

## Deep Ecology: Literature of an Environmental Ethics

L 329- TH

Fall 2008

When: Thursdays 1-3:45

Where: Bunting 480

Professor: Firmin DeBrabander

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 10-12; also by appointment

Course Description: The environment is in dire straits—or is it? These days, it seems to be a matter of perspective, at least as far as some would have you believe. But beneath this debate lurks another, more important one. How can we include the environment and its various members in our value systems? For, in a sense, an “environmental ethic” is an oxymoron. In the history of philosophy, moral systems have been constructed with humans – and humans only – in mind. Rights were recognized according to what were considered exclusively human traits, such as rationality, or a soul. Animals, much less ecosystems, had no moral value of their own. They have been accorded instrumental value, i.e., seen as instruments of human projects. But is this enough? Or is there any way to recognize animals or ecosystems as full members of a moral community, together with humans? As our anthropocentric moral values traditionally proceed from the Judeo-Christian system (at least in the West), some argue that a truly valuable, truly lasting environmental ethic requires a new metaphysical base. This is no small endeavor.

Over the course of the semester, we will examine questions and projects such as these mentioned above. In addition, we will consider other philosophical issues related to our treatment of and habitation within the environment, such as whether we can truly restore nature, why we should try to save wilderness areas at all, and what social justice demands of our treatment of the environment.

### Required Texts (available at MICA bookstore):

*Walden, or Life in the Woods*, by H. D. Thoreau

*Omnivore's Dilemma*, by Michael Pollan

*The Botany of Desire*, by Michael Pollan

*Deep Economy*, by Bill McKibben

*Animal Liberation*, by Peter Singer

### Requirements:

Your final grade in this class will be determined by 4 components: 1) a **Midterm essay** of 4-5 pages. Its due date is indicated on the course schedule, and I will provide topics for this; 2) a **Term paper** of 6-8 pages due on the last day of class (or shortly thereafter). This will be a topic of your own choosing. Consider it a personal project, which should concern an ecological topic of your own interest and concern. More details on this later... 3) You will take part in **Group Presentations**. A separate sheet on that follows. 4) Finally, since this is a discussion class, **participation** is a crucial part of your grade. You are expected to do the readings carefully and come to class prepared to analyze/ comment/ disparage/ debate. There will be *pop quizzes or periodic in-class reflections* as part of your class participation grade. These will primarily indicate to me that – and how well – you are doing the readings.

The breakdown of your final grade is as follows:

Midterm paper	25%
Final paper	30%
Presentation	25%
Class Participation (including quizzes)	20%

### Attendance Policy:

As we only meet 15 times this semester, it is crucially important that you attend all classes. For two or more unexcused absences, I will deduct 5 points each from your final grade. If you will be absent due to illness or family emergency, I can excuse you from class if you provide written notice.

### Institutional Policies:

*Plagiarism:* MICA will not tolerate plagiarism, which is defined as using someone else's words or ideas without acknowledgment. Please note that only **three contiguous** borrowed and unreferenced words constitute plagiarism. Submitting work containing plagiarism is grounds for **failure** of an assignment, or if serious enough, failure of the course, and will be reported to the Chair of the Language, Literature and Culture department. Repeat offenses will be brought to the attention of Academic dean.

To be responsible when summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting, include a citation like:

"I read in yesterday's New York Times that..."

"As Simone de Beauvoir famously asserts: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.'"

"My roommate Pete noticed that..."

Document your citations in a bibliography or Works Cited page at the end of your paper and follow standard guidelines such as MLA or Chicago manual style. Familiarize yourself with these guidelines in Diana Hacker's A Pocket Style Manual, and always check with your instructor or one of the friendly tutors in the Writing Center (410) 225-2418. The Writing Center also has copies of the Hacker.

### *ADA Compliance Statement*

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact [insert instructor's name/title] privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://www.mica.edu/learningresourcecenter/>.

### *Health and Safety Compliance*

From the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

The Office works to provide EHS support for all members of the MICA community. The primary goal of the Office is to be proactive in establishing a culture of safety in which each member of the community shares ownership responsibility that allows each person to be involved in maintaining a healthy work and studying environment. EHS uses several methods to achieve this objective.

First, the EHS office looks at the totality of the EHS requirements by combining campus needs with state and federal requirements and clearly communicating the shared policies and procedures. Second, EHS identifies training needs and develops guidelines for the use of equipment, material and procedures. Third, we ensure compliance with policies through evaluations, inspections, and committees.

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to understand health and safety policies relevant to their individual activities and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan, as well as to participate in training, drills, etc.

It is also each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of the Academic Department's also publish EHS procedures and policies such as a dress code, the use of personal protective equipment, fire safety, training, and how to properly dispose of chemical waste. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, it is the responsibility of the faculty to review, test, and assess each student's awareness of basic safety procedures, such as evacuation routes, use of chemicals, fire prevention, and all other guidelines posted by the Environmental Health and Safety Office, (e.g., smoking policy, independent studio policies, pet policy, disposing of hazardous and chemical waste, etc).

To become a member of the Faculty EHS Committee or for any questions relating to EHS, please call 410.462.7593. You can also visit the department online at [www.mica.edu/ehs](http://www.mica.edu/ehs)

## CLASS SCHEDULE

9/4- Introduction to the course

9/11- Read from Thoreau's Walden, sections "Economy" and "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"

9/18- Rd. Singer's Animal Liberation, chs. 1 and 4

9/25- Rd. Singer's Animal Liberation, ch.6

10/2- Rd. Pollan's Botany of Desire, ch. 1

10/9- Rd. Pollan's Botany of Desire, ch. 4

10/16- **Midterm papers due**

10/23- Rd. Pollan's Omnivore's Dilemma, Part I, chs. 2, 5, 6

10/30- Rd. Pollan's Omnivore's Dilemma, Part II, chs. 8, 10, 11

11/6- Rd. Pollan's Omnivore's Dilemma, Part III, chs. 16, 17

11/13- Rd. McKibben's Deep Economy, ch. 1

11/20- Rd. McKibben's Deep Economy, ch. 3

11/27- *No class- Thanksgiving break*

12/4- Rd. McKibben's Deep Economy, ch. 4 (pgs. 142-158 only) and ch. 5 (pgs. 196-226 only)

12/11- Review and conclusion

12/18- **Final papers due**