

Political Science 469/569

4 credits

Prerequisites: One upper-division political theory course

Tues. & Thurs., 12-1:50pm

STAG 106

Professor Valls

315 Gilkey Hall

Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs., 10-12

[andrew.valls@oregonstate.edu](mailto:andrew.valls@oregonstate.edu)

Winter 2009

### **Topics in Political Theory (WIC): Environmental Political Theory**

This course examines some of the many topics and issues that lie at the intersection of the environment and political theory. Environmental issues are of growing importance and salience, and occupy an increasingly prominent place in domestic and international politics. Political theory is the sub-field of political science that examines the concepts and norms of politics, with a special emphasis on the ethical issues raised by political life. So the questions that motivate the course are, what does political theory contribute to our understanding of environmental issues? And how can environmental issues inform, challenge, or extend our understanding of traditional political theory?

We begin by examining how some of the important figures in the history of Western political thought have understood humans' relation to their natural environment (Unit I). We then turn to the political processes that may be utilized in addressing environmental issues, with special attention to (various conceptions of) democracy and alternatives to it (Unit II). Unit III explores how different conceptions of justice conceive of environmental issues. One question that is touched upon in this unit is to whom justice applies—is it to humans, to animals, to all living creatures, or to the ecosystem as a whole? Unit IV explores in greater depth one of these questions—whether we should extend to animals the notion of rights. Unit V examines the issue of global climate change and the issues of justice that it raises.

The aims of the course are essentially two. First, the student should become familiar with the material covered in the course. S/He should be able to discuss the material, both verbally and in writing, in an informed way. Second, the course will also emphasize the development of skills in critical reading, thinking, and effective communication. These are skills that are essential to liberal arts education, and will be essential to the student's future success, whatever their chosen profession or field.

#### **Requirements:**

Since this is a WIC (Writing Intensive Curriculum) class, there is a heavy emphasis on writing. Students will write a research paper on an environmental issue, using the theories and concepts covered in the course. They will also write short "reaction paragraphs" in response to each class meeting's reading assignment, which is due before the class meets.

Reaction Paragraphs (20% of course grade): These should be written and emailed to me by 11am of each day that class meets. The paragraph should be on the reading assignment for that day, and should be about 200 words. You should use this as an

opportunity to jot down your reactions to the reading, things you (dis)agreed with, things you didn't understand, etc. These paragraphs constitute the "minimally graded writing" portion of the writing for the course.

Assignments Related to Research Paper (20%): As indicated on the schedule below, students will submit a number of assignments that will lead up to their research paper, including a topic paragraph, an outline, an annotated bibliography, and a rough draft.

Final Paper (20%): On the last day of class, students will submit the final draft of their research paper.

Final Exam (20%): On the last day of class, students will take a final exam, which will consist of essays.

Attendance and Participation (20%): Since this is a small class, attendance and participation from all students are essential to the success of the course. Students are expected to do the assigned reading before class, to come to class, and to participate in discussion of the material.

### **Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities:**

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Students with accommodations approved through SSD are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through SSD should contact SSD immediately at 737-4098.

### **Academic Integrity and Student Conduct:**

Students are expected to abide by all OSU regulations regarding student conduct, especially those pertaining to academic honesty. You must properly cite any sources used in writing your papers (including internet sources) and work alone and without notes on the examination. Violations of academic honesty will result in failing the course, and will be reported to the proper university authorities for further action. For a description of Oregon State's policies on student conduct and academic honesty, see the website at: <http://oregonstate.edu/admin/stucon/index.htm>.

### **Electronic Devices in the Classroom:**

All electronic devices are prohibited from the class. During class students are expected to turn off and put away all electronic devices including computers, cellphones, ipods, pagers, etc. The only exception that will be made is in cases where students provide documentation from the SSD office that s/he requires the use of a computer for note-taking.

## **Readings:**

Most of the readings for the course consist of four books that are available at the OSU bookstore. The readings for Unit I are available online and in various editions. The books ordered are:

John S. Dryzek, The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses, 2nd ed. Oxford, 2005.

David Schlosberg, Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature. Oxford, 2007.

Peter Singer, Animal Liberation. HarperCollins, 2002.

Steve Vanderheiden, Atmospheric Justice: A Political Theory of Climate Change. Oxford, 2008.

## **Schedule:**

1. March 31: Course Introduction

### I. The Environment in Western Political Thought

2. April 2: Humans in Nature in Ancient Thought: Read Aristotle, The Politics, Book I. (available at: [http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit\\_01.htm](http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_01.htm))

3. April 7: Humans over Nature: Read John Locke, Second Treatise of Government, chapter 5, "Of Property." (available at: <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtr05.htm>)

4. April 9: Humans Alienated from Nature: Read Jean-Jacque Rousseau, Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, Part I. (available at: [http://www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq\\_03.htm](http://www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq_03.htm))

**April 10: Paper topic paragraph due.**

### II. The Politics of the Environment

5. April 14: Responses to Environmental Problems. Read Dryzek, Part II: Global Limits and Their Denial. (Skim Dryzek, Part I.)

6. April 16: Bureaucracy, Democracy, and the Market. Read Dryzek, Part III: Solving Environmental Problems.

7. April 21: Growth and Sustainability. Read Dryzek, Part IV: The Quest for Sustainability.

8. April 23: Radical Responses. Read Dryzek, Part V: Green Radicalism.

**April 24: Paper outline due.**

### III. Environmental Justice

9. April 28: Defining the Scope of Environmental Justice. Read Schlosberg, Part I: Justice in Theory and Practice.

10. April 30: Environmental Justice Movements. Read Schlosberg, Part II: Movement Definitions of Environmental Justice.

11. May 5: Justice to Nature. Read Schlosberg, Part III: Doing Justice to Nature.

12. May 7: Justice and Difference: Read Schlosberg, Part IV: Plurality, Reflexivity, and Engagement.

**May 8: Annotated bibliography due.**

### IV. Animal Rights

13. May 12: Equality and Animals. Read Singer, chapter 1. (Skim chapter 2.)

14. May 14: Animals as Food. Read Singer, chapter 4. (Skim chapter 3.)

15. May 19: Speciesism. Read Singer, chapters 5 and 6.

### V. Justice and Climate Change

16. May 21: Framing Climate Change. Read Vanderheiden, Introduction and chapter 1.

**May 22: Paper draft due.**

17. May 26: Principles of Justice. Read Vanderheiden, chapters 2 and 3.

18. May 28: Intergenerational Justice. Read Vanderheiden, chapters 4 and 5.

19. June 2: Responsibility. Read Vanderheiden, chapters 6 and 7.

**20. June 4: Final Exam. Final paper due.**