



# Philosophy & the Environment

Professor Craig Callender

MW 5-6:20

PETER 103

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## SYLLABUS

### Contact

Professor: [Craig Callender](mailto:ccaller@ucsd.edu) HSS 8077, 858-822-4911, [ccaller@ucsd.edu](mailto:ccaller@ucsd.edu)  
Office hours: Wed 3:30-4:30pm and by appointment

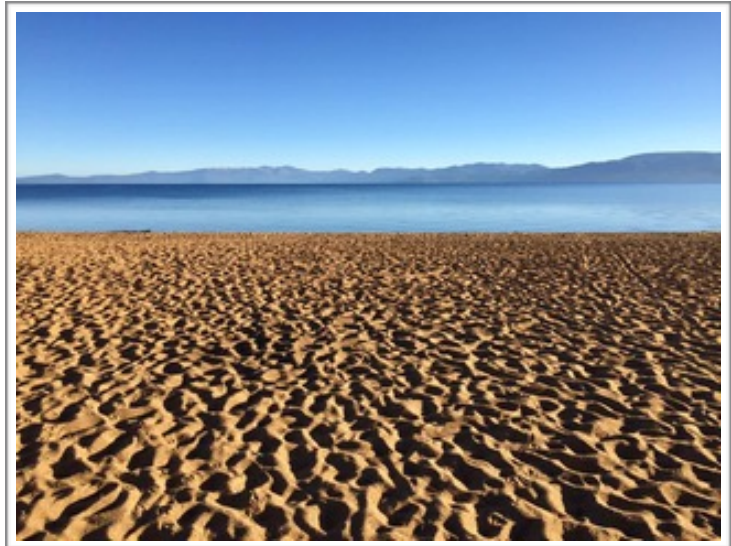
TA: Cory Davia HSS 7093, [cdavia@ucsd.edu](mailto:cdavia@ucsd.edu),  
Office hours: Wed 12-2pm

### Topic and Goals

This course explores contemporary environmental issues from the perspective of philosophy, primarily applied ethics, political philosophy, and philosophy of science. This quarter we'll cover some of the following topics:

- Ethics, Food and Animals
- Wilderness, Ecology and the Land Ethic
- Biodiversity: What is It? Why Value It?
- Conservation in the Anthropocene
- Climate Ethics, Economics and the Future
- Property, Pollution and Justice

In each section, we'll mix theoretical problems in philosophy with practical problems facing conservation today.



The main goal of the course is that students come to appreciate and understand the way that ethical values and arguments underlie many of today's debates about the environment. These arguments will have relevance to many decisions you'll make in life, ranging from small personal ones (e.g., what car should I buy? what should I eat?) to your views on major public policy choices (e.g., climate change). By the quarter's end, successful students will be able to identify the values at stake in environmental decisions and see the strengths and weakness of various positions. Along the way, they will also improve certain skills, such as the ability to critically read and

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appraise an academic essay, the ability to write such an essay, the ability to create and complete an independent project, and more.

### Reading

The only book required is Emma Marris' *The Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World*, which can be purchased used for under \$10. All other reading will be available via Tritoned. We'll read excerpts from two classics, John McPhee's *Encounters with the Archdruid*, and Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*, each of which also can be purchased online for under \$10. So if you prefer to read hard copies these are nice books to own.

### Participation

Every single lecture will contain material not found in the reading. Anything short of regular attendance will severely damage your grade. Attendance will be taken once the add/drop period ends. Your participation grade, however, is more than your attendance; thoughtful contributions to class will increase your grade.

### Assessment

1. 300-word Reactions — 45%
2. Midterm Examination — 25%
3. Final Exam — 25%
4. Class Participation — 5%

The class also features a few special activities, including the Environmental Challenge (where you choose to go vegan, carry your own trash, live below the poverty line, or other options tbd for 3-5 days), the Native Species Scavenger Hunt and project @ Scripps Knoll, the Emma Marris visit, plus other visitors.



### Late Work

Assignments handed in after the due date and without permission will be docked five percent the first day of the missed deadline. The penalty will then grow at a rate of five percent per day. After ten days no assignment will be accepted except in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with your instructor. Assignments that are handed in late and without extension will be returned after those completed on time and will not receive comments.

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## Plagiarism

In your assignments, all sources, including discussions with classmates, must be appropriately acknowledged. All answers given must be in your own wording. Closely paraphrasing or simply copying the work of others (such as authors of books or articles, or classmates, or Wikipedia) is not allowed. Plagiarism, the stealing of an idea or actual text, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be immediately reported to the Academic Integrity Office. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers, quizzes and homework may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students who wish to take a make- up exam or hand in material late must inform me (by phone or email) well ahead of time. In order to qualify for a make-up exam, appropriate evidence of the most severe circumstances must be produced by the student. I will determine, in consultation with the student, what qualifies.

## Accommodation for Disability

Students requesting accommodations must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to me and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. The OSD can be contacted via 858.534.4382 (phone), [osd@ucsd.edu](mailto:osd@ucsd.edu) (email), [disabilities.ucsd.edu](http://disabilities.ucsd.edu) (web).

## Electronics

Except when explicitly allowed, use of electronics (laptops, phones, tablets, etc) in the classroom is *prohibited*.

## Tentative Schedule

The reading should be done before the relevant class. The official reading schedule is determined in class. "Optional" denotes supplemental reading that is either helpful backup or a step further on a topic. Often some of this material makes it into lecture.

**Week 1: Ethics, Food and Animals.** What should you eat? Is it moral to produce and eat the way we do? You will be introduced to some basic ethical concepts and the main rival theories, e.g., utilitarian and deontological theories. We'll apply these theories to questions about what we should eat and the moral status of non-human animals.

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- Wallace, "Consider the Lobster"
  - Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs and People"
  - Pollan, "Power Steer and When a Crop Becomes King"
  - Optional: Gruen, chapters 1-3
  - Optional: Greenberg, Why Are We Importing Our Own Fish? and TED talk

**Week 2: Wilderness and the Land Ethic.** Aldo Leopold wrote what many consider to be the finest work in environmental ethics and conservation, *Sand County Almanac*. His thoughts on conservation, ethics, ecology and evolution, expressed in an understated yet beautiful prose, motivate many conservation biologists today. We'll find out why and examine his thought. We'll also examine the idea of wilderness. The Wilderness Act of 1964 enshrines our nation's desire to preserve wilderness areas. What is a wilderness? Should we seek to preserve or conserve wilderness, and why? We'll tackle these questions via an interesting real dialogue reported in McPhee's classic, *Encounters with an Archdruid*.

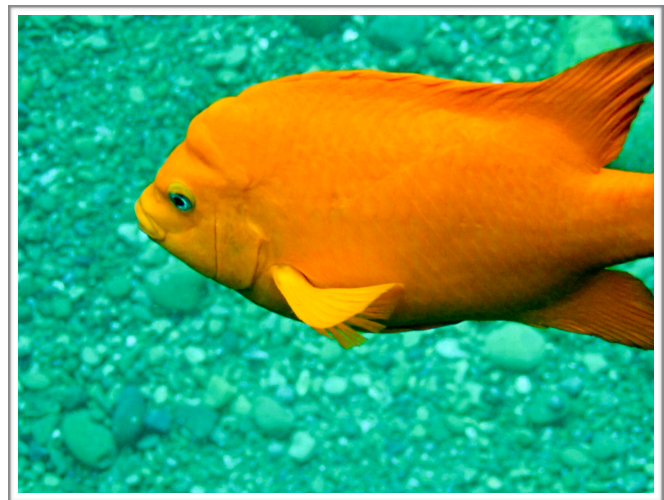
- Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, selection
- McPhee, *Encounters with the Archdruid*, selection
- Desjardins, "The Land Ethic" chapter
- Optional: Price, "Hats Off to Audubon"
- Optional: Nichols, *Paradise Found*, selection

**Week 3: Biodiversity and Invasives.** Recent scientific reports about biodiversity loss are alarming. Conservation sciences have biodiversity as their goal. What is it and why is it valuable? Is it a normative or descriptive concept (or both)?

- Sober, *Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism*
- Russow, tbd
- Santana, *Biodiversity Eliminativism*
- Invasive species tbd
- Optional: Odenbaugh, "Conservation Biology"
- Optional: *Cane Toads: An Unnatural History* (the greatest film of all time)
- Optional: Watch: Jackson, *Brave New Ocean*

**Scripps Knoll Project:** weather permitting, class on April 17 will be at Scripps Knoll. Directions and field guides are on TED. We will start with a native species scavenger hunt, followed by work on biodiversity trouble cases.

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**Weeks 4 and 5: Conservation and the Anthropocene.** Once we acknowledge that human beings have affected more or less everything on the planet, how “hands on” should conservation be? Using the latest techniques in genetic engineering, it may soon be possible to create close cousins of extinct animals. Should we “rewild” the world, assist migration, resurrect extinct species, introduce exotics, and build novel ecosystems? Or does this turn the world into a “zoo” —and if so, what’s wrong with that? Should GM insects be released into the environment to combat malaria?

- Marris, *The Rambunctious Garden*
- Elliott, *Faking Nature*
- Mark, *Why We Still Need Wilderness in the Era of Climate Change*
- Sandler, *The Ethics of Reviving Long Extinct Species*
- Gene drive ethics, tbd
- Optional: Soule, “The ‘New Conservationists’”
- Optional: Marris and Aplet, “How to Mend the Conservation Divide”
- Optional: Krichner, “Nothing Endures But Change”
- Optional: Dowie, *Conservation Refugees*

#### April 24 Special Event

- Emma Marris, “The Future of Nature: Conservation in the Anthropocene”, 5-6:30pm, Roth Auditorium at Sanford Consortium. You must register! <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-future-of-nature-conservation-in-the-anthropocene-tickets-55730731117>



**Midterm!** May 6. Please bring a blue book.

**Weeks 6.5 and 7.5: Climate, Ethics and the Future.** Do we have duties to future generations? If so, what are they? What would intergenerational justice look like? Should we “discount” future interests in our evaluations of costs and benefits? Is environmental economics value-laden? How does justice demand we pay for climate change amelioration? Is geoengineering a solution, and what questions does it raise?

- To be announced
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**Environmental Challenge Project!** See handout on TED for all the details.

**Weeks 7.5-9.5: Property, Pollution and Justice.** Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* awakened the country to the dangers of chemical pollution. Pollution raises interesting questions for our understanding of property rights, and (some? most?) environmental battles become clashes between property rights and environmental public goods. What are property rights? What do they allow you to do? Can you morally pollute your own property? When is compensation owed? Are pollution risks distributed fairly?

- Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons"



- Sagoff, "Takings, Just Compensation, and the Environment"
- Railton, "Locke, Stock, and Peril: Natural Property Rights, Pollution, and Risk"
- TBD on justice
- Extra: Ross and Amter, "The Sorcerer's Apprentices" The Polluters
- Extra: Pauly, Beyond Duplicity and Ignorance in Global Fisheries.
- Extra: Levy, "Catch Shares Management"

**June 5 – Final Review**

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