



Gelop700

Understanding Attitudes to the Environment

S1 Evening 2016

Department of Geography and Planning

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

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W3A 412

by appointment

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MRes

Corequisites

Co-badged status

GEOP800

Unit description

This unit explores the ways in which humans think about nature and environment and how these ideas are formed. Given the diversity of environmental challenges that have emerged from contemporary human-nature relations there is an urgent need to explore the role that human attitudes to nature have had in contributing to these crises, and how changes in attitudes may provide some solutions. To explore these issues this unit draws from social constructionism, environmental ethics and political ecology to explore how ideas about nature and environment are created and contested. The first section of the unit looks at contemporary approaches to nature, their history and complexity. The second section explores environmental ethics and the challenges they pose to these dominant understandings of humans and nature. The final section analyses environmental ethics in society – exploring their relevance to environmental politics and our everyday ways of life.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Ability to clearly identify the core ethical principles of different eco-philosophical

approaches

Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the importance of understanding environmental attitudes in addressing environmental issues

Skills in researching eco-philosophies and applying them to potential research projects

Ability to reflect and develop personal environmental attitudes and identify their relevance to practice.

The ability to work as a team and present ethical solutions to contemporary environmental challenges.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Short report</u>	10%	6pm Monday 21 March
<u>Critical Reflection</u>	25%	6pm Monday 9 May
<u>Eco-philosophy research essay</u>	40%	6pm Monday 6 June
<u>Group presentation</u>	20%	From week 8 onwards
<u>Group reading task</u>	5%	all semester

Short report

Due: **6pm Monday 21 March**

Weighting: **10%**

What is meant by the social construction of nature and why is the concept important? Write a short one page report that critically analyses how nature is socially constructed in contemporary society. Your report should draw on one or more examples from advertising, websites, media, novels, official documents, film, television etc to illustrate your answer.

This short essay is one page only (use 12 point font) (not including references). If you would like to attach images they can be included as an Appendix or can be integrated into your one page summary.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Skills in researching eco-philosophies and applying them to potential research projects

Critical Reflection

Due: **6pm Monday 9 May**

Weighting: **25%**

Why do you care about the environment?

Write an essay of up to 1500 words that critically reflects on your own attitudes to the environment. Discuss the eco-philosophies that most inform your attitudes and pro-environmental actions and practices. Draw from the eco-philosophical literature to inform your reflections.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to reflect and develop personal environmental attitudes and identify their relevance to practice.

Eco-philosophy research essay

Due: **6pm Monday 6 June**

Weighting: **40%**

Write a 2000 word essay that answers ONE of the following questions:

- 1) How do environmental ethics shape research in your discipline? Draw on case studies to illustrate your answer.
- 2) Consider your research interests from a particular ethical standpoint (eg more-than-human, ecofeminist, Indigenous, animal rights etc.). How does adopting this standpoint influence how you should conduct your research?
- 3) Choose a recent research book / special issue of a journal in your interest area. Identify the environmental ethics that inform the research that has been conducted. Do you agree with the ethics involved? How could they be improved?

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to clearly identify the core ethical principles of different eco-philosophical approaches
- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the importance of understanding environmental attitudes in addressing environmental issues
- Skills in researching eco-philosophies and applying them to potential research projects

Group presentation

Due: **From week 8 onwards**

Weighting: **20%**

Environmental issues can be interpreted through a range of different eco-philosophical lenses. In this assignment you will work with other class members to develop a group presentation that demonstrates your understanding and ability to communicate eco-philosophies by analysing a contemporary environmental issue. You are welcome to choose any issue that interests your group (some suggestions are below). You are encouraged to be creative in your presentation and are welcome to use unconventional presentation techniques such as debates, role plays, audience interaction, skits etc. The length of your group presentation will be determined in class

but will not normally exceed 30 minutes. Your grade will be comprised of a overall group mark weighted by peer assessment of your contribution. More details will be made available during class.

Suggested topics: logging; genetically modified organisms; large dams; whaling; geoengineering; factory farming; hunting; indigenous rights, veganism; nuclear energy; mining; artificial meat; coal seam gas; pest management; fire management; Anthropocene; population growth; rewilding; etc

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to clearly identify the core ethical principles of different eco-philosophical approaches
- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the importance of understanding environmental attitudes in addressing environmental issues
- The ability to work as a team and present ethical solutions to contemporary environmental challenges.

Group reading task

Due: **all semester**

Weighting: **5%**

An important component of the class are the required readings that all students must read each week. Students will be separated into small groups in which a coordinator will be identified. The coordinator will be responsible for assigning group members the role of discussants for each week whose responsibility will be to lead discussions on particular papers. Each week a group will be randomly selected in class to give a short presentation on the readings. The presentation will be assessed according to the group's understanding of the papers, the key insights they gained, and their ability to critically assess strengths and weaknesses in the arguments presented.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to clearly identify the core ethical principles of different eco-philosophical approaches

Delivery and Resources

The unit will be taught through 13x3 hour sessions on Monday nights from 6-9pm. Most sessions will involve a lecture accompanied by tutorial-style activities. Outside of class students are expected to complete assigned readings and undertake research on topics to complete the assessment requirements. The sessions require active and informed student input.

GEOP800 will make use of web-based teaching support through iLearn. Students will require access to the internet and regular contact with the unit's iLearn site. To complete assignments students will need access to basic word processing programmes and submit assignments via turnitin. Some students may wish to make use of powerpoint or prezi for class presentations.

Unit Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Lecturer	Assignment
1	29 Feb	Introduction: Social natures	AM	
2	7 March	Indigenous nature	FB	
3	14 March	Western nature	AM	Group reading tasks begin
4	21 March	Anthropocentric environmentalism	AM	Short report due
5	28 March	Easter Monday - no class		
6	4 April	Biocentrism and animal rights	AM	
MID-SEMESTER BREAK				
7	25 April	Anzac Day - no class	AM	
8	2 May	Ecocentrism and deep ecology	AM	Group presentations begin
9	9 May	Ecofeminism	AM	Critical reflection due
10	16 May	More-than-human	AA	
11	23 May	Neo-liberal natures	AM	
12	30 May	Political environments	AM	
13	6 June	Future nature	AM	Eco-philosophy essay due

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

New Assessment Policy in effect from Session 2 2016 http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy_2016.html. For more information visit http://students.mq.edu.au/events/2016/07/19/new_assessment_policy_in_place_from_session_2/

Assessment Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/

[offices_and_units/information_technology/help/](#).

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Ability to reflect and develop personal environmental attitudes and identify their relevance to practice.

Assessment task

- Critical Reflection

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Ability to clearly identify the core ethical principles of different eco-philosophical approaches

Assessment tasks

- Eco-philosophy research essay
- Group presentation
- Group reading task

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Ability to clearly identify the core ethical principles of different eco-philosophical approaches
- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the importance of understanding environmental attitudes in addressing environmental issues
- Skills in researching eco-philosophies and applying them to potential research projects

Assessment tasks

- Eco-philosophy research essay
- Group presentation
- Group reading task

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the importance of understanding environmental attitudes in addressing environmental issues
- Skills in researching eco-philosophies and applying them to potential research projects

Assessment tasks

- Short report
- Eco-philosophy research essay
- Group presentation

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- The ability to work as a team and present ethical solutions to contemporary

environmental challenges.

Assessment task

- Group presentation

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Ability to clearly identify the core ethical principles of different eco-philosophical approaches
- Ability to reflect and develop personal environmental attitudes and identify their relevance to practice.

Assessment tasks

- Critical Reflection
- Eco-philosophy research essay
- Group presentation
- Group reading task