

**ASU**  
**Syllabus for:**  
**Politics, Technology, and Environmental Ethics:**  
**Revisiting Nature as Social Space**  
**Spring 2006**

**T-R 11:00-12:15, LLR, Rm. 221 (other, future meeting rooms TBA)**

**Instructor: C. L. (Chuck) Smith**

**Office Hrs.**

**Tuesday and Thursday - 8:30 – 10:00 AND 2:00-3:00**

**Other by appt. via email**

**Office LLC – LLA 210, Phone: 262- 2241**

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**Description:**

This class will explore the relationships and inter-relationships of Politics, Technology, and the Environment. In so doing we will take a different look at the modern concept of Environmentalism and the social and political foundations of this movement(s). We will seek to problematize many of the concepts and terms we generally consider solid and definitive. At the end of the day we should simultaneously feel more knowledgeable and know very little. This is somewhat frustrating, yet I assure you it is a positive process. Hopefully, by the end of the course, things will fall together.

Naturally, the course content will cross disciplinary boundaries. You will get a smattering of history, environmental history, social and political theory / philosophy, natural science, and philosophy of nature. This may seem difficult at first for many of us are accustomed to categorize things, for this is part of the modern project. However, you will find that it is actually more difficult to set these ideas apart, for they are truly interrelated and for conceptual purposes best left jumbled.

**Requirements:**

1. Read the assignments and come to class. This is most of the battle. Every meeting I want you to come with a quote, question, and critical comment from the assigned reading. These will be collected. There will be occasional pop quizzes. Come prepared and there will be no problems with these.

Reading assignments are due for the day noted.

(I know it seems like a lot of reading, but it isn't that bad. I "front load" my classes. This means that we get the heavier reading out of the way earlier.)

2. There will be a brief critical reaction due from each of you every two weeks or so. These will normally be on a Tuesday. The reaction should cover one or more of the previous two weeks worth of readings. More on this later.

3. The only "test" will be a final exam.

4. A Short 5-8 page final essay will also be required. This is not intended to be a research paper. This is an effort for you folks to clear your thinking and explain what you learned during the semester.

## **Evaluation / Weights**

1. Class Participation, quotations / questions, and pop quizzes ... 20%
2. Bi-weekly reaction papers ... 30%
3. Final Exam ... 20%
4. Final Essay ... 30%
5. Ecotopia Essay ... This is an extra credit opportunity for those of you who have stumbled a bit, up to 30 extra points on your **final exam** grade.

## **Required Texts and other readings:**

(Available on the WWW)

1. Merchant, Carolyn (ed.) Ecology: Key Concepts in Critical Theory: Humanities Press International, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. 1994, pp. 383. This book denoted by (M)
2. Pollan, Michael. Second Nature: A Gardener's Education: Dell Publishing, NY, New York. 1991, pp. 304. (Pollan)
3. White, Richard, The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River: Hill and Wang, NY, New York. 1995, pp. 139 (White)
4. Callenbach, Earnst. Ecotopia: A Novel: Bantum / Doubleday / Dell, pp. 181. (Ecotopia)
5. There will be Library readings on E-Reserve as well (RR)

\*\* denotes the reading assigned and to be read for that day

## Schedule:

### 1. Introduction and some basic Social Philosophy of Nature

#### Tues 1/10

Introduction:

Student / Instructor Introductions

Syllabus / Course Content / Plans for the Semester

Split into groups. These groups will be for the duration of the course for various things.

Perhaps a discussion on "Nature"

#### Thurs 1/12

Philosophical musings:

Lecture "Nature as Social Space"

\*\* Bring in a "found object". This object should be something that represents the contemporary co-optation of "nature" or "natural". For example, a magazine clipping that appropriates nature to sell an SUV.

### 2. A Literary Look at the Nature-Culture relationship Take me to the Garden

#### Tues 1/17

Some continued discussion before we get into actual content. Get ready to read.

Hand out packets for aux. semester reading

#### Thurs 1/19

TBD

#### Tues 1/24

TBD

#### Thurs 1/26

"Second Nature" (Pollan)

\*\*Intro-pp.78

#### Tues 1/31

\*\* Pollan, pp.78-115

#### Thurs 2/2

\*\* Pollan, pp. 116-138

Discussion: Weeds as social metaphor / hierarchy

**1<sup>st</sup> Reaction Due**

#### Tues 2/7

\*\* Pollan, pp. 139-208

#### Thurs 2/9

\*\* Pollan, pp. 209-238

#### Tues 2/14

\*\* Pollan, pp.239-268

#### Thurs 2/16

\*\* Pollan, Finish Book

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reaction Due**

### **3. Modern Social Philosophy The Roots of Modern Environmentalism Capitalism / Romanticism / Socialism**

#### **Tues 2/21**

Another Discussion of Nature

Introduction / Brief Lecture:

The social roots of modern environmentalism, Capitalism (Enlightenment), Romanticism, Socialism  
Capitalism, Enlightenment, Individualism, Idealism, Science, a reactionary turn.

\*\* Reserve reading TBA (RR)

(HUMAN Nature – self interested? Technology in the service of Humans? Division of Labor? Capital as personal power?)

#### **Thurs 2/23**

Romantic reaction cont.: more individualism, naturalism, Spiritualism / Idealism, anti-Enlightenment

\*\* Reserve Reading TBA (RR)

(Where does the railroad ride? Rural life as exemplar?)

Discuss the reading

#### **Tues 2/28**

Socialism / Marxism: Communalism, Humanism, Materialism

(internet excersize)

\*\* Read the Communist Manifesto, K. Marx and F. Engles. Find this in many places on the internet.

(HUMAN Nature – self interested? Technology, a tool of class? Capital as Social power? The idiocy of rural life?)

Discussion of the reading

### **4. The Philosophies of Modern Environmentalism (and their historical links)**

#### **Thurs 3/2**

Introduction to the strains of modern environmentalism, their history and social foundations

Lecture: Capitalism, Romanticism, Socialism and the modern world to 1945. WWII and the bomb.

1945 – 2000, the formulation and consolidation of modern environmentalism.

\*\* Merchant, Intro. Pp. 1-21 (Read this carefully)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Reaction Due**

#### **Mainstream Environmentalism**

#### **Tues 3/7**

\*\* G. Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” (P)

(Communalism or Privatization?)

\*\* H. Daly, “Steady – State Economics”. P. 96 (M)

(Sustainable Development)

#### **Thurs 3/9**

\*\* C. Pursell, “The Rise and Fall of the Appropriate Technology Movement” (P)

*~Spring Break 3/13-3/17~*

**Deep and Spiritual Ecology**

**Tues 3/21**

\*\* A. Naess, "Deep Ecology" p. 120 (M)

(What is "Deep Ecology?")

\*\* G. Sessions, "Ecocentrism and the Anthropocentric Detour" p. 140 (M)

(So we are / were ecocentric first? Self interest was later on?)

\*\* B. Duvall, "The Deep Ecology Movement" p. 125 (M)

(Are you shallow or deep? Is deep ecology a "social paradigm"?)

**Eco-feminism**

**Thurs 3/23**

Lecture: Ecofeminism

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What are Eco-feminists? Are they of one mind?

\*\* Merchant TBA (M)

**4<sup>th</sup> Reaction Due**

**Social Ecology and Eco-socialism**

**Tues 3/28**

\*\* M. Bookchin, "The Concept of Social Ecology" p.152 (M)

Reaction Due

**Thurs 3/30**

\*\*J. O'Connor, "Socialism and Ecology" p.163 (M)

**5<sup>th</sup> Reaction Due**

**Tues 4/4**

\*\* R. Guha "Radical Environmentalism: A Third World Critique" p. 281. (M)

(A reaction to deep ecology. What's first, people or nature?)

## **5. A Historical look at the Nature -Culture Relationship Take me to the River**

**Thurs 4/6**

\*\* White, Introduction – p. 29.

(Read White very carefully. There is a lot going on here. Think hard!)

Reaction Due

Lecture: Revisiting Nature as Social Space

## **6. Visions of a new Nature – Culture Relationship Take me to Future**

**Tues 4/11**

\*\*White, pp. 30 – 58

**Thurs 4/13**

\*\*White, pp. 59-88

**Tues 4/18**

Finish The Organic Machine.

**6th Reaction Due**

**Thurs 4/20**

Review for the exam / General discussion of the future / possibilities

**Tues 4/25**

Last Class

Final Words / Continued discussion of the Nature/Culture relationship

**Final Essay Due** (due in class)

**Extra credit Ecotopia Essay Due.**

**Final Exam:**

*Friday, April 28, 2006 from 3:00 PM - 5:30 PM*