



PHILOSOPHY 2242F (570)
Philosophy of the Earth
Fall 2026

Instructor: M. Tait
Email: mtait8@uwo.ca

Course Information

Class Times: Tuesday, Thursday: 2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Calendar Description: This course considers contemporary environmental thought and how we understand the relation between humanity and the Earth. Topics include: climate change and justice, place and knowing, eco-affectivity and spirituality, and integral ecology. This course explores this question through world philosophical traditions including: East Asian Buddhist, Indigenous, and Western philosophy.

Prerequisite(s):

Antirequisite(s):

Extra Information: 3 hours

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category B

Subject Code: PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

King's University College
Philosophy 2242F
Philosophy of the Earth: Fall 2026

Course information:

Philosophy of the Earth, Phil 2242F 570
Instructor: Professor Morgan Tait
Contact Information: mtait8@uwo.ca
Office hours: Thursdays, 1:30 PM; location TBD

Course description:

This course is an introduction to the ethical, social and philosophical challenges posed by environmental philosophy in the age of the 'Anthropocene'. To begin, we will examine classic approaches to thinking about environmentalism and our relationship to the earth through a philosophical lens. We will then move on to a discussion of some of the most pressing and hotly contested environmental challenges of our time: what is the relation between ethics and activism? How should we respond to climate change? What is the role of economics, game theory, and new technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and social media? Should we be 'ecomodernists'? How do we reconcile 'planetary boundaries' with human 'development'? These and other 'wicked questions' will be examined throughout the course with an eye toward improving our facility and confidence in approaching some of the defining problems of the 21st century.

Course learning outcomes:

- i) To familiarize students with some of the most critical and consequential philosophical challenges associated with environmentalism;
- ii) To help develop students' critical and analytical skills, especially in reading and writing philosophy, and examining, critiquing, or defending their most cherished beliefs;
- iii) To provide students with the philosophical tools they need to grapple with outstanding contemporary problems related to the environment, especially as these are contested through a philosophical lens

Mode of Instruction:

We will proceed with an in-class lecture-discussion format. Students are encouraged to ask questions and participate in class discussion. It is expected that students complete the reading assignments indicated below to the best of their ability and participate fully in class discussion.

Course textbooks/materials:

- Students should have access to the internet and the ability to access the course website for the purpose of accessing course materials, posting in discussion threads, and answering polls.
- ***There are no required textbooks for this course.*** All necessary course materials can be accessed through the course OWL page at no additional cost.

Method of evaluation:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| ○ In-class participation: Lecture Polls | 10% |
| ○ Online discussion posts | 10% |
| ○ In-Class Midterm (Oct. 27th) | 25% |
| ○ Final Essay Proposal (Nov. 3 rd) | 5% |
| ○ Final Essay (Due Dec. 9 th) | 20% |
| ○ Final Exam (to be scheduled during December Exam Period) | 30% |

In-class Participation: Lecture Polls

10% of the final grade for the course will be based on participation in multiple-choice polls that will be posted within the course lectures and presented in class. Note that there is no 'right answer' for the polls; your grade is based on participation alone. Each poll question will be posed in the lecture slides for the course every week. You can answer the polls by accessing the 'Quizzes' folder under the 'Submit' tab on OWL, which will also show the due date and time for each quiz. *Polls can be answered any time **during the calendar week** associated with the lecture(s) in which they are posed; however, students are strongly encouraged to answer polls within the allotted class time. **Polls cannot be answered for credit after the period in which they are open on OWL.*** When answering a poll, select a multiple-choice answer (a, b, c, etc.). Your participation is pass-fail, and your grade will be calculated by taking the total number of quizzes answered divided by the total number of quizzes. Quiz results will be shared with the group after polling has finished for each round.

Discussion Posts:

Discussion Posts are a virtual participation element wherein students will be given the opportunity to respond in written form to difficult or controversial questions raised in class. This component will be graded for participation, and once again there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. The 10% grade for this element will be based on the number of posts completed, divided by the number assigned.

Essay Proposal and Final Essay:

The final paper assignment for this course will be divided into two stages. In the first, students will develop an essay proposal in consultation with the instructor, due on November 3rd. A list of potential essay topics will be provided, but students will also be given the opportunity to create their own essay topic if desired. The proposal will outline a thesis and argumentative strategy to be developed and defended in the final paper. More detailed instructions for this and other assignments will be provided on the course Brightspace page.

Final Exam:

The final exam will take place during the December examination period and will be written in person. The exam will consist of a mix of multiple-choice questions, plus a list of short answer questions. 6 short answer questions will be provided, from which you are expected to answer 3 of your choosing. You will be allowed a single cheat sheet, double sided, and the exam will be written by hand.

Academic Considerations:

- All assignments are due in the OWL Dropbox at 11:59 PM on the due date indicated. Late assignments are penalized 5%/day of the assignment's value per departmental policy. All written assignments will be turned in to TURNITIN at the instructor's discretion. Please consult the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) for more information.
- There will be two 'grace days' available to every student in the course. These can be applied to extend the due date with no penalty for any course deliverable. Students should indicate if they wish to use a grace day for any particular assignment.
- Note that the midterm test will require formal documentation for academic consideration.

Academic Integrity / Remote Proctoring:

- Link to Western Scholastic Discipline policy:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf
- Within this course, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT are permitted exclusively for information-gathering and preliminary research purposes, such as development of an essay outline or suggesting secondary sources pulled from online. Please be aware that these tools tend to 'hallucinate' (i.e., make things up!), and be sure to vet any suggestions for content made by GPT, Claude, and other AI text-generators. If AI tools are used, students must acknowledge use and state how the tool was used. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

- *Notice on Turnitin:* All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Schedule of Classes, Readings, Assessments:

**Please note that this schedule is tentative and subject to revision with prior notice. Note that all readings will be posted on the course website before the accompanying lectures.*

Sept. 10th:

Ethics and Environmentalism in the Anthropocene

Assigned Reading: *Environmental Ethics for Canadians: Introduction: Four Normative Theories*

Sept. 15th through 17th:

Environmental Philosophies: The Land Ethic, Indigenous Ethics, Confucian Ethics

Assigned Readings: *Environmental Ethics for Canadians: Introduction: Four Normative Theories (continued); Excerpts from The Sand County Almanac: 'The Land Ethic'; Untenable Origins: The Mystery of Reconciliation in Canada; Confucian Thought and China's Environmental Dilemmas*

Sept. 22nd through 24th:

Moral Standing for Humans, Non-Humans, and Ecosystems: Philosophical Tensions

Assigned Readings: *All Animals are Equal; Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce; The battle for the soul of biodiversity; Kill all the Mosquitos?!*

Sept. 29th through Oct. 1st:

Environmental Conflict: Political, Moral, and Economic

Assigned Readings: *In his own words: Captain Paul Watson; Headaches and Heartaches: The Elephant Management Dilemma; Natural Enemies: An Anatomy of Environmental Conflict*

Oct. 6th through Oct. 8th:

Capitalism and Environmentalism: Essential Tensions

Assigned Readings: *The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Profits; Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation*

Reading Week Oct. 10th through 18th

Oct. 20th through Oct. 22nd:

Moloch, Game Theory and the Tragedy of the Commons

Assigned Readings: *The Tragedy of the Commons*; *Living on a Lifeboat*; *Moloch: The Beauty Wars*; *The Tragedy of the Tragedy of the Commons*

Oct. 27th through Oct. 29th:

Planetary Boundaries and the Limits of Economic Analysis: Is Economics a Friend or Foe of Environmentalism?

Assigned Readings: *Cost-Benefit Analysis: An Ethical Critique*; *A Place for Cost-Benefit Analysis*; *The Value of the World's Ecosystem Services and Natural Capital*

November 3rd through Nov. 5th:

The Growth Paradigm and its Apparent Contradictions

Assigned Readings: *Can the Supply of Natural Resources Really be Infinite? Yes!*; *Steady State Economics: A New Paradigm*; *Dambisa Moyo: 'Economic Growth has Stalled. Let's fix it'*; *Taming the Greedocracy*

November 10th through Nov. 12th:

Ecomodernism and its Discontents

Assigned Readings: *Ecosystems and Human Wellbeing: Summary for Decision Makers*; *Excerpts from Enlightenment Now: 'The Environment'*; *A De-growth Response to an Ecomodernist manifesto*

November 17th through Nov. 19th:

Environmental Political Activism

Assigned Readings: *Environmental Political Activism*; *Local Ecocentric Democracy and Fossil Fuel Divestment*;

November 24th through Nov. 26th:

Surveillance Capitalism, AI, and Big Tech Through an Environmental Justice Lens

Assigned Readings: *Excerpts from Zuboff, S. 'The Age of Surveillance Capitalism'*; *A View from Everywhere, All the Time*; *Advancing Environmental Justice with AI?*

Dec. 1st through Dec. 3rd:

Sustainable Development, "Doughnut Economics" and Human Rights, Environmental Justice, and Climate Change

Assigned Readings: *A safe operating space for humanity; A doughnut for the Anthropocene: humanity's compass in the 21st century; Ethics, Public Policy and Global Warming; A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Corruption*

Dec. 8th: *Review for Final Exam*

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this assessment.
- If instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs. (For example, if students need to submit X of Y assignments, this flexibility already provides consideration.)
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the “Special Examination” (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a multiple exam situation (i.e., you are scheduled to write more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

Good2talk is an online and phone resource for students, available 24/7, with services in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

Western’s Mental Health Services site provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Social Worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see https://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

6. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. **Check with you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

7. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

8. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

9. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.