

GOVT 287: Political Theory and the Environment

Professor Joel Winkelman

TR, 2:30–3:45pm KJ 104

Contact information

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KJ 137, x4984

Office Hours: TR, 3:45–4:45; W, 3:00–4:30pm; and by appointment.

Required Books

Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace* (978-1593760076)

John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (978-0486204710)

Frans de Waal, *Chimpanzee Politics* (978-0801886560)

James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (978-0300078152)

Philip Kitcher, *Science in a Democratic Society* (978-1616144081)

Course Description & Learning Outcomes

Engaging primary texts from the liberal, agrarian/communitarian, and pragmatist schools of thought, this course explores several conceptions of nature and the environment. The course examines how each approach responds to the problems of political membership, the role of experts in a democracy, and the relationship between state power and the environment. It also includes journalistic accounts of contemporary environmental issues to situate course readings in the real world. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to (1) describe and explain three major approaches to the environment in political theory; (2) explain the consequences of each approach in framing or addressing an environmental problem; (3) articulate and defend criteria to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each approach; (4) identify their own approach to the environment.¹

Expectations and assignments

Expectations.

To successfully achieve the course's learning outcomes, you must prepare reading assignments as listed on the syllabus. Preparing reading assignments comprises reading the assigned text; reflecting on its concepts, methods, and style; and forming an opinionated evaluation of the assignment that you would feel comfortable sharing

¹ For methodology on developing and achieving learning objectives, see Sarah L. Ash and Patti H. Clayton, "Generating, Deepening, and Documenting Learning," *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education* Vol. 1, Fall 2009, pp. 25–48; and Allison Rank and Heather Pool, "Writing Better Writing Assignments" *PS: Political Science and Politics* Vol. 47, July 2014, pp. 675–681.

with the group. We refer to the texts regularly in class, so you should bring with you a physical copy of the reading assignment, and a pen or pencil.

So that all students have an opportunity to achieve the course's learning outcomes, you should comport yourself respectfully. Be aware of other students' needs, temperaments, and opinions, which might be different from your own. Support one another in pursuing the course learning outcomes despite your differences.

Recent research has indicated that classroom laptop users retain less information from class sessions.² Thus, in order to support our learning outcome, laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices are not permitted.

² For a good review of relevant studies, see <http://bit.ly/Ubk0X2>.

For this course, no late work will be accepted nor extensions given. I will provide reasonable accommodation for student athletes and students with documented disabilities.

Assignments.

Journal— The primary assignment for this course is a semester-long journal. It will be graded four times, and will constitute **60%** of your overall grade. See the appendix for more details.

Papers— Two papers will ask you to address systematically the course learning outcomes. The first paper will ask you to provide a detailed description and explanation of one of the theoretical approaches, while the second will ask you to require and defend criteria to evaluate one of our approaches. More details and specific instructions will follow. Each paper constitutes **15%** of your overall grade.

Exams— There will be a cumulative final exam, consisting of short answer and identification questions. The final exam will constitute **10%** of your grade.

Schedule

August 28: No class (APSA annual meeting)

Part 1: Liberal Environmentalism

September 2: Class introduction.

September 4: Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (PDF) [5pp].

September 9: Goodin, "Selling Environmental Indulgences" (PDF) [24pp].

September 11: Wissenberg, "Sustainability and the Limits of Liberalism" (PDF) [14pp].

September 16: Kolbert, "The Sixth Extinction" (PDF) [31pp].

September 16: **First Journal Check**

Part 2: Communitarian Agrarianism

September 18: Berry, "The Unsettling of America" & "The Use of Energy" [26pp].

September 23: Berry, "The Body and the Earth" [42pp].

September 25: Berry, "Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community" [23pp].

September 30: Berry, "People, Land, and Community" & "Conservation and Local Economy" [22pp].

October 2: Mittman, "Environmental Interactions" (PDF) [37pp].

October 2: **First Paper Due**

Part 3: Pragmatism

October 7: Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, ch. 2 [37pp].

October 9: Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, ch. 3, pp. 78–92; ch. 4, pp. 121–137 [30pp].

October 14: Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, ch. 5, pp. 185–205 [20pp].

October 15–20: **Fall Break**

October 21: Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, ch. 7, pp. 248–271 [23pp].

October 23: McPhee, "Atchafalaya," pp. 3–42 (PDF) [39pp].

October 28: McPhee, "Atchafalaya," pp. 42–92 (PDF) [50pp]. October 28: **Second Journal Check**

Part 4: Political Membership

October 30: de Waal, *Chimpanzee Politics*, ch. 1 [36pp].

November 4: de Waal, *Chimpanzee Politics*, ch. 2, pp. 77–107 [30pp].

November 6: de Waal, *Chimpanzee Politics*, ch. 2, pp. 107–137 [30pp].

November 11: de Waal, *Chimpanzee Politics*, ch. 5 [30pp].

Part 5: State-building and the Environment

November 13: Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, ch. 1 [40pp].

November 18: Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, ch. 2 [30pp].

November 20: Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, ch. 4 [43pp].

December 2: Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, ch. 8 [44pp]. December 2: **Third Journal Check**

Part 6: Science in a Democratic Society

December 4: Kitcher, *Science in a Democratic Society*, ch. 1 [26pp].

December 9: Kitcher, *Science in a Democratic Society*, chs. 2 & 3
[44pp].

December 11: Kitcher, *Science in a Democratic Society*, chs. 7 & 9
[46pp]. December 11: **Second Paper Due**

Final exam

December 17: **Final Exam**, 9am.