UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON -- NEW COURSE PROPOSAL

Electronically submit this completed form with PDF attachments to the Chair of the College Curriculum Committee.

**COLLEGE** (check one): Arts and Sciences Business Education

Proposal Submitted By: Jason Matzke
Date Prepared: Jan 11, 2013

Course Title: Seminar: Ethics, Environment, & Sustainability

Department/discipline and course number*: PHIL 430

* This course number must be approved by the Office of the Registrar before the proposal is submitted.

Number of credits proposed: 3
Prerequisites: PHIL 330 or Permission of Instructor

Will this be a new, repeatable "special topics" course? (Do you want students to be able to take this new course more than once if the topic changes?) NO X YES

Date of first offering of this new course: FALL SEMESTER, year
Fall Semester, 2014

Proposed frequency of offering of the course: Once every other year

List the faculty who will likely teach the course: Jason Matzke

Are ANY new resources required? NO X YES Document in attached impact statement

This new course will be (check all that apply):

- Required in the major
- General Elective X
- Elective in the major
- General Education**

** AFTER the new course is approved, a separate proposal must be sent to the General Education Committee.

Catalog Description:
Explores philosophical questions in ethics related to the environment and sustainability. Emphasis will be on practical problems with specific topics including population and consumption, pollution, climate change, species preservation, and environmental justice. The concept of sustainability will both frame the discussions and be itself subject to conceptual analysis.

COURSE HISTORY

Was this course taught previously as a topics or experimental course? YES X NO

Course Number and Title of Previous Course Semester Offered Enrollment
PHIL 331D: Environmental Problems Fall 2011 15

X CHECK HERE if the proposed course is to be equated with the earlier topics or experimental offerings. This means that students who took the earlier “topics” course will only be able to take the new course if they made a C- grade or lower in the earlier course.

NOTE: If the proposed course has not been previously offered as a topics or experimental course, explain in the attached rationale statement why the course should be adopted even though it has not been tried out.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS:

1. Rationale Statement (Why is this course needed? What purposes will it serve?)
2. Impact Statement (Provide details about the Library, space, budget, and technology impacts created by adding this new course. Include supporting statements from the Library, IT Department, etc. as needed.)
3. Sample Syllabus

Department Chair Approval: CRV Date: Jan 14 2013

CCC Chair Approval: Brad Hansen Date: 2/13/13

UCC Chair Approval: Date:
INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Jason Matzke  
E-mail: jmatzke@umw.edu  
Office: Trinkle 208  
Mailbox: Trinkle 242  
Office Hours: MWF 11:00-12:00;Tue 1:15-3:15  
Office Phone: 654-1113  
Class Time: MWF 10:00-10:50  
Class Location: Trinkle 207

Course Description and Objectives:  
This course is a seminar in which students will engage in extensive research in one or more areas of practical environmental ethics and sustainability. Many of the class periods will be dedicated to the analysis of key articles in the field—several meetings will be led by students—while others will involve group meetings with the professor and presentation and discussion of projects.

Although the discipline of environmental ethics typically focuses on abstract questions regarding moral considerability, individualism/holism, and intrinsic/instrumental value, this course will deliberately move the conversation towards more directly addressing what we might call “real world” problems and proposed solutions. Specific topics might include (but are not limited to) population and consumption, pollution, climate change, species preservation, and environmental justice. Each of these will be framed by the notion of sustainability, which will itself be subject to critical analysis and reformulation. We will strive to better understand the diversity of meanings and values that shape contrasting models of sustainability and environmental discourse itself.

Successful completion of the course will include the ability to:
- Critically appraise competing notions of sustainability to arrive at a viable and coherent account.
- Undertake interdisciplinary research in the topic area.
- Learn how to write an annotated bibliography in the style of the discipline of Philosophy.
- Develop and defend, using assigned and self-collected academic and news-related articles, a thesis of one’s choosing. This will result in a carefully developed term paper.

Additional Course Objectives:  
In addition to the substantive goals outline above, this course also aims to help you improve your capacity for critical thinking, identifying and evaluating arguments, active/analytical reading, and writing well-reasoned arguments.


Grades (see below for details):  
Grading Scale:  
Research paper 50%  
Annotated bibliography 15%  
Paper outline 10%  
Paper abstract 10%  
Seminar leader/presentation 10%  
Participation 5%  
95-100: A  
90-94: A-  
87-89: B+  
84-86: B  
80-83: B-  
77-79: C+  
74-76: C  
70-73: C-
The primary course assignment is an extended research paper. Students will divide into small groups (about three students to a group) and pick one practical environmental/sustainability issue on which they will work together. The length of the paper will be in the range of 18 to 25 pages. Each group will submit 1) an abstract/prospectus, 2) an outline, and 3) a final paper. Groups will share their research and source material at various points throughout the semester with the larger class. The abstract or prospectus will be a page-length description of the project early in its development. The outline will be submitted a bit later and will provide greater specificity. The final paper can take one of two forms. The first option will be to produce one paper jointly with each group member being singly responsible for at least one significant portion; the portions will address and critique the other authors’ claims. The second option will be for each group member to submit a final paper of his/her own. In this case the whole work is the responsibility of each student, but whenever reference is made to ideas of the other members one must carefully cite the source. I will work closely with each group to facilitate this process and we will make adjustments as needed. Each group will have 50 minutes near the end of the semester to share and receive feedback on their work with the rest of the class.

A second assignment is the creation of a resource base. While working on the semester’s research paper, each group will collect research material to share with the rest of the class. To the extent possible, this will include electronic or paper copies of articles or book chapters used. Each student (not each group) is responsible to write annotated bibliography entries for five sources. More specific instructions will be provided as the due date approaches, but in short these will provide a description of the sources’ content and philosophical import to supplement the usual bibliographic information. The emphasis should be on answering two questions: Why did you choose the particular article/book chapter, and what is philosophically interesting about it in the context of our practical topics. These should be at least 300 words per entry.

Each group will be responsible for conducting one seminar meeting (see schedule below). This will involve selecting one reading not already assigned from the Pojman & Pojman anthology, informing the class members 1 week in advance via our Canvas site as to the title and page numbers, and leading a discussion in which the primary arguments are identified, key criticisms are raised, and connections are made to other course materials. Further details and guidance will provided well prior to the first group-led meeting.

Because this is an upper-level seminar, each student is expected to come to class ready to ask questions, engage with one’s peers, readings, and professor at a high level. It is imperative that each student come prepared to participate fully for each meeting. Coming to class and paying due attention to your instructor and fellow students will likely result in a 70 (out of 100) participation grade. Higher grades will be given to those who are more actively engaged.

Cases of academic dishonesty (i.e., violations of the University Honor Code) will be taken very seriously and promptly turned over to the Honors Council. Examples of academic dishonesty most relevant to this course include representing someone else’s ideas or work as your own in your paper and its component parts.

Unsatisfactory midterm grades will be reported for students whose course average is below a C- at that point in the semester (see grading scale above). Participation grades will not be included in the midterm calculation.
Schedule

WEEK 1
M: Discussion: structure, assignments, etc., of course  
W: Reading: Peter Singer, “A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation” (73-82)  
F: Reading: Kenneth Goodpaster, “On Being Morally Considerable” (154-163)

WEEK 2
M: Reading: Henry Shue, “Global Environment and International Inequality” (47-57)  
W: Reading: Aldo Leopold, “Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic” (163-172)  
F: Continued

WEEK 3
W: Continued  

WEEK 4
M: Andres R. Edwards, “Portrait of the Sustainability Revolution” (From The Sustainability Revolution. Portrait of a Paradigm Shift.);  
Vassos Argyrou, “The Logic of Environmentalism”  
W: Reading: Peter Söderbaum, “Economics for Sustainability” and “Unsustainable and Sustainable Trends” (Chapters 1 and 2 of Understanding Sustainability Economics: Towards Pluralism in Economics.)  
F: Continued

WEEK 5
M: Reading: Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, “The Challenge of Sustainability in a Postmodern World” and “The Brundtland Report and the Limits of Techne” (Chapters 1 and 2 of Safeguarding Our Common Future: Rethinking Sustainable Development.)  
W: Continued  

Paper abstract due

WEEK 6
M & W: Individual/small group meetings with professor (follow schedule we develop together); research  
F: Student run seminar meeting: Reading from Pojman and Pojman to be decided by student group 1

WEEK 7
M & W: Individual/small group meeting with professor (follow schedule we develop together); research  
F: Student run seminar meeting: Reading from Pojman and Pojman to be decided by student group 2

WEEK 8
M: [Fall Break]  
W: Individual/small group meeting with professor (follow schedule we develop together); research  
F: Student run seminar meeting: Reading from Pojman and Pojman to be decided by student group 3
Paper outline due

WEEK 9
M & W: Individual/small group meeting with professor (follow schedule we develop together); research
F: Student run seminar meeting: Reading from Pojman and Pojman to be decided by student group 4

WEEK 10
M & W: Individual/small group meeting with professor (follow schedule we develop together); research
F: Student run seminar meeting: Reading from Pojman and Pojman to be decided by student group 5

WEEK 11
M & W: Individual/small group meeting with professor (follow schedule we develop together); research
F: Student run seminar meeting: Reading from Pojman and Pojman to be decided by student group 6
Annotated bibliography due

WEEK 12
M: Reading: Ramachandra Guha, “A Third World Critique” (176-184)
W: Reading: Donella Meadows, “Biodiversity: The Key to Saving Life on Earth” (187-189)
F: Reading: Lilly-Marlene Russow, “Why do Species Matter?” (190-197)

WEEK 13
W & F: Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 14
M: Final Project Presentations, group 6
W: Final Project Presentations, group 5
F: Final Project Presentations, group 4

WEEK 15
M: Final Project Presentations, group 3
W: Final Project Presentations, group 2
F: Final Project Presentations, group 1

FINALS WEEK:
Final paper due at scheduled final exam time

New Course Proposal Supplementary Material
For PHIL 430: Seminar: Ethics, Environment, & Sustainability
Submitted by Jason Matzke; Department of Classics, Philosophy, and Religion

A. Catalog Description
Explores philosophical questions in ethics related to the environment and sustainability. Emphasis will be on practical problems with specific topics including population and consumption, pollution, climate change, species preservation, and environmental justice. The concept of sustainability will both frame the discussions and be itself subject to conceptual analysis.
B. Rationale Statement

The philosophical analysis of sustainability and the application of environmental ethics to current public debates on climate change, population, species protection, inter-generational and cross-cultural justice, and the like, has become a major area within the discipline of philosophical ethics. Providing a research-intensive seminar experience for students interested in these issues will accomplish three things. First, understanding and learning to critically evaluate competing positions regarding value and our relationship to the environment is important for students as they become informed democratic citizens in a world where environmental issues play an increased role in our lives. Second, and more concretely, this course aims to provide students interested in environmental science, environmental ethics, inter-generational and cross-cultural justice, and natural resources a venue in which to think carefully about issues and questions they will be confronted with as professionals. Third, it provides our philosophy majors access to one of the fastest growing areas of the discipline. It relates to the core of courses in philosophy focusing on ethics, social-political philosophy, and philosophy of law (environmental issues are becoming a significant area of law).

The course is proposed to be listed at the 400-level because it demands a high level of personal discipline and background understanding of environmental issues (from either a philosophical or science perspective) in order to do sustained research and work with academic sources written from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

Although academic work on sustainability and related topics has become clearly interdisciplinary, the methodology and primary perspective of the course is distinctly philosophical. It is concerned with the normative and conceptual. Research will involve argumentative and conceptual, rather than empirical analysis. It therefore contributes to the depth of understanding of students planning to work in areas of environmental policy formation, for example, while not replicating courses offered on sustainability in the sciences.

This course will also largely complete the Philosophy faculty’s efforts to restructure the ethics curriculum at Mary Washington to reflect developments in the discipline and new faculty expertise. It will count for major elective credit and will also play a role in our anticipated Ethics minor (which is under development) by providing an upper level research-intensive seminar experience. We anticipate that it will also count for credit in the existing Sustainability minor (Earth and Environmental Science) since this was the case when it was offered as a special topics course in 2011. Importantly, the ethics courses—especially the existing course in theoretical environmental ethics—continue to draw students from the sciences and other disciplines, providing invaluable interactions and discussions between our majors and those from elsewhere in the University.

C. Impact Statement

The current University of Mary Washington library holdings—given especially student access to online journal articles—are more than adequate for the philosophical research students will be
doing in this course. This proved to be the case during its first offering as a special topics course. Neither the students nor I had trouble locating and accessing needed material.

Likewise, there are no additional funds, space, or technology needed to offer this course since it will not involve empirical research (but readily accessible written texts), will be taught by a tenured faculty member whose expertise is in this area, and will be taught every other year alternating with the already existing theoretical environmental ethics course.