Philosophy, Religion and the Environment

Syllabus

Contacting the Professor

Contacting the Class

Course Description

Course Objectives

Evaluation Procedures

Required Text

Course Outline

Contacting the Professor

Preferred: USE WEB CT COURSE MAIL
E-Mail: jcompson@mail.ucf.edu

Contacting the Class

Use WebCT: Discussion or mail functions
ECommunity: Emails

Course Description
There’s one fundamental question that runs through this course: who are you, and what is your place in the environment?

As part of our exploration of this question we will look at issues of value:

- What is the value of nature, and is it ‘out there’ already, or do we somehow place it there?
- How do our philosophical and religious worldviews affect the way we value ourselves and our environment?
- How do different traditions vary on these questions?

This course is designed to help students develop sensitivity and critical awareness in their thinking about environmental issues. It will also impart information to you about what how different religions and philosophies regard the environment. This course aims to help you to gain an appreciation of the interconnectedness of all life forms on earth, and to understand that the way we value and act in the environment has far-reaching repercussions.

---

**Course Objectives**

By the end of this course:

- You should be able to think better and discuss better about how you personally value the environment, and how your valuing matches or differs from other religious or philosophical ways of looking at the world.
- You will start to recognize that you have a ‘worldview’ and that it is one among many; it is a view that is part of a particular time and tradition, and which can be challenged and enhanced by other views.
- You will have begun a journey of discovery, beginning to find out what other religions and philosophies have to say about valuing the environment.

---

**Evaluation Procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percent of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>Every week, you will be expected to participate in a discussion assignment</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>For most readings, you will be asked to take a quiz to test your comprehension.</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paper
You will be asked to write one 1000-1500 word paper from a variety of questions. 20%

Discussion Group Leader
Each week, one student from each discussion group will be the 'leader' who will be asked to post a 1-2 page summary of the discussions within that group. 10%

**Required Text**


**Course Outline**

**Week One (May 16 - 22)**

(NB: This outline is provisional and subject to change by the instructor at any time).

**Module 0 - Orientation**

**Module 1 - Introduction: What is a worldview?**

Readings: James Sire, "Naming the Elephant" (online reading); Textbook, "Introduction" (pages 1-7)

**Week Two (May 23 -29)**

**Module 2 - Have Judeo-Christian religious worldviews contributed to our environmental crisis?**


**Week Three (May 30 - June 5)**
Module 3 - Humans, Nature and Modernity: how does the modern, scientific Western worldview contribute to our attitudes towards nature?


Week Four (June 6 - June 12)

Module 4 - Aboriginal attitudes to the environment.

Readings: James Kinsley, "Australian Aboriginal Religion" (online); Textbook Chapter Three, Mary Graham, "Some Thoughts about the Philosophical Underpinnings of Aboriginal Worldviews".

Week Five (June 13 - 19)

Module 5 - Buddhist Attitudes to the environment.

Readings: Textbook Chapter Five, Rita Gross, "Toward a Buddhist Environmental Ethic"; James Kinsley, "Buddhism: Ecological Themes" (online reading); Guy Claxton, "Involuntary Simplicity" (online reading).

Week Six (June 20 - 26)

Module 6 - Back West to Contemporary Perspectives.