



*Syllabus 2018*  
**Perspectives on a General History of Philosophy  
and Ecophilosophy**

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[CEL – UNSAM]

**Monday - Wednesday 16:00 – 17:30**

**Total Load: 96 hours**

### **Course Description**

This course offers students an introduction to some selected basic issues in philosophy and research, issues which our common academic tradition is based on. The emphasis will be on critical reflection, exemplified by analyzing and discussing some of the tradition's most important and influential philosophers. The course will focus on some forerunners of contemporary society, including the development of science and scientific knowledge. How do we have knowledge about the world, and what is the relationship between interests, power and knowledge?

Reasoning and logic are important for scientific texts, as well as for politics. The course will explore how to understand text, argumentation, and rhetoric, with a view to develop skills that will enable students to analyze arguments and develop their own skill for argumentation. Pluralism, participation, and equality will be discussed.

The course is a basic formation courses that combines the classical notion of 'education', with a particular focus on ecology: namely that students develop an open-minded, receptive attitude both in relation to their intellectual work and to their larger life-world, and further that students are able to use knowledge actively as they encounter, and engage in, both their larger *human* community as well as the *more-than-human* community of life.

This includes also a focus on ethics, on different ethical theories, and on the question of how to apply such theories to specific ethical dilemmas. A special phenomenon that brings out more clearly a variety of ethical dilemmas of our time is the ecological crisis, a crisis that philosophers have recently begun to cast a critical light on. What can we learn from classical and contemporary philosophy to better cope with today's ecological challenges? How can we learn to recognize and resolve moral dilemmas that arise in our relationship with nature?



## Objectives & Learning Outcomes

### KNOWLEDGE

*The candidate will:*

- have knowledge of key questions related to knowledge and moral practices, as they are answered throughout the history of ideas, and be able to relate these to the current ecological debate.
- have knowledge of basic philosophical concepts, central thinkers in the history of philosophy, knowledge of the main arguments for and against a number of influential philosophical stances.
- have a basic understanding of scientific thought and the influence of science on social development.
- be able to analyze different types of texts in relation to their arguments and viewpoints.

### SKILLS

*The candidate will be able to:*

- engage in basic discussions in a number of key issues within the history of philosophy.
- identify and reflect independently around a number of fundamental ethical issues and questions, again in special relation to ecological issues.
- discuss claims and arguments independent of their own conclusions.
- treat knowledge as provisional: theories, positions, and perspectives rest on assumptions that may be subject to revision.
- analyze and assess ethical dilemmas.
- work both independently and in groups.
- apply relevant academic tools and techniques.
- compose academic texts as well as present academic work orally.

### GENERAL COMPETENCE

*The candidate will:*

- be able to think critically.
- have a critical and reflective understanding of education.
- have the ability to see connections between worldviews (ontology), the ways in which knowledge is formed (epistemology), as well as ethics.
- be able to think critically about scientific knowledge production.
- be generally oriented in philosophy, text, and science.
- be able to think critically about different forms of knowledge production.
- have insight into the requirements for academic texts, and how such texts can affect society.



## Required Literature:

1. Evelyn Fox Keller & Helen Longino. 1996. *Feminism and Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Ian Hacking. 1986. "Making Up People". *Reconstructing Individualism*, ed., T. Heller et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 222-236.
3. Stephan Harding. 2010. *Animate Earth. Science, Intuition & Gaia*. Totnes, Devon: Green Books. Second Edition.
4. Stephan Harding & Lynn Margulis. 2010. *Water Gaia. Three and a half thousand million years of wetness on planet Earth*. in: Alliance for Wild Ethics. <http://www.wildethics.org/essays/water-gaia.html>
5. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of World Picture," *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt, New York; Harper and Row, 1977:115-54.
6. Jacques Rancière. 1991. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster. Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Chapter 1. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. <http://abahlali.org/files/Ranciere.pdf>
7. Peter Singer. 2011. *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.
8. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://plato.stanford.edu/> (selected readings)
  - "Aristotle's Ethics"
  - "The History of Utilitarianism"
  - "Kantian Ethics"
  - "Existentialism"



## CONTENT & COURSE CALENDAR

This calendar may be subject to changes. The instructor will announce changes in class and distribute updated versions.

The course includes three partly overlapping perspectives: Who are we?, What do we want?, as well as: Where are we headed? These three approaches are all related to *existence*: First, *ideal existence* (ethics), second *concrete existence* (ontology), and third, *understanding of existence* (epistemology). The course discusses either of these, linking them back to classical philosophy, science, the philosophy of science (including some of the impacts technology has wrought on our life-worlds), as well as the still-emerging school of ecophilosophy.

### **Part I - Understanding of Existence (Epistemology/ Philosophy of Science)** *'formation' or 'education' in a technological/scientific perspective*

Key areas to be explored include: Key events in the history of technology (historiographic review); history of science; philosophy of science; consequences of science & technology (history of technology's impacts); science and construction of subjectivities.

### **Part II - Ideal Existence (Ethics)**

*'formation' or 'education' in an ethical perspective; including the perspective of ecological ethics*

Relevant areas include: virtue ethics; deontological ethics; utilitarianism; relational ethics; discourse ethics; & ecological ethics. Problems to be discussed: human equality; equality amongst living beings; death for humans, animals, embryos and fetus; climate change and environment.

### **Part III - Concrete Existence / Ontology (Ecophilosophy)**

*'formation' or 'education' in an ecological perspective / "ecological literacy"*

How has the contemporary concept of ecology grown out of our scientific tradition? How does it challenge some of that tradition's underlying premises? How can we bring about cultural metamorphosis at anything approaching the depth, scale, and speed that is called for by the ecological situation within which we find ourselves?



## WEEK I - INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE/ WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY

### Readings

Course material.

## WEEK II – ARGUMENTATION AND LOGICS

### Readings

Course material.

## WEEK III – EPISTEMOLOGY WEEK I/III / KUHN AND SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS

### Readings

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: “Thomas Kuhn”.

## WEEK IV – EPISTEMOLOGY WEEK II/III / SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE AND CONSTRUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITIES

### Readings

Ian Hacking. 1986. “Making Up People”. *Reconstructing Individualism*, ed., T. Heller et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 222-236.

## WEEK V – EPISTEMOLOGY WEEK III/III / SCIENCE AND GENDER PERSPECTIVE / ESSAY WRITING

### Readings

Evelyn Fox Keller & Helen Longino. 1996. *Feminism and Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## WEEK VI – ETHICS WEEK I/III / INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS / UTILITARIANISM / PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY / PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL CONSIDERATION OF INTERESTS/ HUMAN AND ANIMAL EQUALITY / MURDER AS AN ETHICAL PROBLEM

### Readings

“Chapter 1. About Ethics”; “Chapter 2. Equality and Its Implications”; “Chapter 3. Equality for Animals?”; “Chapter 4: What’s Wrong With Killing?”. En: Peter Singer (2011).

## WEEK VII - ETHICS WEEK II/III / MURDER AS AN ETHICAL PROBLEM / HUMAN AND ANIMAL LIFE / ABORTION AS AN ETHICAL PROBLEM

### Readings

“Chapter 5. Taking Life : Animals”; “Chapter 6. Taking Life : The Embryo and The Fetus”; “Chapter 7. Taking Life : Humans”. En: Peter Singer (2011).

## WEEK VII - ETHICS WEEK III/III / CLIMATE CHANGE AS AN ETHICAL PROBLEM – ESSAY WRITING

### Readings



“Chapter 9. Climate Change”; “Chapter 10. The Environment”. En: Peter Singer (2011).

## **WEEK VIII – ECOPHILOSOPHY WEEK I/III – INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD; THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION**

### **Readings**

Harding (2010)

## **WEEK IX - ECOPHILOSOPHY WEEK II/III GAIA – SCIENCE AND METAPHOR; THE SYSTEMS VIEW OF LIFE; EXCURSION (DEEP TIME WALK)**

### **Readings**

Harding (2010); Harding & Margulis (2011)

## **WEEK X - ECOPHILOSOPHY WEEK III/III ESSAY WRITING**

### **Readings**

Harding (2010); Harding & Margulis (2011)

## **WEEK XII – CONSULTING WEEK – PAPER DUE**

## **WEEK XIII – DISCUSSION ON PAPERS – COURSE BALANCE**

### **Readings**

Student papers.



## Evaluation & Grading

### A) Evaluation Criteria and Requirements:

It is expected that students read the assigned texts for each class and discuss them with their fellow classmates. Student participation throughout the course is very important and highly encouraged.

The course will be graded on the grounds of the course grade and the final essay (between 2,000 and 2,500 words). The course grade is an average of the grades given to the three papers the students will write during the course (between 1,400 and 1,600 words each). The final grade is an average of the course grade and the final essay grade. The self-study paper, on the other hand, is graded Approved or Not Approved.

### B) Attendance Policy:

The university policy is that more than six absences (equivalent to nine hours) implies an automatic "F." In this class, 0.5 points will be deducted from your Attendance grade for every unexcused absence. Students are responsible for getting all the material and work handed out during a class they missed. Unexcused absence on a workshop day will result in the deduction of 0.5 points on the next essay due.

**Missed Exams:** "Make-up" exams are a privilege, one to be extended only to students who have missed an exam with prior arrangement (one-week notice) with the instructor or due to extenuating circumstances.

**Participation:** A high weight is placed on participation as a learning experience. A student's grade will suffer due to actions which disrupt the group experience. For this reason, **all cell phones must be turned off before class begins**. If you have a unique circumstance for which you must leave the phone on, consent from the instructor is required beforehand. Students will have a significant point total deducted from their class grade if they do not adhere to this regulation.

### C) Grading Scale

Description	Percentage
10 (A) Excellent	100-95
9 (A-) Very Good	94-89
8 (B) Good	88-83
7 (B-) Above Average	82-77
6 (C) Average	76-71
5 (C) Below Average	70-65
4 (D) Lowest Passing Grade	64-60
F Failure	59-0
W Officially withdrawn	Academic Advisor's approval
I Incomplete	Only with Academic Advisor's approval



**Plagiarism:** An important objective of this course is to get students to learn how to write essays. Students are expected to do their own written work. Plagiarism not only undermines this learning process but also represents a serious breach of College policy and of academic honesty.

Outside sources should always be referenced in the essay's bibliography. Plagiarized work will receive an automatic F. If you have any doubts on what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask the Instructor.