

Australian Environmental Philosophy (AIND20010)

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Consultation by appointment anytime on Mondays and Tuesdays only.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This subject considers progressive developments that are being generated through Indigenous and non-Indigenous dialogue and intersections in the context of Australian environmental thought. Students will critique and reconsider aspects of dominant Western ways of knowing and understanding, particularly deep-rooted assumptions surrounding the 'nonhuman'. Students will gain awareness of how these assumptions shape our lives and relationships with the world, and will examine connections between epistemology, life practices and environmental ethics. Students will explore topics such as eco-phenomenological perceptions of 'nature', other-than-human subjectivity and sentience, and their inclusion in epistemology, societal values, identity and belief. Through a study of Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous environmental thinkers, and drawing from Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships with the land, students will think about ethical, social and political issues, including connection to place, human and other-than-human rights, interspecies communication, environmental democracy, ecofeminism, Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, and decolonization.

WEEKLY TOPIC LIST

The following reading list is idiosyncratically structured according to indigenous, non-indigenous and internationalizing texts. Doing so is not intended to either acknowledge or erect a chasm between indigenous and non-indigenous Australian Environmental Philosophy, but rather serves as a platform for drawing attention to the commonalities and differences between and among them. For no such chasm exists—much of the engagement with indigenous environmental thought by non-indigenous philosophers has been performed by recent migrants to Australia, such as Stephen Muecke and Deborah Bird Rose, whereas Mary Graham is among the few indigenous scholars to have actively intruded aboriginal knowledge into otherwise Western, Environmental Philosophy. For this reason, texts that connect distinctly Australian Environmental Philosophy to global debates and issues are also included.

July 21

Pre-semester: Before Philosophy...

Before class begins you are asked to familiarize yourself with the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder, an astronomical facility designed to listen to the dawn of time on aboriginal homelands that are billions of years old, and which have been inhabited for at least 40,000 years.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Neidjie (1985b, 35–38)	Jones (2017b)	Jones (2017a)

July 24

Week 1: Ecological “awakenings”

It is a commonplace to say that Environmental Philosophy began only in 1973. Quite independently, the Norwegian Arne Naess published a scientific article that attempted to characterize the two dominant strands of the ecology movement, at around the same time that Richard Routley, based in Canberra, Australia, argued more forcefully that what was in fact needed was “a new, an environmental, ethic”.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Neidjie (1985a, 45–52); Bureau of Meteorology (2015)	R. Routley (1973); Hyde (2014)	Rose (1988)

July 31

Week 2: Indigenous knowledges**

Is it possible or even advisable for the largely oral knowledges of aborigines to be brought into dialogue with a Philosophy derived from ancient Athens? Whilst Aboriginal Australians comprise some of the world's oldest living cultures, this week we consider how their voices are variously absent, neglected, overlooked, marginalized, dismissed, and/or silenced.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Roe (2000); Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project (2013; 2013)	Muecke (2011); Plumwood (1990, 1999b); Bradley and Johnson (2015)	Rose (2004); Callicott (1994)

** Invited lecture: Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

August 7

Week 3: Contending circles

Picture a large circle drawn on the ground at your feet. Whom and what would you include inside your circle if it was to represent the limits of your ethical concern? Would you distinguish between friends and strangers? What about non-human beings and things? Contemporary non-indigenous Australians have been central to these philosophical debates.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Graham (2013); Fourmile (2002)	Passmore (1974); Singer (1974); V. Routley (1975)	Plumwood (2008)

August 14

Week 4: Situating environmentalisms

Few know that the world's first environmental political party was founded in Tasmania, Australia, in the early 1970s. Fewer still realize that Australia still plays a key role in global efforts to mainstream or universalize environmentalism. However, taking a critical perspective, we find that "the environment" is also a potential site for conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous worldviews whose concern is often particular to place.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Vincent, Altman, and Nolan (2017); Birch (2016)	The Australian Greens (2002, 2013); Milne (2017); Neale and Vincent (2016)	Dann (1999); Dryzek (2002)

August 21

Week 5: Antipodean eco-feminisms

Several Australians, such as Val Plumwood, helped pioneer eco-feminist theories and practices. Yet for some non-indigenous proponents, eco-feminism must simultaneously resolve two forms of domination (or, chauvinism, towards “nature” and women), without further entrenching the domination of aboriginal men and women (or, whiteness).

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Moreton-Robinson (2000, 126–49)	Plumwood (1986, 2002)	Salleh (1984)

August 28

Week 6: Multispecies communities

How often, if at all, do you locate yourself in the food chain? To be swooped by a magpie during mating season is one thing, but have you ever been in a position where you are mere food for another? Val Plumwood has, and she lived to tell the tale. Others, particularly indigenous peoples, have come to be highly attuned to such non-human animal behavior in both kinship and survival.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Emmanouil (2015); Pascoe (2017); Rose (2008)	Kirksey and Helmreich (2010); Plumwood (1999a); National Museum of Australia (2013)	Peace (2011); Rose (2012)

September 4

Week 7: Ecological selves

Having situated ourselves as ecological beings, both philosophically and materially, this week we consider how this translates to our predicament globally, as citizens of an ecological community that are mutually implicated and co-constituted in the biosphere.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Clarke (2003); Langton (2006); Onus (1990)	Plumwood (2007b); Taylor (2015); Muir et al (2013)	Mathews (1995); Robin (2002)

September 11

Week 8: Urban country

Contemporary urban cities such as Melbourne, just like the “outback”, were once (and in some sense still are) aboriginal homelands. What’s more, having problematized the categories of “wilderness” and “nature”, we might then ask whether there could be an Australian Environmental Philosophy of Bourke Street Mall and Barkley Square!

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Cunningham (TBC); Morgan (2016)	Mathews (2003); Sexton and Riley (2008)	Jacobs (1998); Fox (2000)

September 18

Week 9: Wilderness homelands**

What is “nature”? Is there such a thing as “wilderness”? How can aboriginal homelands, for instance, possibly be “(re)wilded”? These are the sorts of enduring and vexing questions that beset environmental philosophers, even today. In lieu of finding answers, we consult the disciplines of History and Indigenous Studies for greater context.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Pascoe (2014b, 2014a)	Gammage (2011b, 2011a); Plumwood (Plumwood 2003)	Brown (1996); Robin (2012)

** Guest lecturer: Bruce Pascoe

September 25

<Semester Break>

October 2

Week 10: Nuclear colonialisms**

Through the prism of the nuclear age, we stage an encounter with the continued colonialization of aboriginal and remote communities, as well as multispecies communities living today. Given that the problem of nuclear harm persists into the far-future for up to 100,000 years, we are compelled to ethically consider future beings yet to be born, as well as the relationship between presently living and non-living beings and things.

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Langton (2012); Langton,	Taylor (2017); Vincent (2007)	Herzog (1985); Journeyman

Rhea, and Palmer (2005)		Pictures (1999)
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** special lecture involving the screening of a virtual reality film produced by (Wallworth 2016).

October 9

Week 11: Us/them dialogues

Let's try and be positive. How can, if we so chose, deploy what we have learned to bring about more favourable environmental, social, political and economic outcomes? Can we listen, or even speak, with birds and trees? Or, to venture further, if we afford the non-human world moral status in and of itself, ought we militarily intervene—and harm humans—on behalf of the environment as we do in response to a humanitarian crisis?

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Neidjie (2002, 18–29); Brigg and Graham (2009)	van Dooren and Rose (2016); Rose (1992); Weir (2015)	Eckersley (2007)

October 16

Week 12: Eco-humanities futures

As we have seen, contemporary environmental problems are not merely scientific—they are also cultural, social, economic, and ethical. So, what role can the Humanities disciplines such as Indigenous Studies, Environmental Studies, and Philosophy, play in identifying, interpreting, understanding and perhaps even resolving past, present and future environmental challenges?

Indigenous text/s	Non-indigenous text/s	Internationalizing text/s
Mowaljarlai and Malnic (1993)	Rose et al (2012)	Plumwood (2007a)

TEXT LIST

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ASSESSMENT TASKS

Assessment Task 1: Tutorial Dialogue

Due: Assigned Week (from Week 2)

Task	Criteria	Grade
<p>You choose the topic. You get the class thinking about it.</p> <p>Step 1: In tutorials in Week 1, you are to select a weekly topic that you are passionate and/or interested in.</p> <p>Step 2: In preparing for your assigned week, you consider the commonalities and differences between the set texts. Your task will be to introduce something that you deem interesting and important (i.e. an idea, text, opposing viewpoint, personal experience, news item, etc.) to illuminate your chosen topic.</p> <p>Step 3: “Just do it!” Each student is allocated five (5) minutes (and no more than ten (10) minutes each) for this purpose at the beginning of the tutorial.</p> <p>Please note, you are not required to give a formal presentation or “speech”, although you may. You are encouraged to instead use role play, simulations, staged dialogues/interviews, personal narratives, and other interactive activities to illuminate your argument. You are thereby encouraged to approach this task as one of experimentation and play—take risks, and so long as preparation and team work are evident, you will be rewarded.</p>	<p>(1) critically engaging with the required text/s and ideas covered in lectures, as well as evidence of additional research;</p> <p>(2) the ability to clearly and succinctly evaluate the key themes and ideas being discussed; and</p> <p>(3) the ability to respect and listen to others, and to continually interrogate oneself.</p>	<p>10%</p>

Assessment Task 2: 1,500-word “Exploratory” Essay

Due: Week 4 (in tutorial) and Week 7 (online, by 11:59pm, Monday, September 4)

Task	Criteria	Grade
<p>You pose the question. You deliver the answer.</p> <p>Step 1: Before consulting your lecturer, you are to choose and develop a topic relevant to Australian Environmental Philosophy in the widest possible sense (e.g. human relations with wild dogs). Bring a one-page, printed copy of an annotated bibliography for your chosen topic to the tutorial in Week 4.</p> <p>Step 2: Together in tutorials, in Week 4, we will refine your topics into precise questions (e.g. How does, if at all, Peter Singer ethical treat “wild” dogs differently from domesticated ones?).</p> <p>Step 3: Submission.</p>	<p>(1) the ability to identify and interpret the major elements of Indigenous and/or non-Indigenous Australian Environmental Philosophy;</p> <p>(2) demonstrated knowledge of the cultural, social, political, and moral complexity of the topic chosen; and</p> <p>(3) the presentation and structure of your argument in a clear and convincing manner.</p>	30%

Assessment Task 3: 2,500-word “Research” Essay**

Due: Week 9 (in tutorial) and Week 11 (online, by 11:59pm, Monday, October 9)

Task	Criteria	Grade
<p>You pose the question. You deliver the answer.</p> <p>Step 1: Before consulting your lecturer, you are to choose and develop a topic relevant to Australian Environmental Philosophy in the widest possible sense (e.g. cross-cultural issues for learning Indigenous Environmental Philosophy). Bring a one-page, printed copy of an annotated bibliography for your chosen topic to the tutorial in Week 9.</p> <p>Step 2: Together in tutorials, in Week 9, we will refine your topics into precise questions (e.g. Indigenous knowledge cannot be translated into Western Environmental Philosophy. Discuss.).</p> <p>Step 3: Submission.</p>	<p>(1) the ability to identify and interpret the major elements of Indigenous and/or non-Indigenous Australian Environmental Philosophy;</p> <p>(2) demonstrated knowledge of the cultural, social, political, and moral complexity of the topic chosen; and</p> <p>(3) the presentation and structure of your argument in a clear and convincing manner.</p>	60%