

Environmental Ethics, Rel 2104

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[Course Gateway](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses/ee/ee-gateway(s09).html); or if hyperlink does not work, paste this address into your browser's URL bar: [http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses/ee/ee-gateway\(s09\).html](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses/ee/ee-gateway(s09).html) Or, go to professor's courses page at <http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses.htm>, and click on the Environmental Ethics class at the top.

Spring 2009 Sections

All sections, Tuesday lecture, 3:00-4:55, CSE E121. Three Thursday discussion sections as follows:

- 12:50 (period 6), MAT 15, Rel 2104, section 5712
- 3:00 (period 8), MAT 15, Rel 2104, section 5716
- 4:00 (period 9), Anderson 15, Rel 2104, section 5723

CSE=Computer Science & Engineering (next to Turlington); MAT=Matherly Hall (next to Anderson)

Course Instructors

Dr. Bron Taylor has been studying the ethical and religious dimensions of environmentalism for over twenty years. An editorial board member for the journal *Environmental Ethics*, his project website is www.religionandnature.com and his personal website is www.religionandnature.com/bron. His office hours are 1-2:40 Tuesday and by appointment.

Todd LeVasseur is a graduate student pursuing a Ph.D. focusing on "Religion and Nature" at UF. His email is toddlev@ufl.edu and his office hours: Wednesdays, 1-3pm Anderson Hall 121

Catalogue Course Description

Exploration of competing secular and religious views regarding human impacts on and moral responsibilities toward nature and of the key thinkers and social movements in contention over them.

Background

As concern over the well-being of the planet spreads, people frequently find themselves in conflict over how to balance conservation with the use of natural resources, about visions for our common future, and the wisdom of development. Such conflict stems in important ways from varying understandings of values and responsibilities, of what is good and right. In this course we will examine a wide range of intellectual efforts to address the problem of our obligations to [the] Earth and its living systems. Although we will focus on contemporary *philosophical* environmental ethics we will also introduce *religious* environmental ethics, examine ideas about nature prevalent in American culture and history, and examine how individuals involved in contemporary environmental movements express and endeavor to implement their environmental values.

Role of the Religion Department, Sustainability, SNRE Curricula, General Education, Gordon Rule

This course serves as an elective for Religion majors and minors, and provides credit for the department's ethics emphasis. It also meets the ethics requirement in UF's Sustainability minor and for SNRE students, and provides Humanities General Education and Gordon Rule (2) credit.

Required Texts (Available at Goerings and the UF Bookstore).

Joeseph Des Jardins, *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy* (Thompson/Wadsworth, 4th edition)
Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael* (Bantam, 1992)

Additional course materials, both required and recommended, will be available through links in the course schedule online at www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses.htm.

General Education/Humanities Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

1. To understand the historical emergence and development of environmental philosophy in general, and environmental ethics in particular, in Western societies, as well as the ways such ethics become intertwined with and influenced by developments in religion, literature, and the arts, as illuminated by the Humanities.
2. To understand the range of perspectives on human responsibility to the environment and enable critical thinking and writing about them, including by arbitrating among competing views of environmental facts.
3. To understand the epistemological bases (philosophical, scientific, religious, aesthetic) for different ethical orientations as well as the various methodological approaches to making individual and public environment-related decisions.
4. To introduce the contribution of diverse humanities disciplines, especially art history, literary criticism, philosophy, and religious studies, to illuminating environmental ethics and practice.
5. To communicate effectively and logically one's own moral perspective and views of environmental facts and trends orally and in writing.

Format

Introductory lectures; careful reading, analysis, & discussion, journal preparation, debates and forums; guest presentations.

Requirements and Evaluation

Gordon Rule credit has been applied for in this course (E2/2000 words or more). The Writing Requirement (Gordon Rule) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. The following course assignments (see 1, 3, and 4, below) includes written work in which the instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. Feedback and evaluation of written work will be returned to students before the end of the semester, and normally no more than one week after they are due. For due dates see

the course schedule.

- 1. Study Guides & Reading Analysis.** Students will be expected to bring to class every week either a completed study guide or an analysis of readings.

The Study Guide is for weeks with readings in the *Environmental Ethics* text. It is downloadable as either a word (docx) or rich text document:

[http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses/ee/DesJardines-StudyGuide\(s09\).docx](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses/ee/DesJardines-StudyGuide(s09).docx)

[http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses/ee/DesJardines-StudyGuide\(s09\).rtf](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/courses/ee/DesJardines-StudyGuide(s09).rtf)

During weeks when the readings are not drawn from the main text you will prepare an analysis of the readings. It is essential with this assignment that you *strictly* observe the following guidelines: Write with a word processor single spaced, between [2]50 and 500 words every week, analyzing three things in your analytical journal: All students will do section (1), labeling it “reading arguments.” Under this heading describe the following about the most important perspectives articulated this week answering: *What are the central argument(s)?, How do the author(s) build their argument(s)?, and What evidence do they cite?* In addition, there are two optional sections, in which you may use additional words. In the first one you will discuss the key presuppositions, strengths or weaknesses of the articles. Set this off with a heading “reading analysis.” The second optional section set off with the heading “personal reaction,” and will reflect on questions such as: *What surprised you? What did you hear or learn for the first time? What made sense to you or disturbed you, and why? With whom did you agree more than the others, and why?*

The study guides for a given week, and your analytical readings up to and including that week’s readings, must be brought every Thursday to your discussion session. They may be collected and graded at any time. They will be collected and graded at least five times during the course. Have them ready in an 8x10 envelope with your name on it.

This assignment is critically important if we are to have robust classroom discussions. It will prepare you for your exams as well as for classroom discussions.

- 2. Mid term and final examinations.** These exams will typically have multiple-choice questions and fill-in sections, as well as short essay and/or take-home essay question(s). Exams are open note: you may use the materials you prepare in assignment #1. Study your notes because there will be only one in-class hour for these exams; you will not have time to find everything in them you will need.
- 3. Essay Review.** You will write an essay review of *Ishmael*. In two to four double-spaced, word-processed pages, analyze the book, describing its overall moral perspective and the kind of evidence provided related to this perspective. Make an argument about what you take to be the strengths and/or weaknesses in the book’s assertions.
- 4. Critical Essay.** Students will write a 2000-2500 word critical ethical analysis of an environment-related issue. Details will be distributed in class. Students will be given an opportunity to turn in a draft two weeks before it is due to receive feedback on it for revisions before turning in a final version (see course schedule).
- 5. Attendance and participation.** Students are expected to attend and participate in class -

- this is part of the learning process. **Students who miss the equivalent of three weeks of class will suffer a one-grade reduction; those missing more than this will fail the course.** Students who distinguish themselves by contributing significantly to classroom discussions may receive extra points for doing so. Course instructors will be looking for the following: Do you demonstrate that you have read and understood the course readings and can you engage in discussions in an informed and civil manner? Do you regularly commit “fallacies of moral reasoning” as discussed early in the course? How well do you integrate what you are learning in this course with information gathered elsewhere?

We will regularly arrange forums and debates and hold them in class. Although I will not award points based on the *quantity* of participation, regular participation will insure that I have enough experience of you to evaluate. Do not miss class.

Monitoring email and participation in email discussions. Routine course logistics will be updated through email. Course Instructors will also send you short supplementary materials to read and about which you may be questioned on exams. All students will be expected to check weekly their email accounts. A list serve is established for the class and students may communicate with each other and the course instructors through the use of it. Students may ask questions via email and instructors will respond either privately or to the class, as appropriate. It is critical to check your email because, *as the course progresses, the list of assignments and the readings are subject to modification. Always consult the latest version of the readings online.*

Points Possible for Required Assignments

Assignment	Points per Assignment	Total Possible Points
Weekly Journals	10 points each (or pro-rated to 100 total points if less than 10 are evaluated)	100
Exams (midterm & final)	100 (midterm), 150 (final)	250
Essay/Review of <i>Ishmael</i>	500 minimum, 750 maximum words	50
Critical Analysis	2000 minimum, 2500 maximum words	100
	Total Possible Points:	500

Calculating Grades

At the end of the semester, the total number of points earned by each student will be divided by the total number earned by the highest-scoring student. The resulting percentage will be used to calculate each student’s grade for the course. Put in a formula, it looks like this:

$$\frac{\textit{the score of each individual student (your score)}}{\textit{(divided by) the highest score earned by a student}}$$

The percentage arrived at by means of this formula will be evaluated according to the following scale (minus grades will be rounded up Spring 2009 and awarded when available after that):

93%	A
90%	A-
87%	B+
83%	B
80%	B-
77%	C+
67%	C
60%	D
59%	F

This kind of scoring is fairer than many other forms of grading because: (1) It is based on what students actually achieve rather than some preconceived standard held by the professor; (2) Each student can receive a high grade; (3) Hard-working students will not be penalized for staying in a demanding course full of equally industrious students. With a traditional curve, demanding courses that “weed out” less industrious students, leaving hard-working ones, can unintentionally harm good students putting them in competition with each other. This will not occur in this course. To further insure fairness, any extra credit points will be added to the individual student’s score, *only after the highest score earned by a student has been established*. This ensures that the extra credit earned will not increase the difficulty of the grading scale.

Course instructors reserve the right to lower or raise course grades based on classroom contributions or upon absences. We also reserve the right to change course requirements.

Late or Missing Assignments. Students who do not turn in study guides or reading analyses on the days they are collected will not receive points. The total number of points *possible* for the review essay will be reduced by 20% for each day it is late.

Returned Assignments. Assignments will usually be returned to students no later than one week after they were due. At the end of the semester, unreturned course work will be available until 1 June in the Religion Department office in Anderson 107. After this time, they will be recycled.

Appointments and Office Hours. Office hours are listed at the top of this syllabus. Other times may be arranged by appointment. Alternately, you may call or email Mr. LeVasseur or Dr. Taylor with your questions and concerns.

Academic Dishonesty. Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the Student Discipline Code, may fail the course and will be subject to other disciplinary measures.

THE [COURSE SCHEDULE](#) IS ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE, INCLUDING ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES AND HYPERLINKS TO MANY OF THE READINGS NOT IN THE MAIN TEXTBOOKS.

Back to [Course Gateway](#)