GSE 800
Attitudes to the Environment
S1 Evening 2015
Department of Geography and Planning

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**General Information**

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
Andrew McGregor
andrew.mcgregor@mq.edu.au
Contact via andrew.mcgregor@mq.edu.au
W3A 412
4-5pm Wednesdays

Credit points
4

Prerequisites
Admission to MEnv or PGDipEnv or PGCertEnv or MEnvEd or PGDipEnvEd or PGCertEnvEd or MEngMgt or MEnvMgt or MEnvPlan or MEnvSc or MEnvStud or MIntRel or MSusDev or PGDipSusDev or PGCertSusDev or MClimCh or MSc in (Biodiversity Conservation or Remote Sensing and GIS or Environmental Health) or PGDipSc in (Biodiversity Conservation or Remote Sensing and GIS or Environmental Health) or PGCertSc in (Biodiversity Conservation or Remote Sensing and GIS or Environmental Health) or GradDipEnv or GradDipSIA or GradCertSIA or GradCertSusDev or GradDipSusDev or MConsBiol or GradDipConsBiol

Corequisites

Co-badged status

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://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates](https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates)
Learning Outcomes

1. Ability to clearly identify the core ethical principles of different eco-philosophical approaches
2. Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the importance of understanding environmental attitudes in addressing environmental issues
3. Skills in analysing contemporary environmental issues from a variety of eco-philosophical standpoints in order to identify dilemmas and solutions.
4. Ability to reflect and develop personal environmental attitudes and identify their relevance to practice.
5. The ability to work as a team and present ethical solutions to contemporary environmental challenges.

Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short report</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6pm Wednesday 18 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reflection</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6pm Friday 3 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-philosophy essay</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>6pm Wednesday 3 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>From week 8 onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on readings</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>all semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short report

Due: 6pm Wednesday 18 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. You 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.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Skills in analysing contemporary environmental issues from a variety of eco-
philosophical standpoints in order to identify dilemmas and solutions.

**Critical Reflection**

**Due:** 6pm Friday 3 April  
**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.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:
- Ability to reflect and develop personal environmental attitudes and identify their relevance to practice.

**Eco-philosophy essay**

**Due:** 6pm Wednesday 3 June  
**Weighting:** 35%

Write an essay of up to 2000 words which answers ONE of the following essay questions:

a. **Why do attitudes to nature matter?** Draw on examples to illustrate your argument.

b. **Provide an indepth critical assessment that contrasts the ethics of the two eco-philosophies that most interest you.**

c. **How can alternative eco-philosophies become more influential in shaping how humans interact with the environment?** Discuss the possibilities, and the difficulties, of empowering alternative ideas in your answer.

This Assessment Task relates to the following 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

**Group presentation**

**Due:** **From week 8 onwards**  
**Weighting:** 25%

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 an 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 and environmentalism; veganism; nuclear energy; perceptions of environmental crisis; mining; artificial meat; coal seam gas; pest management; fire management.

This Assessment Task relates to the following 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 analysing contemporary environmental issues from a variety of eco-philosophical standpoints in order to identify dilemmas and solutions.
- The ability to work as a team and present ethical solutions to contemporary environmental challenges.

Feedback on readings

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.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- 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 Wednesday nights from 6:30-9:30pm.
Unit guide GSE 800 Attitudes to the Environment

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.

GSE800 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25 Feb</td>
<td>Introduction: Social natures</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 March</td>
<td>Indigenous nature</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11 March</td>
<td>Western nature</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Reading feedback begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18 March</td>
<td>Anthropocentric environmentalism</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Short report due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>25 April</td>
<td>Biocentrism and animal rights</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 April</td>
<td>Ecocentrism and deep ecology</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Critical reflection due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MID-SEMESTER BREAK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>22 April</td>
<td>Ecofeminism</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>29 April</td>
<td>More-than-human</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Group presentations begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6 May</td>
<td>Neo-liberal natures</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>13 May</td>
<td>Changing attitudes to nature</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>20 May</td>
<td>The politics of environment</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>27 May</td>
<td>Environmental justice</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3 June</td>
<td>Future nature</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Eco-philosophy essay due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central. Students

https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/48594/unit_guide/print
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
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 Enquiry Service**

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

**Equity 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.
Graduate Capabilities

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 essay
• Group presentation
• Feedback on readings

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

Assessment tasks

• Eco-philosophy essay
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 analysing contemporary environmental issues from a variety of eco-philosophical standpoints in order to identify dilemmas and solutions.

**Assessment tasks**

- Short report
- Eco-philosophy 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 essay
- Group presentation
- Feedback on readings

**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

**Readings**

**Recommended texts**

Essential readings will be provided week by week – there is no set text for this course. The list below provides you with some starting points for engaging with the assessment tasks. For assessments you should reference academic books and journal articles - please note that wikipedia is not considered an authoritative source of knowledge for this unit. A good database for searching for journal articles is Scopus - available on the MQ library website.

**Books and collections**


**Articles**


