Environmental ethics is the discipline in philosophy that studies the relationship of human beings to, and also the value and the moral status of, the natural environment and its nonhuman contents. The course will provide a first introduction to the field, focusing on both the historical roots and the directions of work. No prior experience with philosophy is required.

The course is divided into two sections. The first one is devoted to an historical review of the ways in which Western culture has thought nature and human nature that most deeply influenced the current debate on environmental topics in philosophy. We will start from the Greek and the Christian traditions, then we will explore some modern attitudes towards nature as they emerged in Descartes's Mechanism, in Modern Contractarianism and in eighteenth-century Aesthetics. Finally we will examine the nineteenth-century American myth of wilderness (Emerson, Thoreau).

In the second section of the course, we will turn to the contemporary debate in ethics. Firstly we will examine the three major normative theories (namely Utilitarianism, Kantian Deontology and Virtue Ethics) and how they apply to environmental issues. Then we will explore some recent approaches to animal welfare and animal rights (Peter Singer and Tom Regan), and some directions of work that cannot be assimilated into the traditional normative framework (Jonas's Ethics of Responsibility) and that more radically challenge the anthropocentrism (i.e. human-centeredness) still embedded in it: Land Ethic (Leopold), Deep Ecology (Arne Naess). In the end we will investigate the complex relationship between ethical theory and practice, analyzing the case of global climate change and the achievability of an ecological culture.

The student will be challenged to read and comprehend classical and contemporary philosophical texts and to learn the vocabulary and the logical tools to evaluate and develop philosophical arguments. At the end of the course the student will become acquainted with concepts and methods of ethical reasoning, will know the lines of the philosophical debate about nature, and will be able
to critically orient her/himself on the many moral and political issues regarding mankind's dealings with the natural environment.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**CLASS PARTICIPATION: 10 POINTS**

*Attendance at all classes is required of all students (see Spring Hill College Italy Center Attendance Policy). In order to receive a high mark for participation, it is required that you read and understand the texts, ask critical questions, and *actively participate* to debates with your own remarks and arguments. All the readings is required* (i.e. mandatory). During the lecture, I may ask *random questions* to make sure you all read and understood the assigned readings.*

**HOMEWORK: 10 POINTS**

It is required to write a short composition of 200-300 words with your personal opinion on the readings and the movies. It is expected to define the philosophical concepts with references to the assigned course readings.

Send your homework to rgrasso@shc.edu. Any homework received past the deadline will automatically be penalized.

| What to not do: | Express your opinion without evidence. For example, you cannot just write: “I (don’t) like/appreciate/agree with X” without any further explanations (arguments, references). |
| What to do: | Find the author’s main conclusion *thesis* and the reasons *arguments* he offers in support of it. Take special notice of any assumptions or ambiguities. *Quote correctly the sources.* You will be finally in a position to evaluate the author’s arguments and express your own (argued!) opinion. *Other helpful indications are provided by Jim Pryor’s Guidelines on Reading Philosophy.* |

**4 IN CLASS TESTS: 10 POINTS EACH**

True/False questions, definitions and short open questions about the readings and the topics discussed in class.

**FINAL PAPER: 40 POINTS**

For your final paper, you are required to write a *2000/2500 words essay* (word count includes references and footnotes, but excludes bibliography). You may select a topic among the issues analyzed in our course syllabus.

Topics need to be discussed in advance with me: send *an essay plan* (consisting of a provisional title, two/three explanatory sentences, and a rough table of contents) to rgrasso@shc.edu by **March 20**, by 23:59 (Italian time).

Send your final paper (.doc) to rgrasso@shc.edu.

Late papers will be considered under exceptional circumstances but may be marked down one third of a letter grade for each day that they are late. Contact the professor asap (preferably at least 24 hours in advance of the due date) if you think you may need a paper extension with the request and reason for the request. Documentation and college approval may be necessary in certain cases.

Essays that are not submitted via email by the due date will be considered late unless otherwise stated or other arrangements are made with the professor.
It is imperative to keep conceptual precision, logical coherence, historical awareness, and to quote correctly the sources. Example of structure*:
1) Definition of the problem and its terms;
2) Development of the argument;
3) Conclusion.
A strong final paper will use a minimum of two refereed journal articles and one primary source*, including references from the required course readings, readings recommended by the teacher and sources suggested by the student.

*A primary source is a first-hand testimony. A secondary source is a reading about the primary source.

**Other helpful indications are provided by Jim Pryor’s Guidelines on Writing a Philosophical Paper.

Please note: Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and will result in a failing grade for your final paper. If you are not sure what counts as plagiarism, please ask me, I shall be happy to help you.

Johns Hopkins SAIS Graduate School Library (via Belmeloro, 11) is a superb library and recent journals, books and academic publications are available for consultation here. You cannot take books out of the SAIS library but you can use them when studying in the library. See http://catalog.jhube.it.
The Sala Borsa library (Piazza Nettuno, 3) is part of the University of Bologna, and there are also some books and reviews in English which you may wish to consult or take out on loan. See www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it.

**Spring Hill College Italy Center Attendance Policy**

Attendance at all classes is required of all students. Students are expected to arrive at class on time, having completed the week’s course readings and assignments, with a pen, paper and books in-hand. Students are expected to read their email daily to keep abreast of important academic and safety related issues. It is the student’s responsibility to notify his/her teachers of an anticipated absence, make arrangements to complete the work, and then complete the work as agreed. In the event a student misses more than TWO classes he/she will automatically be marked down one grade point. A student may be absent twice before being penalized. For example, if a student is excepted to receive a "B" for a course, but has more than 2+ unexcused absences on his/her report, the final grade for the course will be dropped to a "B-". Excused absences require a note from the Spring Hill medical Doctor (Stephen Williams, M.D.) or from Dr. Todd Waller. Any change in status which will result in absence, the student must contact their professor immediately. It is a student’s responsibility to keep him/herself informed of pending strikes, changes in air travel and any other potential obstacles that may prohibit one from being at class on time. Excuses related to travel delays will not be accepted. Examinations missed by reason of absence must be made up at the convenience of the instructor. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the course schedule and should not attempt to make travel plans that may conflict with course meetings, on site visits, and exams.

**Accommodation Policy**

In order to be eligible for accommodations (i.e. extended time on exams and tests) you are required to present an official letter from your home institution indicating that you may receive support. The
letter which normally comes from one’s home campus Center for Academic Support must be presented to me and also to Dr. Waller prior to the Italy Center drop / add deadline (see Italy Center Webpage for calendar deadlines / http://kudzu.shc.edu/italycenter/). A note provided by a home physician or counselor will not suffice. Any information provided will be treated as private and confidential.

ITALY CENTER ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

All students are expected to turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during class. Photos or video may not be taken in class without prior permission. Anyone who is observed text messaging or using an electronic device during class will be marked absent.

GRADING

The college describes grade designations in the Bulletin. Briefly, an A constitutes “excellent, truly outstanding scholarship and an unusual degree of intellectual initiative”; a B “truly superior or well above average attainment”; a C “average or satisfactory work as is done by a majority of students”; and a D “deficient, but passed”.

GRADES CHART

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COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note, adjustments to the schedule will be announced in class and/or per email. Reading assignments are due on the date listed.

#1 Introduction
Outline of the course. No required readings.
Recommended: Jim Pryor, ‘Philosophical Terms and Methods’ and ‘Guidelines on Reading Philosophy’.

SECTION 1: HISTORICAL ROOTS

#2 The classical Greek tradition:
- The myth of Prometheus and the Golden Age
  - Plato
    *Plato, Protagoras, 320c - 322a.
    *Plato, Phaedo, 78d - 84b.
    *Richard Kraut, Plato, SEP entry, selection.

(20 - 22 Orientation Tour - Swiss Alps)

#3 The classical Greek tradition:
- Aristotle
  *Aristotle, Physics II 1, 192b - 193b22.
  *Aristotle, On the soul II 2, 413a21 - 413b14.
  *Aristotle, Parts of animals IV 10, 687a3-b22.
  *Aristotle, Politics I 2, 1252a24-1253a39.
  *Jonathan Barnes, Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000: Ch. 1 (‘The Man and His Work’); Ch. 2 (‘A Public Figure’); Ch. 17 (‘Teleology’) and Ch. 18 (‘Practical Philosophy’).

#4 Christianity
*Genesis: 1-3.

#5 Modern Attitudes towards Nature: René Descartes’s Mechanism

#6 Descartes’s Mechanism in Practice: Animal and Human Experimentation

#7
Exit from the State of Nature: The Contractarians’ Foundation of Civil State
*Thomas Hobbes’s Biography, in ibidem.
*John Locke’s Biography, in Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, s.v.

#8
Escaping Civilization: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Primitivism
*Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Biography, in ibidem.

#9
Nature and the Feeling of Sublime
*Immanuel Kant’s Biography, in ibidem, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

#10
The Myth of Wilderness
*Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature (1836), pp. 35-41.
*Henry David Thoreau, Walden (1854); Walking (1861): selection.

#11
The Myth of Wilderness: The Experience
*Werner Herzog, Grizzly Man, 2005.
DVDs available at SHC Library

Write a reflection paper on the movies Into the Wild and Grizzly Man. The two main characters have a similar biography, but they are introduced under different point of view from the directors Sean Penn and Werner Herzog. Explain which are the common points between the two 'heroes of the wilderness' and which is the judgment of Penn and Herzog on their attitude towards nature. The paper must be submitted via email and must be 200-300 words

SECTION 2: DIRECTIONS OF WORK
#12
Classical Approaches to Ethics and the Environment: Utilitarianism
*Jeremy Bentham’s Biography in Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, s.v.

#13
Classical Approaches to Ethics and the Environment: Kantian Deontology
*John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, ch 1 (3-30)

#14
Classical Approaches to Ethics and the Environment: Virtue
Ethics *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics II 1-2, 1103a14-1104b3.

#15
Animal Welfare and Animal Rights

#16
Responsibility to Nature and Future Generations

(Puglia Migration and Social Justice Tour; Greece Social Justice Tour)

#17
Land Ethic

FINAL PAPER TOPIC (PROPOSAL DELIVERY)

#18
Deep Ecology

#19
Global Climate Change

#20
Global Climate Change
*Marion Hourdequin, *Environmental Ethics: From Theory to Practice*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2015: Ch. 6 (‘Global Climate Change’): 143-156.

#21
*Towards an Ecological Culture*

#22
*Conclusions*

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**BIO / RAFFAELLA GRASSO**

Raffaella Grasso earned a Master's Degree in Philosophy from the University of Bologna, where she obtained a fellowship and worked as teaching assistant for the course "History of Ancient Philosophy". She is mainly interested in the dialogue between ancient and contemporary philosophy and she worked on the fields of Moral and Political Thought and Philosophy of Mind.
**Introduction**

**SECTION 1: HISTORICAL ROOTS**

**The classical Greek tradition**


*Plato, *Phaedo*, 78d - 84b.


*Aristotle, *Physics* II 1, 192b - 193b22.

*Aristotle, *On the soul* II 2, 413a21 - 413b14.

*Aristotle, *Parts of animals* IV 10, 687a3-b22.


**Christianity**

*Genesis*: 1-3.

*Lynn White, ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,’*

**René Descartes’ Mechanism**


*David Cooper, ‘The Frankensteian Nature of Biotechnology’*

**Modern Contractarianism**


*Thomas Hobbes’s Biography*


*John Locke’s Biography*


*Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Biography*

**Nature and the Feeling of Sublime**

*Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*


*Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

*Henry David Thoreau, *Walking*

*William Cronon, ‘The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature’

**SECTION 2: DIRECTIONS OF WORK**

**Utilitarianism**


**Kantian Deontology**

*Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*

*Immanuel Kant, ‘Duties to Animals are Indirect’

*John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, ch 1 (3-30)

**Virtue Ethics**

*Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

*Martha Nussbaum, *Non Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach*

**Animal Welfare and Animal Rights**

*Peter Singer, ‘All Animals are Equal’

*Tom Regan, ‘The Case for Animal Rights’

**Ethics of Responsibility**

*Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*

*Hans Jonas, ‘Philosophical Reflections on Experimenting with Human Subjects’

**Land Ethic**

*Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

**Deep Ecology**

*Arne Naess, ‘The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement’

**Global Climate Change**

*Marion Hourdequin, *Environmental Ethics: From Theory to Practice.*