

# Course Syllabus

[Jump to Today](#)

 **Edit**

## Syllabus

### ***PHI 3640 Environmental Ethics: “Climate Ethics and Apocalyptic Futures”***

*(3.0 Credit Hours, W Mode)*

## Course Description

This course examines ethical issues related to the environment through a careful examination of apocalyptic thought in the Anthropocene. We will critically examine complex environmental challenges in three ways: (1) as technical/scientific problems, (2) as social/political problems, and (3) in terms of ethical solutions/responses. Environmental ethicists and climate scientists continue to fight not only to make their voices heard among the din of climate skepticism, species extinctions, environmental degradation, and continued carbon emission but also to fight for the very survival – some claim – of human civilization as we know it. This vision of an apocalyptic future should make us ask several key questions: How likely is this future? What can we do to prevent it? How can we prepare for it? By the conclusion of this course, we will be better prepared to offer reasonable answers to such questions – and better prepared to face the future, whatever it holds.

Participants in this course, yourself included, will:

1. understand and identify key themes and arguments in traditional environmental ethics,
2. develop an ability to apply ethical reasoning skills to contemporary cases of anthropogenic climate change, and
3. creatively analyze popular cultural instances of an apocalyptic future.

Assignments will include core readings, class discussions, and concise analytical papers. Four units shape the structure of the course, and the modules within each unit are framed around opportunities small group discussion, and engaging key themes through philosophical and popular sources. My goal is for you to leave this course with a deeper appreciation for the practical and philosophical significance of environmental issues – and some tools for engaging them in your own lived experience.

## Office Hours

Office hours will be held in-person and online by Webcourses chat. I will be available during official office hours from 10:00am-12:00pm on Wednesdays and will work with you to find a mutually agreeable alternative time as needed.

I am in my office considerably more than my scheduled office hours per week, so feel free to stop by or call at your leisure to talk. If I need to cancel or change my office hours during the semester, I will make that announcement on our course site. I am also available by email, and will respond as promptly as I can. I encourage you to speak with me about course material and related topics.

### Instructor Contact

Dr. Jonathan Beever

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### Required Texts & Materials

I will provide readings and multimedia content through our UCF online course site. No physical textbook is required.

### Course Requirements

- 1) Connecting to Place (10%) – Once each unit (so 6 times this term), I'll ask you to share a reflection of your experience watching and listening to some environment. I'll provide a prompt for each reflection and you'll post an audio comment, short written reflection, or video post in response to be shared with your peers and with me.
- 2) QCKs for Readings (10%) – In response to each module's readings, you'll post a QCK (Question, Comment, or (K)oncern). These can be single sentences or questions, or very brief paragraphs where you point me and your colleagues toward something of interest from the readings.
- 3) Discussions/Quizzes (15%) – Approximately once each unit, I'll pose a discussion question or a brief quiz. These assignments are meant to push you to engage the themes, concepts, and arguments you just worked through.
- 4) Face-to-face engagements (5%) – I believe strongly in personal engagement when it comes to ethics, and sometimes online courses can feel isolating. So I'll offer six opportunities (2 each at early, mid, and late semester) for you to join me in a face-to-face discussion in webcourses discussions. You should take these opportunities to ask me questions, talk about content, or get feedback. You must participate in at least two of these engagements.

- 5) Midterm Paper (20%) – In 500-1000 words, I'll ask you to identify a recent (post 2000) apocalyptic film or video game and analyze it using themes we've discussed in the course. Your goal here is to identify course themes in popular media and to carefully and concisely analyze those themes.
- 6) Peer Evaluations (10%) – You'll evaluate two of your peers' midterm papers, using the same rubric I'll use to do my own evaluation.
- 7) Final Paper (30%) – The term project will ask you to develop the argument of your midterm paper in two ways. First, I'll ask you to compare the argument of your midterm paper with one other film or fiction piece - for a total of two. You'll compare and contrast those two media pieces around one clearly defined ethical issue. Go for depth of analysis, not breadth. Pose a clear thesis, present clear arguments for that thesis, and draw a clear conclusion. In the last part of the paper, you'll critique your own analysis: imagine the real world 100 years from now. Does your analysis of that ethical issue apply? Does it help you or others live well in the world? This final project should be a conference-length (3000 word) and must draw on at least two of the readings from the course and two apocalyptic fiction pieces. The paper must be clear and concise, error free, correctly referenced, and pose a clear thesis, arguments, and conclusion.

*N.B.: scoring rubrics will be included in individual assignments in webcourses as needed*

*N.B.: work submitted outside of the appropriate webcourse assignment will not be accepted.*

## Expectations for Feedback

Over the course of the semester, I will strive to get you feedback on work in each module no later than the end of the next module (a new module will be released each week). With larger assignments or around times when I travel for academic conferences, I may need more time to give you feedback. Please reach out to me if you have specific questions. My own contributions to discussion threads and to your individual written work are important content contributions, like your own. Be sure to review and engage with mine and others' comments along the way.

## Academic Integrity

This is an ethics class, so it seems unnecessary to say that plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course and/or the placement of a "Z" designator with your grade. Academic dishonesty will subject you to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule and <http://z.ucf.edu> for further information. I also expect you'll act with academic honor: putting in your best effort, fully engaging with assignments and readings, and staying informed about course requirements. I will, in turn, do the same.

## Makeup Exam Policy

I realize that some of you may have compelling reasons to request extensions of deadlines on particular assignments, including module content deadlines, quizzes, and papers. Extensions will be granted, with no penalty, if you give evidence of those reasons in advance of the assignment deadline and I approve the extension. Please contact me through webcourses email with any concerns about assignment deadlines.

## FERPA and Privacy of Personal Information Policy

For your academic work you likely will use public software or services. Do not provide any private information about yourself or your classmates on a public site. Some written assignments may require personal reflection or comments, but those assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identity-sensitive information outside of this secure UCF webcourse. If you have any concerns about information privacy, please contact me. Be sure to familiarize yourself with [national FERPA guidelines \(https://registrar.ucf.edu/ferpa/\)](https://registrar.ucf.edu/ferpa/).

## Course Accessibility Statement

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning. If anyone believes the design of this course poses barriers to effectively participating and/or demonstrating learning, please meet with me (with or without a Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodation letter) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. Helpful information is found at SAS: Ferrell Commons 185; 407-823-2371; sas@ucf.edu. You are welcome to talk to me at any point in the semester about concerns, but it is best if we talk at least one week prior to the need for any modification. [Webcourses@UCF Support \(https://cdl.ucf.edu/support/webcourses/\)](https://cdl.ucf.edu/support/webcourses/) provides technical support for all students taking online courses at UCF.

## Teach Act Statement

The materials for this course are only for the fair use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated. The instructor receives no royalty payments for any materials used in this course.

## Syllabus Subject to Change

I anticipate that I will follow the schedule outlined here, but I may make adjustments based on your interests and what decisions we make together in class. All changes will be clearly announced in person and online. Remaining in the course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes and responsibility for being aware of them.

Course Units (multiple modules in each unit)

1. Climate Ethics in the Anthropocene
2. Conquest: The Post-Natural
3. War: The Post-Human
4. Famine: Post-Truth
5. Death: The Trans-Human
6. Survival in the Apocalypse
7. Coda: Having Hope