

Syllabus
LAIS 421

Environmental Philosophy and Policy

Office: 402 Stratton Hall

Instructor: Sandy Woodson

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Office Hours: Wed 12-3, Tues/Thur 10-10:50, and by appointment

Objectives: The purpose of this course is to understand and analyze competing claims that underlie environmental issues, as well as examine the complexity of the issues themselves. Such analyses rest on critical reading, familiarity with fundamental concepts that drive environmental arguments, and the ability to apply abstract theories to concrete cases. Thus, students are expected to use the full repertoire of their educational experience—technical and non-technical knowledge, research experience and intellectual curiosity—to evaluate their own and others' arguments.

Texts: 1) *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application, 5th Edition*, Louis P. Pojman & Paul Pojman (2008).

2) Other readings on reserve or Blackboard.

★I will be putting a copy of the Pojman text on Reserve in the library next week. (I purchased the text from textbooks.com. \$30, delivered.)

Attendance: Regular attendance is vital—there will material presented in class that will be unavailable elsewhere. If you simply skip class, it is YOUR responsibility to contact ANOTHER STUDENT to get the information about what happened in class. If you are ill (or have some other serious excuse), start by getting the information from another student, and if necessary contact Sandy for clarification.

Grading & Class Structure: The final grade is comprised of a number of different requirements, and a description of each requirement is provided below. There are 1000 points possible for this course.

Weekly reading Summary: A 400-600 word (1-2 pages) summary for each week's reading is due every Tuesday. (On your reading schedule I will include a specific word count for each summary.) You do not need to submit a paper copy—I will access the summaries on TURNITIN.COM. You will receive full credit for each assignment if you've made the effort to master the material and you submit it on time. Summaries should demonstrate your understanding of the material, rather than your opinions of it. Save the opinions for class discussion and your long papers. *Late summaries (not submitted by class time) will receive half credit, but will not be accepted at all over one week late. (200 points total).* See below for more detail about the summaries.

Papers: two papers---a report on your presentation (100 points), and a final paper (200 points). (The final paper is in lieu of a final exam.) Detailed instructions/guidelines will be provided in class. Late papers lose 10 points per day (including weekends). Note: These

papers will be submitted to Turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection service. Failure to submit papers to Turnitin will result in a 0 for the assignment, and late submissions also result in a reduction of 10 points per day. *300 points total*

Presentation: Students will sign up in teams of three or four to present a reading assigned for the class. (Detailed instructions are provided on a separate handout.) *200 points—a FIFTH of your grade for the course. You should devote serious time and energy to this assignment!*

Each student writes a paper about the assigned article used for the presentation. The paper connected to the presentation will summarize in detail your understanding of the article, your research about it, and include a separate section evaluating the article's content. The paper is due two weeks *following* the presentation, 5+ pp, and detailed instructions will be provided on a separate handout.

Tests: There are two tests for the course. They are open note, but NOT open book. The summaries you write may be used on the tests. *100 points each; 200 points total*

Small Assignments: There will be short in-class assignments—which cannot be made up—if you're absent, you will simply lose the points, unless you've made arrangements BEFORE CLASS. Completion of these assignments are factored into your participation grade

Participation: This class will be MUCH more enjoyable for all concerned if the instructor isn't the only one talking. This means students need to discuss (out loud) ideas and issues. Clearly, participation grades will be negatively affected by absences and lack of preparation (reading). For those who are petrified/hate talking in class, use the discussion board on blackboard to meet the participation requirements. If you never say a word on class or write a post on Blackboard, you will receive a 0 for this assignment. SHOWING UP IS NOT ENOUGH. *100 points*

Additional Notes: Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. If you use more than four words in a row verbatim, you must cite your source, including a page number. I always need to know when you are talking, and when you're using someone else's ideas to support your own. The difference between those two sources MUST be clear and documented. Also, do not submit the same paper for different courses, even if there is significant overlap in concepts. It is perceived as simple laziness, and that's never good.

Finally, think about how to go *beyond* the minimum requirements—meeting minimum requirements will earn you a “C,” but not much beyond. That may mean additional research, or bringing in sources from your technical courses (all engineering has an environmental impact, either negative, positive or most likely, both). Your grade will depend upon the intellectual work you do, not how well your ideas conform to mine. As long as your opinions are supported by evidence—credible evidence, not your Uncle Bob's rant about prairie dogs—then you'll do well.

Turnitin.com

I will post the turnitin.com registration info on Blackboard.

Summaries and presentations:

Summaries should demonstrate your understanding of the article. Summaries are used instead of tests/quizzes, and can be used as a start for research/ideas on the longer papers.

- Each article will have a minimum word requirement on your reading schedule. You can go long, but not short. (But going extremely long is not helpful. Part of this exercise is to have students compress and synthesize concepts.)
- Summaries should not include direct quotes. The point of a summary is to put the concepts in your own words. If you can't put it in your own words, you probably don't really understand the concept/s. *A summary should contain no more than 15% of the text as direct quotes. You can check this percentage on Turnitin.*
- Each summary should start with a thesis statement: a concise and specific sentence that captures the author's main point. This should not be a direct quote.
- I will read your summary on turnitin, and you will receive full credit if you really give it a shot and meet the above requirements. Even if you misunderstand the content of the article, you will get full credit for trying. I will contact you if there's a problem with your summary; otherwise, no news is good news.

Presentations should also demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the article, but go well beyond it. This means research.

The actual presentation of information (not including discussion) should last A MINIMUM of 30 minutes. Be prepared to handle questions from the audience, and to lead a discussion following. Each presentation will focus on one selected article, but feel free to include information from any other assigned articles from that week, and other articles from your text.

For the presentation, each team needs to do three things: 1) summarize/demonstrate your understanding of the reading, and 2) relate the reading/s to a larger issue—a current controversy or broader ethical issue. You can use unassigned readings from the text to add to the class's understanding. For the more theoretical articles, relate it to a concrete issue. For issue-driven articles, relate them to theories. Make connections between the readings the precede yours, and to the lectures. *The purpose of the research is to give the class (and yourselves) enough information to be able to talk intelligently about the ideas and issues.* 3) Raise questions to start discussion. To do this well, avoid yes/no, agree/disagree questions. Avoid questions that have been raised in other presentations.

*Remember that everyone in class will have read the assigned reading, so a point-by-point rehash is unnecessary. Concentrate on the biggest ideas, and if you had difficulty with a part of the reading, hit that too, because other students probably were confused by that too.

Each presentation must have the following:

1. Use some sort of visual aid (powerpoint is fine, but the team is responsible for providing the laptop and setting it up). Overheads are also fine. Do remember that these classrooms are quite large, so you need at least 20 point font for each slide.

2. Some sort of handout that **outlines** the contents of your presentation, includes major findings, and lists the team members and their role/s in the presentation. (You'll need ~25 copies.) This handout will be used by class members to aid in discussion **and by the instructor in grading**. DO NOT SIMPLY REPRODUCE THE VISUALS (SLIDES). THE HANDOUT SHOULD ADD TO THE PRESENTATION, NOT SIMPLY DUPLICATE IT. Handouts ideally should help the audience organize the information, especially by highlighting the most important information—which means they should be a couple of pages long.

- **Citations** for sources should also be included in the handout. Use academic sources, not just Wikipedia and google. The citations should be IN TEXT, so I can see where the info you're using comes from.
- One person in the group must submit the handout to turnitin.com.

3. Do your best to explicitly discuss some ethical/theoretical issue that underpins or emerges from your topic. Remember that this is a PHILOSOPHY class, not a science class. So bring up issues that depend on—but are not answered by—data/science.

4. Do NOT lapse into purely emotional rhetoric. The audience should NOT be able to tell how the team feels about the issue, but your position should/can emerge during the discussion. Stay professional and academic. (You don't need to dress up, but don't wear sunglasses or chew gum.)

5. End the formal part of the presentation by raising questions for the audience to engage. It's always better to avoid yes/no sorts of questions, or extremely vague ones ("What do you think?"). The questions should spur discussion, which you will lead.

5. THE DAY OF THE PRESENTATION, EACH STUDENT MUST COMPLETE A BRIEF EVALUATION OF THE OTHER MEMBER OF THE TEAM. AN EVALUATION TEMPLATE IS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD. THE EVAL WILL REMAIN ANONYMOUS, BUT IT WILL BE USED IN DETERMINING THE GRADE FOR EACH STUDENT. NO ONE WILL BE GRADED UNTIL ALL EVALUATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED.

Any student who has not submitted the peer eval by one week following the presentation will lose one letter grade. It's not fair to other people on the team, and you will be penalized.

Your Presentation/Date: