South Central College

PHIL 210 Environmental Ethics

Common Course Outline

Course Information

Description: This class explores the place of human beings within the broader ecosystem, focusing on the environmental impact of human behavior and sustainable alternatives to consumerist lifestyles. In addition to surveying the scientific evidence for the ecological problems humans cause, it addresses the political, economic, cultural, philosophical and religious dimensions of the current environmental crisis. The class also includes discussion and application of solutions to these problems, encouraging students to become involved in environmental activism and consider changes in their own behavior. (Prerequisite: ENGL 100) (MNTC 9, 10: Ethical and Civic Responsibility, People and the Environment)

Total Credits: 3.00
Total Hours: 48.00

Types of Instruction

Instruction Type | Credits
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Lecture | 3

Pre/Corequisites

Prerequisite: ENGL 100

Institutional Core Competencies

1. Analysis and inquiry: Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze information from multiple sources and to raise pertinent questions regarding that information.
2. Civic knowledge and engagement- local and global: Students will understand the richness and challenge of local and world cultures and the effects of globalization, and will develop the skills and attitudes to function as “global citizens.”
3. Ethical reasoning and action: Students will develop ethical and social responsibility to self and others, and will collaborate with others to address ethical and social issues in a sustainable manner.

External Standards

Title: MN Transfer Goals

Target Standards

Goal 9: Ethical and Civic Responsibility - To develop students' capacity to identify, discuss, and reflect upon the ethical dimensions of political, social, and personal life and to understand the ways in which they can exercise responsible and productive citizenship. While there are diverse views of social justice or the common good in a pluralistic society, students should learn that responsible citizenship requires them to develop skills...
to understand their own and others' positions, be part of the free exchange of ideas, and function as public-minded citizens.

9a - Examine, articulate, and apply their own ethical views.

9b - Understand and apply core concepts (e.g. politics, rights and obligations, justice, liberty) to specific issues.

9c - Analyze and reflect on the ethical dimensions of legal, social, and scientific issues.

9d - Recognize the diversity of political motivations and interests of others.

9e - Identify ways to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Goal 10: People and the Environment - To improve students' understanding of today's complex environmental challenges. Students will examine the inter-relatedness of human society and the natural environment. Knowledge of both bio-physical principles and socio-cultural systems is the foundation for integrative and critical thinking about environmental issues.

10b - Discern patterns and interrelationships of bio-physical and socio-cultural systems.

10c - Describe the basic institutional arrangements (social, legal, political, economic, religious) that are evolving to deal with environmental and natural resource challenges.

10d - Evaluate critically environmental and natural resource issues in light of understandings about interrelationships, ecosystems, and institutions.

10e - Propose and assess alternative solutions to environmental problems.

10f - Articulate and defend the actions they would take on various environmental issues.

Course Competencies

1 Demonstrate an understanding of core concepts in Environmental Ethics.
   Learning Objectives
   Differentiate between "natural" and "artificial."
   Distinguish between different types of Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism and Theocentrism.
   Apply the concept of telos to wild, domesticated, and the human species.

2 Summarize the characteristics and severity of current environmental problems.
   Learning Objectives
   Identify ways in which science has contributed to our understanding of and the development of solutions to environmental problems.
   Identify ways in which science and technology have contributed to environmental problems.
   Demonstrate a basic understanding of the following environmental problems: air pollution, water pollution, toxic waste, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, climate change.

3 Explain the causes and potential consequences of climate change.
   Learning Objectives
   Recognize the role of greenhouse gases in causing climate change.
   Demonstrate an understanding of methods used to forecast the climate and uncertainties created by positive and negative feedback loops.
   Explain the predicted consequences of climate change.

4 Evaluate efforts to deny and/or evade moral responsibility for climate change.
   Learning Objectives
   Contrast the scientific consensus on climate change with claims made by denialists.
   Identify the ideological perspectives and financial interests which underlie denialism.
   Assess the historical and contemporary contributions of First-World consumers and the global poor to climate change.
Assess the range of political, economic and technological proposals to address climate change.

Learning Objectives
Summarize the actual (enacted) and proposed responses to the climate crisis.
Evaluate the relative efficacy and feasibility of proposed solutions in light of the obstacles to their implementation.

Identify the different stages and dimensions of the environmental movement.

Learning Objectives
Recall the historical development of the environmental movement.
Identify the differences between mainstream and radical environmentalists.
Assess radical and conservative criticisms of the mainstream movement.

Explore the political and economic aspects of environmental problems.

Learning Objectives
Contrast the approaches of different political parties to environmental issues.
Evaluate the obstacles to change and the prospects for progress toward greater sustainability.
Contrast the "free market" approach to environmental problems with regulatory and market-based alternatives.
Explain the difference between internalized and externalized costs and the use of green fees to address the latter.

Examine the contribution of population growth and overconsumption to environmental problems.

Learning Objectives
Explain the history and causes of human population growth.
Assess the efficacy, feasibility and moral acceptability of proposed solutions to excessive population growth.
Contrast consumption levels among First-World consumers with those of the global poor, including a self-assessment of one's individual impact.
Identify wasteful forms of consumption and the ways in which they contribute to environmental problems.
Recognize the definition and historical development of the ideology of consumerism.
Evaluate criticisms of consumerisms and efforts to combat overconsumption.

Analyze modern methods of food production and more sustainable alternatives.

Learning Objectives
Contrast traditional forms of small-scale agriculture with industrial methods of food production.
Assess the moral permissibility of raising animals in CAFOs (factory farms).
Evaluate the feasibility and ethical implications of sustainable alternatives to industrial methods.

Explain the causes and consequences of the current and ongoing mass extinction.

Learning Objectives
Identify the primary causes of contemporary extinction rates.
Assess the instrumental and intrinsic arguments for the preservation of biodiversity.
Evaluate the feasibility and moral acceptability of different proposals to slow the rate of extinction.

Identify and defend a plausible and promising solution to a specific environmental problem.

Learning Objectives
Describe the causes and dimensions of a specific environmental problem.
Identify the range of solutions which have been proposed in response to the problem.
Determine which solution is most promising and justify the choice.

SCC Accessibility Statement
If you have a disability and need accommodations to participate in the course activities, please contact your instructor as soon as possible. This information will be made available in an alternative format, such as Braille,
large print, or cassette tape, upon request. If you wish to contact the college ADA Coordinator, call that office at 507-389-7222.

Disabilities page http://southcentral.edu/academic-policies/disability-rights.html