



*Juvenile Great Horned Owl, Encinitas*

# Philosophy & the Environment

Professor Craig Callender

Syllabus

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## PHILOSOPHY 148

### Contact

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### Coordinates

PODEM 1A23 MW 5-620pm



*Assistant Professors Odie and Frank*

### Topic and Goals

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

- Wilderness, Naturalness, and the Land Ethic
- Conservation in the Anthropocene
- Animal Welfare
- Climate Ethics
- Pollution and Risk



*Bakiti Island, NZ: Should it have invasive rats?*

In each section, we'll mix theoretical problems in philosophy with practical problems facing us today. The main goal of the course is that students come to 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 personal ones (e.g., what car should I buy? what should I eat?) to your views on major public policy choices (e.g., just energy transition). 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, students will also improve their ability to critically read and appraise academic essays, write such an essays, create and complete an independent project, and more.

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## PHILOSOPHY 26

### Course Materials

All reading will be available free via Canvas or direct link from this syllabus.

### Assessment

Five 500-word projects (50%):

- Scripps Knoll Project
- Birch Aquarium Project
- Carbon Offset Project
- Environmental Change Project
- Campus Climate Change Project

Attendance & Participation (5%)

Reading Discussion Questions (20%)

Final Exam (25%)



*Green sea turtle. Encinitas*

You are expected to attend all the lectures and (required) special events. Attendance will be taken. You are also expected to have done the reading and be ready to discuss it. If you miss more than two classes without an excuse, points will start to be deducted from your attendance grade. If taking the class P/NP, please recall that your grade must be a C- or better to earn a P.

### Plagiarism

In your assignments, all sources, including discussions with classmates, must be appropriately acknowledged. All answers 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, or ChatGPT) 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.

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## 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 at [osd@ucsd.edu](mailto:osd@ucsd.edu) (email).



*Juvenile bottlenose dolphin Encinitas*

## Tentative Schedule

The reading should be done *before* class so you can discuss it. “Optional” denotes supplemental reading that is either helpful background or a step further on a topic. Often optional material makes it into lecture; lecture always contains material over and above the reading. Note: no class on Wed Nov 22.

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**Class Trip**     **Scripps Knoll: Native Species**  
Oct 9, 5pm     Meet at Reserve entrance.



*Winning photo, Jack Zhi, peregrine falcon that nests at Scripps Knoll*

**Class Trip**     **Evening at the Aquarium**  
Oct 16, 5pm     Meet at Birch Aquarium entrance



*Little noddin Birch Aquarium*

**Class Trip**     **Marine Vertebrate Collection Tour**  
Nov 8, 1pm     SIO, Vaughan Hall 224/5. w/ Dr Ben Frable  
Students unable to make this class will have two IPE talks as alternatives.



*Pacific Footballfish, found Swamis Beach, Encinitas*

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*One of the Mammoth Lakes High Sierras*

**Wilderness and the Natural.** The Wilderness Act of 1964 enshrines our nation's desire to preserve wilderness areas. What is a wilderness? Where did the idea come from? Here we'll take a peek at Aldo Leopold's work that helped launch modern American environmentalism and then a set of philosophical challenges for ideas like this by Elliott Sober.

1. John Muir, [Hetch Hetchy Valley](#); Laura Martin, *Uncle Sam's Reservations* (Optional: Isaac Kantor, *Ethnic Cleansing and America's Creation of National Parks*; Mark Woods, *Rethinking Wilderness*; Steve Nicholls, *Paradise Found*, [selection](#).)
  2. Aldo Leopold, [The Land Ethic](#) (Optional: Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps*, and the film, *The Creation of Yosemite National Park*.)
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3. Class Trip! Hettinger, Understanding and Defending the Preference for Native Species. Matthew Chew and Scott Carroll Don't Judge Species on Their Origins; (Optional: Watch *Cane Toads: An Unnatural History* (the greatest film of all time)).
  4. Elliott Sober, Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism

**Animal Welfare: Lobsters, Octopuses, Puppies, and Steer.** What should you eat? Is it morally acceptable to use animals the way we do? In this module 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 how we should treat non-human animals. We'll concentrate on two exciting new developments, work on the ethics of zoos and philosophical-empirical research on subjective animal welfare.

5. Class Trip! Foster-Wallace, Consider the Lobster
6. Norcross, Puppies, Pigs and People; Pollan, Power Steer (Optional: Gruen, Ethics and Animals, chapters 1-3)
7. Peter Godfrey-Smith, The Mind of an Octopus; Birch and Browning, Animal Sentience. (Heather Browning, What is Good for an Octopus?; and many other articles by Browning.)



*Lobsters Encinitas*

8. Dale Jamieson, Against Zoos; Emma Marris, Modern Zoos Are Not Worth the Moral Cost (Optional: Karlyn Marcy, Why Zoos and Aquariums Are Beneficial. Faria & Paez, It's Splitsville: Why Animal Ethics and Environmental Ethics Are Incompatible; Heather Browning, The Natural Behavior Debate; watch Blackfish)

**Climate Ethics.** The climate crisis raises dozens of important ethical issues, many of which will be explored throughout the course. How much harm does each of us do? What do we owe to future generations? What should we make of carbon offsets? How should the social cost of carbon be calculated? What would a just energy transition look like? Is geoengineering a solution?

9. Steel, Mintz-Woo, & DesRoches, Collapse, Social Tipping Dynamics, and Framing Climate Change
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10. John Broome, [How Much Harm Does Each of Us Do?](#); Marco Grasso, [Climate Justice from Theory to Practice: The Responsibility and Duties of the Oil Industry](#) (Optional: Augustin Fragnière, [Climate Change and Individual Duties: A Review Essay](#))

11. Daniel Baras, [Carbon Offsetting](#). (Optional: Laura Martin, [Avoiding 'Carbon Colonialism': Developing Nations Can't Pay the Price for Pollution.](#))



*What's left of the Palisades Glacier Eastern Sierra*

12. Fleurbaey et al, [The Social Cost of Carbon: Valuing Inequality, Risk, and Population for Climate Policy](#). Wagner, G. et al. [Eight Priorities for Calculating the Social Cost of Carbon.](#)

13. Intergenerational Justice, tbd

**Conservation in the Anthropocene: Zebras, Wolves, Rhinos, and Mammoths.** Recent reports about biodiversity loss are alarming. But what is biodiversity and why is it valuable? Is it a normative or descriptive concept (or both)? Once we acknowledge that human beings have affected more or less everything on the planet, that ecosystems have always been in flux, and that many problems are non-point-sourced (e.g., climate change), how “hands on” should conservation be? Can we go too far?

14. Lilly Marlene-Russow, [Why Do Species Matter?](#) Emma Marris, [Between Dog and Wolf](#), chapter 4, [Wild Souls: Freedom and Flourishing in the Non-Human World.](#) (Optional: Santana, [Save the Planet: Eliminate Biodiversity](#); Odenbaugh, [Conservation Biology](#)) (If interested, watch Marris' UCSD talk: ["The Future of Nature"](#).)

15. Elliott, [Faking Nature](#); Emma Marris, [When Conservationists Kill Lots \(and Lots\) of Animals](#)

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16. Callender, [On the Horns of a Dilemma: Let the Northern White Rhino Vanish or Intervene?](#); Rohwer and Marris, An Analysis of Potential Ethical Justifications for Mammoth De-extinction and a Call for Empirical Research (Optional: Heather Browning on mammoths.)



Victoria, SWR, SD Global Zoo, Escondido

**Pollution, Precaution, and Environmental 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, risk, and justice.

17. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, excerpt. Oreskes, [Science and Public Policy: What's Proof Got to Do with It?](#); (Newman, Varner and Linqvist, Chapter 3: Precaution)
18. TBD. Air Pollution and Inequality Pathways; Anita Desikan, [Why Rachel Carson's Silent Spring Still Resonates Today](#). Jingxiang Yang et al, Abuse of Rachel Carson and Misuse of DDT Science in the Service of Environmental Deregulation.

**Campus Climate Change.** UC San Diego is the only UC with a standing academic senate committee devoted to campus climate change. Take a peek at the (slightly dated) task force report that set up the Committee. Do you have additional or modified suggestions, based in part on what you've learned?

19. What Should the Campus Do? [Report of the Senate Task Force on the Climate Crisis](#)

Note: there are 19 classes because we're substituting the Marine Vertebrate tour (or an IPE talk) for the class on the evening of Thanksgiving.

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