

Course Description

Philosophy 318: Environmental Ethics

UCFV Calendar: Do modern Western assumptions divorce humans from nature, divide mind and body, and justify using science and technology as means of dominating our environment for human convenience? Do environmental problems result? Are there better approaches to the environment? We will examine local examples of global issues to produce proposals for individual and collective action. PHIL 3180 satisfies one of the upper level requirements for the Applied Ethical and Political Philosophy program at UCFV.

This *Course Description* provides routine information and describes the objectives and methods for the course. Read it carefully, asking questions as needed.

It should be viewed as a **contract** but can be altered for individual students in extraordinary circumstances.

If I make a special arrangement with you, explain it in a note or e-mail message and ask me to sign or confirm it; show it to me to remind me of our arrangement.

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Contact Information

Instructor: Paul Herman (based in Chilliwack), BA, University of California Santa Barbara; PhD. work except thesis completed, UBC. Teaching: UBC; Carleton University; FVC, UCFV, UFV 1975-present.

Telephone & E-mail

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E-Mail: through the *WebCT Course Website* and paul.herman@ucfv.ca.

The best times to talk to me on the telephone are in the mornings, but you can try me any time from not too early in the morning to not too late in the evening.

Please put the course number (PHIL 318) in the subject line whenever you e-mail me. Otherwise, I may fail to deal with your message quickly. I usually check my e-mail in the morning, early afternoon, and early evening.

If you have not heard back from me within a day, please try again by e-mail or other means.

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CANADA

Office Hours

Abbotsford: Friday, 9:00-9:30, D3094 (Moir Kloster's office), and immediately after class

Talk to me about your problems with an assignment, areas of interest you would like to pursue, my marking of your work, etc. If these times are not convenient for you, we can arrange to meet at other times.

Since I am often out of my office (but usually close to it) or talking to students during the above times, it is best (but not essential) to make an appointment.

Course Website (www.ufv.ca/online.htm)

The **Course Website** may be helpful in many ways, for example, to download course handouts in order to view them as outlines in your word processor and to edit as you see fit. Internet links in documents are **live** when viewed at the *Course Website*. You can access your marks and see how the class is doing as a whole. There is a place for general discussion and discussion groups that you can use for course group work.

The Course

This course is about deciding how to act ethically towards the environment either personally or through social institutions such as business, occupations, unions, church, government.

The goal is to bring together theories and practices of ethics and politics without presupposing other upper level Philosophy and Politics courses.

Prerequisites: 45 credits from Applied or Arts or Science programs, including nine credits in Philosophy or Political Science; or permission of the instructor.

Major Areas

The course will include three major areas:

1. Logical steps for making decisions about environmental issues where there are typically large stakes; economic, political, and biological complexity; uncertainty; and social conflict.
2. Strategies for making collective decisions by negotiating with each other to apply environmental values to specific environmental issues of personal interest to you.
3. Theories about our appropriate relationship to the environment:

anthropocentric ethics: all and only (individual) humans—and perhaps some non-humans with crucial human traits such as self-consciousness—are due moral consideration;

non-anthropocentric ethics: all and only (individual) living—or perhaps only sentient—things are due moral consideration;

holistic ethics: ecosystems—perhaps including species,; non-sentient or non-living parts of ecosystems; the earth as a whole—are due moral consideration;

socio-political ethics: environmental ethics should be based on just distribution of environmental burdens and benefits without social domination and oppression.

pluralist: more than one of the above positions can justifiably be used to resolve environmental issues.



In the first one-third of the course, we will do preparatory work in areas 1 and 2.

In the last two-thirds of the course, we will consider theories in area 3 as you negotiate with each other in applying them to environmental issues.

Goals of the Course

At the end of this course, my intention is that you will:

- be able to describe different positions on the major, general issues noted above.
- communicate orally and in writing your organized, disciplined, critical thinking about some of these major, general issues in order to produce and defend your own solution to specific aspects or instances of environmental issues such as population growth, food production, natural resources management, energy policy, waste disposal, climate change.
- be motivated to use the skills and knowledge from this course as a productive way to think about these issues as you encounter them in everyday life.

Standard Operating Procedure: method of reflective equilibrium

Throughout the course, we will typically follow this procedure (often called *reflective equilibrium*):

1. I will ask you to make some judgments about some specific examples of a philosophical issue, either based on your own experience or on some reading.
We will consider your judgments in order to see some of the more general issues they raise.
2. I will provide you with some background and philosophical reading for the general issues, asking you to consider how they produce general reasons for your specific judgments.
3. We will reflect upon the reading and test general reasons by applying them to specific examples.
4. You will be asked to make some assessment of **your** judgments and general reasons for them.

There is a dialectic between our **judgments about specific cases** and the **general reasons** for those judgments. Sometimes you may change your specific judgments to fit your general reasons. Sometimes you may change your reasons to fit your judgments. Or you may adjust both.

In most cases, there is no single correct answer that emerges from this process. However, some answers are not as good as others, e.g., because they do not deal well with the full range and depth of the issues or are not supported by good reasoning.

So, good answers require much more than merely expressing an opinion.

Co-operative Learning

I make every effort to have **you** do most of the talking and writing during class sessions. Consequently, we shall do a lot of co-operative learning in groups following several formats.

You are expected to interact with each other to share ideas and resources, support each other, explain material and techniques to each other, and hold each other responsible for completing the assignment. If you need help with the assignment, **first** ask your group mates; if you need further assistance with the group assignment, **only the group as a whole** should request help from the instructor.

Resources

Materials to buy from the [Bookstore](#):

Paul Herman, *Philosophy 318 CoursePack*

Des Jardins, Joseph R., *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, 4th Edition

Additional Resources

If you have doubts about your understanding of the nature of philosophy and of methods of reading and writing philosophy then I recommend Jay F. Rosenberg's *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners*, copies in the *Bookstore* (although ridiculously expensive), *Library*, and *Writing Centres*. Also see [Methods of Inquiry](#) handout.

If you feel you need additional background or conversation about some area, ask me.

The [Library](#) has a respectable philosophy collection, including [The Philosopher's Index](#), a bibliographic database with informative author-written abstracts covering scholarly research in philosophy published since 1940 in journals and books, including anthologies. Library staff are also a great resource.

Internet Resources

The Internet also has many resources, readings, discussion groups, etc. in philosophy and on a variety of topics that we investigate in this course. Go to the UFV Library website, *Guides to Research for Philosophy and for environmental studies* (www.ufv.ca/library/guide.htm). Two excellent philosophy Web sites are:

Epistemé Links: <http://www.epistemelinks.com/welcome.htm>

philosophy material especially useful for undergraduate students of philosophy such as online encyclopaedias and dictionaries, aides for writing better papers, bibliographies, etc.

Ethics Matters (ethics.sandiego.edu/index.asp) is one of the best general resources in ethics, with a section on Environmental ethics
ethics.sandiego.edu/Applied/Environment/index.asp.

Sites are legion on environmental ethics and on the environment. If you are having no luck finding one on your topic, I may be able to help. Here are just a few, general sites:

BC Environmental Network: www.ecobc.org/
Canadian environmental policy: faculty.arts.ubc.ca/hoberg/links/can-env.htm
Canadian Environmental Network: www.cen-rce.org/eng/index.html
Environment Canada: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/envhome.html>
US Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/
European Commission on the Environment:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/index_en.htm
UN Division for Sustainable Development: www.un.org/esa/sustdev/index.html
World Watch Institute: www.worldwatch.org/ World Wildlife Fund-Canada:
www.wwf.ca/
Forest Ethics: www.forestethics.org

Two very useful sites for policy research are:

Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative, including on sustainable development:
policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=root&langcd=E
Canadian Social Research Links: www.canadiansocialresearch.net/

There are many partisan policy institute sites. The following present a spectrum of views:

Fraser Institute: www.fraserinstitute.ca/
C.D. Howe Institute: www.cdhowe.org/index.cfm
David Suzuki Foundation: www.davidsuzuki.org/
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: www.policyalternatives.ca

Help with writing

Writing help for any level of ability is available through *Writing Centres* on each campus (Abbotsford G168, Chilliwack A205, Mission D226a): www.ufv.ca/Writing_Centre.htm

Paradigm Online Writing Assistant provides help on writing argumentative essays common in philosophy: www.powa.org/argumentative-essays

Help with a disability that may interfere with your learning

It would be wise to discuss it with me and to see an access advisor at *Disability Services* (Chilliwack 795-2843, D117a; Abbotsford 864-4609, D207; www.ufv.ca/disabilityservices.htm) about available services at UFV.

Criterion DecisionPlus

You may find the free version of this program helpful for preparing some assignments. See *Environmental Issue Project*. www.infoharvest.com/ihroot/infoharv/CDPFreeDownloads.asp

Work and Evaluation

See *Readings and Assignments* for assignments and due dates. **It is your responsibility to keep up with course work.** We shall try to proceed at a pace that fosters discussion and understanding of the material and issues, so due dates are subject to change with ample notice.

Your written work without your name attached to it may be used as examples in class.

Academic Appeal: Students may appeal academic decisions. See [Academic Appeal Guide](http://www.ufv.ca/studentaffairs/appealguide.htm) (www.ufv.ca/studentaffairs/appealguide.htm).

Plagiarism and Intellectual Property

You will not find the final, authoritative answer to a philosophical question in books, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, videos, or cyberspace. It is essential that you produce and justify your own conclusions.

Plagiarism is the high crime of intellectual activity. If the question of plagiarism arises, a student should be able to show that a piece of work is the student's own by producing notes and drafts, explaining and defending the work. The minimum consequence for plagiarism is a **NO CREDIT** for that piece of work. More severe penalties, including a **NO CREDIT** for the course, may be imposed. (www.ufv.ca/calendar/2009_10/General/RegulationsAndPolicies.htm)

There are many times when you are allowed, encouraged, or required to work together. If you have doubts about when these times are, please ask me for clarification.

Intellectual property rights are still quite unclear on the Internet, and it is very easy to violate even those that are clear. Err on the side of caution. For example, forwarding someone else's e-mail message without permission may violate moral and legal standards. There are also increasingly sophisticated Internet tools for detecting plagiarism.

Use of course material from this course is permitted only for your personal, non-commercial purposes.

Final Mark

Your **Final Mark** is based on several activities explained below. You can choose to do more or less work according to your ambitions and the time you have available. You are continuously evaluated on smaller pieces of work so that you can compensate even for the occasional disaster. Your effort and achievement both count in varying ways.

Please have some tolerance for flexibility in the assignments since many of these assignment are still in the early stages of evolution.

Your **Final Mark** is calculated on the following basis:

Attendance and Class Contribution	5%
Informal Individual Prep & Co-op Work	35%
Seminars	20%
Environmental Issue Project	40%

Except for *Informal Individual & Co-op Work*, each activity is marked on the following scale:

A+ = 4.33	B+ = 3.33	C+ = 2.33	P = 1
A = 4.00	B = 3.00	C = 2.00	NC = 0
A- = 3.67	B- = 2.67	C- = 1.67	

Letter grades for cumulative *Individual Prep & Co-op Work* are assigned by making the top mark an A+, about 50% of the top mark a C-, with the other marks scaled accordingly.

All assignments are marked according to how well the work met the **criteria** explained in the assignment, not according to a distribution curve (*i.e.*, **not**, for example, 10% As, 20% Bs, etc.).

Attendance and Class Contribution (5% of Final Mark)

Please ask questions and contribute to class sessions, especially to your co-op work. Of course, quality, not mere quantity, of class participation is desirable. However, **it is better to err on the side of boldness than of caution**.

Each student starts with a C in this area and adds or subtracts from it. The only way to subtract from it is by being obnoxious to others in class or by regularly not attending. Otherwise, your **Individual Prep & Co-op Work** mark is a good indicator of attendance and class contribution unless you make additional significant contributions to the class as a whole *e.g.*, through general discussion in class.. Your facility in presenting work to the class also counts towards this part of your mark.

Lack of civility to any members of the class is not tolerated. UCFV policy empowers an instructor to dismiss from the course a student who disrupts the class.

Individual Prep & Co-op Work (35% of Final Mark)

Do the assigned readings and other preparation assignments and be ready to ask questions, to agree or disagree with the reading and with others' comments, and to participate in co-operative work.

Typically, each preparatory assignment is marked on a scale from 0 to 4 points. More demanding assignments may be marked on a multiple of this scale. The success of the course depends upon your individual preparation,

Individual Prep Questions are DUE in-class or e-mailed before the beginning of class. They may be turned in up to two days late but with a penalty of one point.

Seminars (20% of Final Mark): See *Seminars* handout.

Each member of the group conducting the seminar receives the same mark except where a member misses preparation or presentation sessions, in which case the mark will be prorated.

Environmental Issues Project (40% of Final Mark): See *Environmental Issues Project* handout.

This project continues through the term with smaller assignments culminating in an extensive report.

Format and due dates

Any formal work (*e.g.*, a handout for the *Seminar* or the *Environmental Issues Project Final Report*) should be typed and one-and-one-half- or double-spaced on 8.5" by 11" paper with one inch margins on all sides, secured with a staple or paper clip. **Do not use folders or a title page.**

Non-sexist language is expected in your written work. (For further explanation, see [Writing without Gender Bias](#) on the Course website.)

Formal work is due by midnight of the due date and is not accepted more than one week late. Late work is marked down one mark, *e.g.*, a B is marked down to a B-. (**Exceptions** are possible in extraordinary circumstances.) Any assignment you do not put into my hands—*e.g.*, that you hand in to Faculty Reception—should be **time stamped**, *e.g.*, by the Faculty Assistant or at Records and Registration; otherwise, I will assume it was turned in when I pick it up.

Work may be handed in as an e-mail attachment in either MS Word or .RTF format. If I am unable to download and read your essay because you forgot to attach it or for other apparently technical reasons that are not my fault, **the work is marked as late**. So, it is wise to submit your work by early evening so I can notify you about technical problems in time for you to correct them.

Keep a copy of all formal work you turn in for comments or for marking.