ENV333H1 F LEC0101 20219: Ecological Worldviews

Term: Fall 2021

Instructor: Prof. Stephen B. Scharper (Stephen.scharper@utoronto.ca)

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Phone: (416) 978-2522 x26312

Time: Mondays 2:10 p.m.-4 p.m.

Room: This is an On-line Synchronous Course, via Zoom; details will be sent via Quercus.

Office Hours: Virtually, Thursdays, 11am till 12:30; beginning Sept. 16, and by appt.

Course Description and Rationale

This course attempts to introduce students to both the scope and seriousness of present ecological concerns, as well as some core principles and concepts in the intersection of environment and culture, through the lens of worldviews. Scientists, policy makers, and activists have of late been frustrated with the long-term efficacy of their actions, and have begun to reflect on the underlying worldviews and core values of their work. Does the neoliberal economic model represent a “worldview,” for example? Does consumerism? What about notions of “progress” or empirical modern science? These questions and emergences have led to a rebirth of interest in secular and religious worldviews as a source of environmental theory and practice. Class lectures on-line will be supplemented by audiovisuals, guest presenters and class discussions.
Course Texts

There are 2 required texts: 1) a photocopied course packet. These readers are being produced by The Copy Place, 720 Spadina Ave., Suite 103, Toronto, ON, M5S 2T9, 416-961-2679. Email: 720thecopyplace@hotmail.ca The Copy Place owner, Patrick, will prepare and ship the readings packet domestically and internationally to students. Please email him directly for pricing, payment, and shipping details. Once contacted, he will ship within 24 hours.

2) Scharper, Stephen Bede. For Earth’s Sake: Toward a Compassionate Ecology. Toronto: Novalis, 2013. This book will be available in the University of Toronto Bookstore, 214 College St., (416) 640-7900. N.B.: It might also be listed under ENV 100. (An e-copy is also being currently explored for the library.)

N.B. For each week, there will be Readings assigned which students will be required to read and will be material upon which students may be tested. There will also be Supplemental readings—these are not required, and students will not be tested on their content. Should students wish to include the Supplemental readings in any of their course essay tests or other assignments, they are perfectly welcome to do so. In other words, anything listed after “Reading” is required; anything listed after “Supplemental” is not. Please note the numbers of each reading in the Course Packet, which will be cited within the syllabus to help you identify weekly required and supplemental readings.

A Note on Communication:

For all course questions related to course logistics, e.g., due dates, scheduling issues, etc., please contact Head TA Ms. Madeleine Fyles.

madeleine.fyles@mail.utoronto.ca

Submission of Assignments: All written assignments, unless otherwise indicated, should be submitted via Quercus. If problems are encountered, please email assignments directly to both Ms. Madeleine Fyles and the instructor. Students should use the absence declaration form on ACORN if they miss a deadline for illness or other issues; otherwise 2% a day will be deducted from late assignments.

Recommended:


Course Requirements

a) Final short in-class reflection: Dec. 6 (10%) and a note on participation

It is essential for the success of this course that students attend class regularly on-line and participate in class break-out discussions. (All of us are part of this learning process!) Students are granted one unexcused absence; any further absences should be cleared with the instructor. A final short essay will be assigned and completed during class-time on the last day of class based on in-class material and submitted via Quercus.

b) 2 Short Essay Tests (30% each). Two 1.5 hour essay-based tests will be given during class time to cover lectures, readings, and class discussions. Test 1: Oct. 4; Test 2: Nov. 22.

c) Major Assignment (30%)

There are 3 options for the major assignment, all due by 15 November.

**Option #1: Book or Film Review**

The review can be of any book or film dealing with the class theme subject to the approval of the instructor. The review will be 7-10 pages typed, double-spaced. In the review, at least three sources should cited, and students can explore an environmental theme as it pertains to an ecological worldview in a film (feature film or documentary) or book of their choice.

**Option #2: Presentation**

Students may wish to opt for a presentation instead of a book or film review, but must inform the instructor of their choice to do so by 18 October. Up to three students may work together on any particular class presentation (a legitimate collaboration). Students will submit via Quercus a one-page summary of their thesis as well as their bibliography on the day of the presentation. If a group presents, students will submit these individually and include what part of the presentation each was responsible for. These will be scheduled later in the term individually with the instructor via Zoom.

**Option #3: Journal**

Students may wish, in lieu of a research paper or seminar, to prepare a written journal reflection with three parts.

Part 1: Reflection on a personal experience of nature or the wilderness and how it shaped your own worldview(s).
Part 2: A reflection on an older person’s perspective concerning his or her understanding of nature, changes in the environmental situation over this person’s life and this person’s ecological worldview.

Part 3: Reflection on two class readings which most clearly speak to your own ecological worldview and why.

Each part should be 3-4 pages typed, double-spaced. The entire journal should thus be no more than 15 pages.

Late submission of an assignment will result in a penalty of -2% per day. Students are expected to be familiar with and follow the University’s Academic Code. Please see: http://life.utoronto.ca/get-smarter/academic-honesty/. For tips on avoiding plagiarism see: http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarizeLinks to an external site.

Outline of Classes

1: Introduction and The Modern Worldview

Sep. 13: Why a Course in Ecological Worldviews?

The Nature of "Eco-Crisis"

We will go over course requirements and goals and begin the semester by discussing the terms of the course and some dimensions of the so-called environmental crisis as well what is meant by “worldviews.” This week we will discuss notions of development and modernity as a worldview and its relationship to our current ecological situation.

Reading: David Orr, “What Is Education for?”

https://www.context.org/iclib/ic27/orr/

2: The Consumerist or “Economist” Worldview
Sep. 20:

This week we will explore the notion of consumerism as promulgated by global capitalism as a worldview.


3: Water

Sep. 27:


https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2016/09/05/water-is-a-human-right-not-a-mere-commodity.html (Links to an external site.)

Jordan Pearson, “Abolish Bottled Water,” Vice:

https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/9a3zb8/abolish-bottled-water-nestle-great-lakes-canada (Links to an external site.)

Before the Flood Documentary with L. Dicaprio:
https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/before-the-flood-2016/

4: Test #1

Oct. 4: This week we will have our first test, during class, for 1.5 hours.

5: OCT. 11 IS THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS

6: Indigenous Approaches to the Environment

Oct. 18: A look at aboriginal lifeways and worldviews

Guest Speaker: Lenore Keeshig, Anishinabek storyteller and poet, will speak on Indigenous Oral Traditions


7: The Universe: Cosmology and Social Ecology

Oct. 25: This week we will investigate the new cosmology proffered by Thomas Berry, a Roman Catholic priest and cultural historian, and Brian Swimme, a gravitational mathematician, who co-wrote The Universe Story.

Guest Speaker: Carol Gimbel, concert violist, and environmental musician will present in class.

Supplemental: Greta Gaard and Lori Green, “Ecofeminism: Towards Global Justice and Planetary Health,” #7 CP and Vandana Shiva, “Development as a New Project of Western Patriarchy,” #25 CP.


8: Forests as Sentient Landscapes and More-Than-Human Ethnography

Nov. 1:

Guest Speaker: Prof. Hilary Cunningham, Dept. of Anthropology, UofT, will speak on sentient landscapes and more-than-human ethnography, readings to be supplied.

Nov 8: READING WEEK: NO CLASS.

9: Deep Ecology, Gaia: Biocentrism and Ecofeminism

Nov. 15: Major assignments due.

Guest Speaker: Mark Hathaway, Faculty Lecturer, School of the Environment


10: Test #2

Nov. 22: This week we will have our second test, during class, for 1.5 hours.

11: The Natural City and Eastern Religious Perspectives

Nov. 29:

Guest Speaker: Simon Apolloni, Faculty Lecturer, School of the Environment – will speak on “Eco-Anxiety”


Supplemental: Po-Keung Ip, “Taoism and the Foundations of Environmental Ethics,” #14 CP.

12: Rituals of the Life Cycle and Final Short In-Class Essay

Dec. 6: Final wrap-up, final short essay. Today there will be a short 15-minute in-class essay.


Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility: if you require accommodations for a disability, or have any other accessibility concerns about the course, please contact Accessibility ServicesLinks to an external site. as soon as possible.
Additional Services and Support

The following are some important links to help you with academic and/or technical service and support:

- General student services and resources at Student Life [Link to Student Life](https://studentlife.utoronto.ca).
- Full library service through University of Toronto Libraries [Link to University of Toronto Libraries](https://library.utoronto.ca).
- Resources on conducting online research through University Libraries Research [Link to University Libraries Research](https://library.utoronto.ca/research).
- Resources on academic support from the Academic Success Centre [Link to Academic Success Centre](https://successcentre.utoronto.ca).
- Learner support at the Writing Centre [Link to Writing Centre](https://writingcentre.utoronto.ca).

Etiquette

Online expectations regarding etiquette/participation (e.g. review discussion postings before posting your own to avoid redundancy). University statement regarding a positive learning environment: “The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity.

All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another’s differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.”

Technology Requirements

Specific guidance from the U of T Vice-Provost, Students, regarding student technology requirements is available here: [https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/](https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/).

- Advice for students more broadly regarding online learning is available here: [https://onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/getting-ready-for-online/](https://onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/getting-ready-for-online/).

- This course requires the use of computers, and of course sometimes things can go wrong when using them. You are responsible for ensuring that you maintain regular backup copies of your files, use antivirus software (if using your own computer), and schedule enough time when completing an assignment to allow for delays due to technical difficulties. Computer viruses, crashed hard drives, broken printers, lost or corrupted files, incompatible file formats, and similar mishaps are common issues when using technology, and are not acceptable grounds for a deadline extension.