPRIATE WORKLOAD FOR COURSE UNITS**

      *Time spent on coursework in addition to hours of instruction (lecture hours)*

      a. Complete weekly reading assignments.
      b. Written homework - weekly or every other week.
      c. Written papers - mid-course paper, final course paper.
      d. Group projects - per term
      e. Individual presentations - per term
f. Review class notes and reading notes (annotations) weekly.

g. Use web and library resources several times during the term to prepare written assignments.

h. Study and prepare for exams several times during the exam.

2. **EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL THINKING**  
Assignments require the appropriate level of critical thinking

a. Paper assignment:

i. Write a paper that compares, contrasts, and evaluates the ethical theories presented during this course on the relationship between the need to use natural resources, and the ethical responsibilities to treat those resources in a fair, just, and sustainable manner.

ii. Write a paper comparing various modalities of environmental ethics and use them to evaluate a contemporary environmental problem.

iii. Write a short paper evaluating the tension between extending moral consideration to animals, plants, and ecosystems and the human need to use natural resources.

iv. Critically evaluate the difference between Deep Ecology and Environmental Pragmatism in terms of how they would address the issue of environmental justice.

b. Exam questions

i. How does a non-anthropocentric account of nature differ from both a weak and strong anthropocentric account of nature. How much sense does an anthropocentric theory of truth make to you? Why?

ii. Based on your reading of Arnae Naess', "The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Issues," and Anthony Weston's "Beyond Intrinsic Value: Pragmatism in Environmental Ethics" and (1) identify Naess' argument for why the concept intrinsic value is essential for environmental ethics and (2) identify Weston's main arguments against the concept intrinsic value.

iii. What arguments can be given for and against the view that we have a duty or obligation to future generations to preserve the ecosystem? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each position? What is your reasoned position on the question? (e.g. I hold position x because of reasons a,b,c) If you hold that we do have such duties/obligations, what are they? What problems or challenges are there if you accept the position that we do have such duties? What response can be made to these challenges?"

E. **TEXTS AND OTHER READINGS (TYPICAL)**


III. DESIRED LEARNING

A. COURSE GOAL
   As a result of satisfactory completion of this course, the student should be prepared to:

   Recognize and think clearly about some of the divergent issues, concepts, and methods used in environmental ethics and philosophy and to gain critical thinking skills in philosophical discourse in preparation for upper division coursework for a bachelor’s degree.

B. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS
   Mastery of the following learning goals will enable the student to achieve the overall course goal.

   1. Required Learning Goals
      Upon satisfactory completion of this course, the student will be able to:

      a. Explain briefly in written or oral activities the ethical theories of: divine command, Utilitarianism, deontology, natural law, virtue or character ethics;

      b. Appraise how all or some of the following are historically and culturally influenced: (a) human values and behavior (b) ideas of nature and wilderness and (c) methods of interpretation of nature and the environment.

      c. Demonstrate and evaluate the tension between extending moral consideration to animals, plants, and ecosystems and the human need to use natural resources;

      d. Compare and contrast the conceptual strengths and weaknesses of nature as having intrinsic value vs. strong and weak anthropocentrism;

      e. Argue for and defend their own thesis on a public policy or topical issue in environmental ethics, taking into account opposing points of view and value judgments, as well as possible objections to their thesis;

      f. Compare and contrast philosophical bases for an environmental ethics, including all or some of the following: anthropocentrism, holism, ecofeminism, deep ecology, social ecology, environmental pragmatism.

IV. METHODS OF ASSESSMENT (TYPICAL)

A. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

   1. All or some of the following:

      1. Establishing course goals and criteria with student input.
      2. Observations in classroom, non-graded course content questions, office hour feedback, anonymous periodic feedback from students.
      3. Questioning – Socratic questioning, content questioning
      4. Self and peer assessment – student evaluation of their peers of themselves on a regular basis.
      5. Student record keeping
      6. Student annotation and/or reading journal
B. SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. All or some of the following:

   1. A series of quizzes throughout the semester.
   2. A series of brief argument response papers to assigned reading throughout the semester.
   3. A series of brief paraphrase papers in response to assigned reading throughout the semester.
   4. Mid-course paper
   5. Final paper
   6. Midterm examination
   7. Final examination