

Philosophy 4040 - Advanced Philosophy of the Environment , Fall 2009.

Instructor: Stefan Linquist

Time: Wednesday 11:30AM - 02:20PM

Email: linquist@uoguelph.ca

Place: [MACK](#), Room 316

Office Hours: Wednesday: 2:30- 3:30.

Course website: biophilosophy.ca/teaching

Course description

Why should society conserve biodiversity and at what cost? Environmentalists argue that biodiversity is essential for ecological stability, that it provides valuable ecosystem services, and that it offers economic and aesthetic benefits. Some also argue that biodiversity is intrinsically valuable or that organisms, species and ecosystems have moral rights. This course will critically evaluate environmentalist claims in light of scientific, economic and ethical considerations. We will explore competing accounts of what biodiversity is and why it should be conserved.

Course objectives

Be familiar with key scientific concepts and debates that are important to environmentalism. For example: For example, what is an invasive species and why are they considered threatening to biodiversity? What is an ecological community? What are “ecosystem functions” and “ecosystem services”? How do environmental economists measure risk, and what is the precautionary principle?

Understand and have a philosophical position on the view that biodiversity should be conserved for its instrumental value.

Understand and have a philosophical position on the view that biodiversity should be conserved for its intrinsic value.

Grading

Weekly Assignments: 45%

Presentations and participation: 15%

Final paper: 40%

Reading

Nicholas Agar, *Life's Intrinsic Value; Science Ethics and Nature*. Columbia University pres.

O'Neil, A. Holland & A Light, *Environmental Values*. Routledge.

Several journal articles listed below and available online.

Course Outline (subject to minor modifications)

Introduction.

Sept 16: Introduction to basic ideas and course objectives.

Sept 23: The conservation movement and its challenges.

Soulé, M. E. (1985), 'What is conservation biology?' *BioScience*, **35**(11): 727–734.

E. Sober, (1986), "Philosophical Problems of Environmentalism", p. 173-94.

Reasons for Conserving Biodiversity Part 1: Instrumental Values.

Sept 30: The 'biodiversity is necessary for ecosystem function' defense.

Ehrlich, P. & Wilson, E. O. (1991), "Biodiversity studies: science & policy", *Science* 253: 758–762.

Lawton, J. H. 1994. What do species do in ecosystems? - *Oikos* 71: 367-374.

Thompson, R. & B. Starzomski (2007), "What does biodiversity actually do? A review for managers and policy makers", *Biodiversity and Conservation* 16: 1359-1378.

Oct 07: The 'biodiversity conservation promotes the discovery of medicines' defense.

R. Firn, (2003), "Bioprospecting - why is it so unrewarding?", *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 12: 207–216.

G. Frisvold & K. Day-Rubenstein (2007), "Bioprospecting, and biodiversity conservation: What happens when discoveries are made?" *Arizona Law Review*, 50(2): 547-576.

Oct 14: The precautionary principle as a justification for biodiversity conservation.

S. R. Dovers & J W. Handmer (1995), "Ignorance, the Precautionary Principle, and Sustainability", *Ambio*, 24(2): 92-97.

Sandin, P. (2004), "The Precautionary Principle and the Concept of Precaution", *Environmental Values*, 13(4):. 461-75.

Oct 21: Biological integrity and the threat of invasive species.

Angermeier, P.L. (1994), "Does Biodiversity Include Artificial Diversity?" *Conservation Biology*, 8(2): 599-602.

Westman, W. E. (1990), "Managing for biodiversity", *BioScience* 40: 26-33.

Sagoff, M. (2005), "Do Non-Native Species Threaten the Natural Environment?" *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 18(3): 215-236.

Oct 28: A critique of Instrumental Value defenses of Biodiversity.

Chapters 3, 4 &5 of *Environmental Values* (p. 31-87)

(Chapters 1-3 strongly recommended as background).

Reasons for Conserving Biodiversity Part 2: Intrinsic values.

Nov 04: On definitions, intrinsic value, and natural kinds.

Chapters 1-3 of *Life's Intrinsic Value* (p. 1-62)

Nov 11: Biocentric Individualism.

Chapters 4&5 of *Life's Intrinsic Value* (p. 63- 100)

Nov 18: Intrinsic value and eco-Holism approach.

Chapters 6,7 &8 of *Life's Intrinsic Value* (p. 101-174)

Nov 25: A critique of Intrinsic value defenses.

Chapters 7&8 of *Environmental Values* (p.112-149).

Grey, W. (1993), 'Anthropocentrism and deep ecology', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, **71**: 463–475.

(Chapter 6 optional background)

Pragmatic Approaches to biodiversity Conservation.

Dec 02: Nature as narrative – Biodiversity as biography.

Chapters 9,10 & 11 of *Environmental Values* (p. 153-182).

Other Important I info

Weekly assignments

Are **due EACH TUESDAY BEFORE CLASS (by 10:00 pm)**, by email. All assignments should be in rich text (rtf) format. Please note that **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS** are accepted without prior authorization or certified medical excuse.

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement...

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration.

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2009 courses, without academic penalty, is **Thursday November 5**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar.

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar

(<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>).

Recording of Materials

Presentations in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter.