

**PHIL 340 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS  
BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY SPRING 2009**

Professor: **Swasti Bhattacharyya**

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Office Hrs.: **TBA & by APPOINTMENT**

Class: **6:00 pm ~ 9:00 pm**

Rm#: **SSA 219**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we critically examine Environmental issues, such as global warming, oil drilling, bio-hazardous waste, farm runoff, etc., from a number of philosophical perspectives (biocentric, ecocentric, ecofeminist, deep ecology, etc). After learning various ethical theories, you will apply these theories in an exploration of particular environmental issues. We will pay particular attention to our obligations to future generations, global justice, and sustainability.

**COURSE GOALS/OBJECTIVES - Upon your *successful* completion of this course, you will:**

- identify, distinguish, and analyze different schools of thought regarding environmental ethics.
- develop the skills of critical thinking as you analyze the economic, historical, political, religious, sociological, and legal perspectives underlying environmental ethics issues.
- critically examine, develop, and clearly articulate your own conclusions and desired actions regarding issues of environmental ethics

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

VanDeVeer, Donald and Christine Pierce. *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Thomson/Wadsworth 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. ISBN: 0-534-56188-8 (**EEPB**)

Easton, Thomas A. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Environmental Issues*. ISBN: 978-0-07-351444-4 (**Taking Sides**)

Additional readings and handouts will be placed on Angel (under the Course Content tab see "Course Reader") or distributed in class (**CR**)

\*You will find the following reference books in BVU's library useful:

Encyclopedia of Bioethics QH332 .E52 2003  
Encyclopedia of Ethics BJ63 .E46 1999  
Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics BJ63 .E44 1998  
The Encyclopedia of Ethics BJ63 .E54 1994  
The Encyclopedia of ethics BJ 63 .E45 1992  
Criminal Justice Ethics HV9950.S36 1991

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Attendance/Participation:** (12%) This is a seminar styled course, it thrives on intelligent and informed conversation. Therefore, your preparation, presence, AND active participation in discussion is vital. Additional specifics are posted below under "Course Policies."
2. **Environmental Ethics Portfolio:** (25%) Through various daily assignments, occasional quizzes and other projects, each of you will build a portfolio comprised of your responses to, or reflection on, materials and issues covered in this course. Specifics are posted on Angel; Go to Syllabus Folder under the Course Content tab: see "Environmental Ethics Portfolio Description & Guidelines."
3. **Environmental Ethics Civic Engagement Project:** (20%) Working in small groups, you will create and present some kind of project that embodies theories and ideas you found central for issues relating to environmental ethics. This project needs, in some way, to actively involve yourself and others outside of our class. (Examples: short performance piece, educational presentation regarding a particular issue, etc). Specifics are posted on Angel; Go to Syllabus

Folder under the Course Content tab: see “Environmental Ethics Civic Engagement Project Description & Guidelines.”

4. **Class Lead:** (8%) With a partner, you will lead and involve the class in a critical examination/discussion regarding the environmental ethics issue/s for a particular week. As you prepare the readings, and think of ways you will actively involve your classmates, you are to include an exploration and application of at least two ethical theories to your issue. Specifics are posted on Angel; Go to Syllabus Folder under the Course Content tab: see: “Class Lead Descriptions and Guidelines” (**WMST students are expected to utilize at least one feminist ethical theory, specifically focus on how the issue/s particularly affect women**).
5. **Research Paper Process:** (35%) This is a substantial research paper that in some way involves issues regarding environmental ethics. Specifics are posted on Angel; Go to Syllabus Folder under the Course Content tab: see: “Research Paper” folder

**\*This course is listed as a DWC**, thus while content is a major focus of the class, we will also be very conscious about the process of writing itself. Portfolio assignments provide a forum for you to utilize informal writing both as a tool for engaging and understanding the material presented, and as a means for effectively communicating what you are learning. The Research assignments provide you with an opportunity to focus on the process of research and formal writing. Along with focusing on the content of your research paper, you will also focus on writing, receiving and providing feedback, editing, and rewriting. By focusing both on content and process, our goal is to produce a clear, well organized, excellently written research paper!

**\*\*This course is also has a Women Studies track:** Those of you taking this for WMST credit, your paper must have a primary focus that utilizes feminist theory, critique, and concerns.

- To receive credit for this course, you must complete all of the 5 elements above.

#### COURSE POLICIES

**Attendance:** Your **engaged presence** is required! As a seminar structured course, you will often be taking the lead in class discussions and presenting on the reading materials. You need to attend class and you need to come prepared. Remember: reasonable people can disagree. As we tackle important, and sometimes controversial issues, you are expected to critically examine the material, carefully consider perspectives with which you disagree and thoughtfully articulate your conclusions—conclusions that will be grounded in facts and sound reasoning.

- Because of the structure of this course, and the fact that one evening meeting is equal to one week of class, absence from one (1) or more classes over the semester will result in lowering the Attendance/Participation portion of your grade.
- If you have **Two (2)** or more absences, you may receive an **F** in the **COURSE**.
- If specific BVU related activities (sports, conference attendance, etc.) conflict with class attendance, it is **your** responsibility to inform me and make arrangements with me **at least one week PRIOR** to the event. Regardless, assignments are expected to be handed in on time.

**Note Carefully** the due dates and times of assignments.

- Portfolio “Reading Response” and “Article Presentation” assignments are to be posted on Angel **No Later than 12:00 pm** (noon) on the date for which it is assigned. Late portfolio postings may receive ½ credit, depending upon the quality of the post.
- The Research Paper Process is comprised of six (6) parts (Topic, annotated bibliography, etc.) each due at specific times throughout the semester. Late submissions will receive a 10% grade reduction per school day. Submissions not completed within 7 days of the due date will receive a “0” (no credit). All six parts of the research paper assignment (topic,

annotated bibliography, presentation, etc.) **MUST** be submitted in order to receive a score for the final paper.

- If you are absent on a day that an assignment is due, make sure to post your work on Angel **BEFORE** class/due date. This will enable you to avoid late penalties.

**Academic Honesty** is important for this class and this institution as a whole. **Plagiarism** is not tolerated. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, to Plagiarize is to “1. take and use (the thoughts, writings, inventions, etc., of another person) as one’s own. 2. pass off the thoughts, etc., of (another person) as one’s own.” This is illegal and not acceptable. The work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Statements and ideas of other persons **must** be appropriately documented.

- BVU’s full policy regarding Academic Policy may be found in a current BVU catalog or online. Read it carefully and make sure you understand it. If you have questions, please contact me.
- **Plagiarism**, and other **actions that violate academic integrity** (see list on website), will result in a **“O” (no credit)** for the assignment **and/or** an **“F” for the course**. This applies to **all** assignments and work you submit on-line or in hardcopy. Incidents of academic dishonesty will also be documented according to university policy.

**BVU’s Center for Academic Excellence** endeavors to offer students with special needs equal opportunity to demonstrate their academic abilities. Should you require assistance, please inform me and consult the Center. BVU’s policy regarding providing assistant may be found at: <http://www.bvu.edu/departments/academicaffairs/cae/equalopportunity.asp>.

**While technology** is a valuable tool, one that will be utilized often in this course, laptop usage can also be very distracting. Therefore, you may use your laptops in class for ***course-related activities only***.

- **BEFORE** beginning of class: turn your IM settings OFF & close all email accounts.
- I retain the prerogative of restricting and/or terminating the in-class use of a laptop.

**I strongly recommend** that you: save **all** of your work (emails, portfolio assignments, papers, notes, etc.) for this course, at least until you receive your final course grade.

- **Be prepared** by completing the readings and written assignments on time. Please bring the appropriate books to class.
- **My office hours** are for YOU, please make good use of them! If my posted hours do not fit into your schedule, I am available to meet at other times. So make an appointment, or simply come by Wood’s house, my office door is almost always open.

#### **GRADING CRITERIA FOR THIS COURSE ARE AS FOLLOWS**

**“C” (Competent) work must satisfy the following conditions:** 1) Relevance: Did you answer the questions, or address the issues or topic? 2) Accuracy: Have you correctly represented the positions and ideas of the texts/thinkers/ideas you are considering? 3) Clear Writing: Have you carefully thought through what you want to say and taken the time to proof-read and edit? Thinking and writing are interconnected; clear and grammatically correct writing often reflects clear and well-organized thinking. If you think clearly, this will often be reflected in your writing.

**“B” (Very good) work must in addition satisfy these conditions:** 4) Documentation: Have you adequately documented your claims with references to the appropriate texts, or are you merely speaking off the top of your head or regurgitating your notes? 5) Breadth of knowledge: Have you covered all of the main ideas relevant to your topic? 6) Sophistication: Have you developed and defended a particular thesis? Have you taken into account various facets of a problem or an idea? You can be accurate on a level so general as to be almost meaningless (“Moses is a biblical character”) or on a more sophisticated and precise level

(“Moses is a character in the Exodus narrative who led the children of Israel out of Egyptian captivity”).

“A” (Outstanding) work will in addition satisfy these conditions: 7) Depth of analysis: How deeply have you delved into the topic? Have you uncovered problems that might not be apparent at first glance? How carefully have possible objections been taken into account? 8) Engagement and effort: How hard have you tried to tackle the topic? If you have made an honest attempt to understand the topic about which you are writing, it will show. 9) Creativity: Do you express yourself in interesting ways? Do you have original insights to offer? Do you have a normative position on the issue, and does it make sense?

“D” (Minimal) work: minimally satisfies the “C” conditions in that it is less relevant, questionable on its accuracy and unclear in its presentation.

“F” (Unacceptable) work: fails to meet minimal requirements.

#### GRADING SCALE

(91 – 100) A

(80 – 90) B

(70 – 79) C

(59 – 69) D

(0 – 58) F

\*NOTE for PASS/NC: **Passing** = 75% or higher. **NC** = 74% and below.

#### SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Below is a general outline of how the course will progress throughout the semester. For actual daily assignments consult the posted Weekly Assignments. Reading assignments are to be **completed and posted on Angel by 12:00 noon** on the date indicated.

- Again, what follows below is a **general outline** of topics and assignments.

T 3 Feb. (Wk 2) Introduction; Ethics and ethical decision making; Research in the library

T 10 Feb (Wk 3) Ethical theories: *EEPD* I (p. 1-42); *Taking Sides* Issue #1; **7 Step to Decision Making** Hand out (GO to the Course Reader tab under Course Content on Angel); You also need to read the appropriate reference texts (Encyclopedia of Ethics BJ63 .E46 1999) regarding your ethical theory.

T 17 Feb (Wk 4) Ethical theories, construction of our “community”

READ: *EEEDB* II & III; *Taking Sides* Issue #4:

DUE: **Research paper TOPIC Wed 18 Feb.** Post it as an attachment by 12:00 noon

T 24 Feb (Wk 5) **Midterm** over Ethical theories; Constructing an Environmental Ethic

READ: *EEEDP* IV; *Taking Sides* Issue #5

DUE: **Portfolio Submission #1**

T 3 March (Wk 6) Global Events & Activism

READ: *EEPD* VI E, VII (p. 587-649)

DUE: **Annotated Bibliography/Thesis Statement**

T 10 March (Wk 7) Economics, Ethics, & Ecology;

READ: *EEPD* V. A-C (311-388); *Taking Sides* issue #3, 10, 11, & 16

T 17 March (Wk 8) Population & Sustainability;

READ: 2) *EEPD* V D & E (p.389-450); *Taking Sides* issue # 2, 12, 13, 18

DUE: **Research Paper Proposal.** Post it as an attachment in appropriate Discussion Forum on Angel.

**22-28 March No Class SPRING BREAK!!!**

**T 31 March (Wk 9)** Biodiversity & Agriculture;

READ: *EEPD* VI A & B (p. 451-518); *Taking Sides* issue #14, 15, 17

**T 7 April (Wk 10)** Wilderness & Corporate Responsibility;

READ: *EEPD* VI C & D (p. 519-586); *Taking Sides* issue #6, 7, & 19

DUE: **Research paper PEER-EVAL DRAFT** Post it as an attachment in appropriate Discussion Forum on Angel before beginning of class

**T 14 April (Wk 11)** Environmental Racism

READ: *EEPD* VI D.81&82 (p. 550-555 env racism)

DUE: **RETURN of Research Paper PEER-EVAL DRAFT** Post it as an attachment in appropriate Discussion Forum on Angel before beginning of class

**T 21 April (Wk 12)** Sliding to Global Catastrophe

READ: *EEPD* VI E (p. 587-624); *Taking Sides* Issue #8 & 9

DUE: **Portfolio Submission #2**

**T 28 April (Wk 13)** Student Presentations (5)

**T 5 May (Wk 14)** Student Presentations ( 6)

**T 12 May (Wk 15)** Student Presentations (6 )

DUE: **Final, well written, carefully edited, proofread Research Paper**

**T 19 May (Finals week ) 7:15 pm -9:15 pm** Student Presentations (4)