

SYLLABUS: PHILOSOPHY 260 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

TEXTS:

Supplement for Philosophy Seminar, Ralph Forsberg, **Technopoly**, Postman
Global Environmental Ethics, Pojman, **The Story of B**, Quinn

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

All of the topics and issues of the course will be treated using the techniques of critical thinking as outlined in your **Supplement**. The overall goal of the class is to treat the topics below using the Elements and Standards of Reasoning. The purpose here is to train you in the methods of critical thinking and analysis when analyzing the writings of others, formulating your own conclusions and defending them. Critical thinking is not just being critical, it is learning to think like a practitioner of the discipline your thinking addresses: for example, in this class you will learn to think like a philosopher examining the topic of "After 2000". The point and purpose of the entire class is to evaluate critically all sides of the issues involving our way of seeing ourselves in relation to the our environment, animals and plants, technology and science, as well as to examine the paradigm from which we view these things. We may even want to question this analytic paradigm itself as part of the course.

The focus of the course is the relationship between philosophy, ethics, our current paradigm (way of seeing the world), and the challenges we will face after the year 2000. The course begins with an examination of the current paradigm Western Culture and Science has adopted as the "correct" way to view the world and our place in it. Second will be the question of how to interpret the challenges of the future and whether we need to adopt a new paradigm, theory, or way of looking at the world to cope with these challenges. Is the current paradigm flawed? Will a new paradigm make a difference? What might such an alternate paradigm look like?

Third, we will examine various important and controversial current issues in these areas. The first step will be to place each issue in its factual and philosophical contexts. Next we will try to find the **philosophical** reasoning behind all sides of the issues, analyzing that reasoning for its strengths and weaknesses. Then you should come to some defensible personal conclusion about the issue. The purpose here is to penetrate the rhetoric and emotion that surround the issues using the methods of critical thinking, not merely to learn the views of others nor to focus on purely political or legal interpretations alone. Some examples of the issues here include:

1. Ethics and environmental thought in Western philosophy: How should we view nature?
2. Can profit and economics exist in harmony with ethical environmental policy?
3. Can the problems we face for the future be solved with a return to spiritual and aesthetic values of the past? With a new paradigm of Western/Eastern culture and science? Or is the current paradigm and science sufficient?
4. Is our current paradigm for viewing the world too anthropocentric or should it be more anthropocentric? More holistic?
5. Is Western culture's paradigm an example of excessive reliance upon technology, which has changed both the world and our own nature as human beings? Is the change for the better?
6. What are the negative and positive effects of our increasing reliance upon technology? How has this reliance altered society, our world view and other aspects of the way we think?

Finally, we will look at the book, The Story of B, which challenges the current way of looking at the world embraced by many world cultures (Eastern and Western). Quinn, in his novel, raises important issues and challenges to the way people look at the world and its future. Especially, he challenges Western notions of "the good life", the value of agriculture, and the relationship between humans and the earth as an ecological entity. Quinn's book questions the traditional paradigm based on humans as the center of ethics, ecology and value. We will read and question Quinn's assumptions and conclusions in order to try to come to our conclusions about his "proposals". This book is a real "step outside the box" from within which Western culture has looked at its relationship to the earth for thousands of years.

METHODS:

The course is a seminar, so lectures will be kept to a minimum, with the majority of class time revolving about student centered activities. As should be obvious, the success of this class is primarily your responsibility, as it always is in a seminar format. The primary responsibility you have is to do the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them, present summaries of them, and offer your own analyses of them. Some classes will be informal discussions of the readings, during which I will act as moderator, questioner, or devil's advocate. Other classes will be formal debates or group "problem-solving".

At other times the focus of the class will be an assignment to be completed during that class. These may be group projects or individual assignments, written or oral. Some will be collected, commented on, and sometimes graded. Such assignments may include analysis of films that present a point of view on the topics of the course, a case study, discussion of an issue, or a debate. There may be an ungraded written assignment to be turned in, a discussion, or group activity following some films.

The emphasis is on class interaction. The discussions allow you to practice philosophy rather than just read it. They train your mind in the techniques of sound critical analysis, and prepare you for the task of writing down your own opinions and justifications. The writing assignments help prepare you to discuss your views with others and serve as practice runs for graded papers. For this reason the discussions and class attendance are important: you are helping each other learn and do philosophical analysis. You have as much, if not more, to learn from each other as from me; I will assist you in learning but the primary job is yours as a group.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

80% = Short Papers, Exams, and Presentations

20% = Peer grades (10%) and class participation (10% - my evaluation)

The grading scale is: A = 93+, A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72; D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, E = -59. For peer grades, see **Supplement**.

The paper grades will be assigned in the following manner. I will read your paper twice, making comments and assigning the letter grade, then assign a numerical grade reflecting the letter grade. Suppose the letter grade is a B+. I would then assign a numerical grade that reflects the B+, the range of a B+ would be 87-89 (a B- = 80-82, a B = 83-86); if the paper is very close to the A- range, I would give it an 89, less close but still a high B would get an 88, a little less close would get an 87 (a solid B paper would get somewhere between 83-86, etc.). I will try to assign you the most points that I think the paper deserves. To compute your final grade you simply average the weighted **numerical** scores (note: a B+ is still in the B range, e.g. an 89 average is not the same as a 90.1 average). The standards below are the basis of my assigning your grade.

Grade Profiles

The Grade of E: E level work fails to display an understanding of the basic nature of philosophical thinking or of philosophical topics and issues. The work is vague, imprecise, and unreasoned - as much at the end of the course as at the beginning. There is little evidence that the student is genuinely engaged in the task of taking charge of his or her philosophical thinking. Many assignments seem to have been done with no thought or effort, the student simply going through the motions without putting any significant effort into thinking his or her way through the issues or assigned tasks. Consequently, the student is not analyzing philosophical issues clearly, not formulating philosophical information accurately, not distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, not identifying key philosophical assumptions, not clarifying key philosophical concepts, not identifying relevant philosophically competing points of view (or arguments), not reasoning carefully from clearly stated premises, nor tracing philosophical implications and consequences. The student's work does not display recognizable philosophical reasoning and analytic skills.

The Grade of D: D level work shows only a minimal level of understanding of what philosophical thinking

is, along with the development of some, but very limited, philosophical thinking skills or abilities. D work at the end of the course shows only occasional use of philosophical thinking skills, but frequent uncritical philosophical thinking. Most assignments are poorly done. There is some, but very little, evidence that the student is reasoning through the assignment. Often the student seems to have merely gone through the motions, carrying out the directions poorly or to a minimal level without getting into the spirit or depth of the assignment. D level work rarely shows any effort to take charge of ideas, assumptions, inferences, and intellectual processes. The student rarely analyzes philosophical issues clearly and precisely, almost never formulates philosophical information accurately, rarely distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, rarely recognizes key questionable assumptions, almost never clarifies key philosophical concepts effectively, frequently fails to use philosophical language in keeping with established professional usage, only rarely identifies relevant competing philosophical points of view (or arguments), and almost never reasons carefully from clearly stated premises, or recognizes important implications and consequences. D level work does not show good philosophical reasoning or grasp of philosophical information and frequently displays poor reasoning or little grasp of philosophical information.

The Grade of C: C level work illustrates some but inconsistent achievement in grasping what philosophical thinking is, along with the development of modest or average philosophical reasoning skills and grasp of philosophical information. C level work at the end of the semester shows some emerging philosophical thinking skills, but also some obvious weaknesses as well. Though some assignments are reasonably well done, others are poorly done, or mediocre at best. There are more than occasional lapses in reasoning. Though philosophical terms and distinctions are sometimes used effectively, they are sometimes used very ineffectively. Thinking lacks depth, even when displaying moderate levels of understanding and reasoning. Only on occasion does C level work display a mind taking charge of its own ideas, assumptions, inferences, and intellectual processes. Only occasionally does C level work display intellectual discipline and clarity. The level student only sometimes analyzes philosophical issues and arguments clearly and precisely, formulates philosophical information accurately, distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, recognizes key questionable assumptions, clarifies key philosophical concepts effectively, uses philosophical language in keeping with established professional usage, identifies relevant philosophical points of view (or arguments), and reasons carefully from clearly stated premises, or recognizes important philosophical implications and consequences. Sometimes the C student seems to simply go through the motions of the assignment, carrying out the instructions without depth or insight. On the whole, C level work shows modest or average philosophical reasoning and analytic skills, while sometimes displaying weak reasoning and analytic skills.

The Grade of B: B level work represents demonstrable achievement in grasping what philosophical thinking is, along with the clear demonstration of a range of specific philosophical thinking skills and abilities. B level work at the end of the semester is, on the whole, clear, precise, and well reasoned, though with occasional lapses into weak reasoning. Generally, philosophical terms and distinctions are used effectively. The work demonstrates a mind beginning to take charge of its own ideas, assumptions, inferences, and intellectual processes. The student often analyzes philosophical issues clearly and precisely, often formulates philosophical information accurately, usually distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, often recognizes key questionable assumptions, usually clarifies key philosophical concepts effectively, typically uses philosophical language in keeping with established professional usage, frequently identifies relevant philosophically competing points of view (and arguments), and shows a general tendency to reason carefully from clearly stated premises, as well as a noticeable sensitivity to important implications and consequences. B level work displays good philosophical reasoning and analytic skills. The weakness most often noted will be lack of great depth or breadth, though some of each may be shown.

The Grade of A: A level work demonstrates real achievement in grasping what philosophical thinking is, along with the clear development of a range of specific philosophical thinking skills or abilities. The work at the end of the course is, on the whole, clear, precise, and well reasoned, though with some lapses into weak reasoning. Philosophical terms and distinctions are used effectively. The work demonstrates a mind well into the task of taking charge of its own ideas, assumptions, inferences, and intellectual processes. The student often analyzes philosophical issues (and arguments) clearly and precisely, often

formulates philosophical information accurately, usually distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, often recognizes key questionable assumptions, usually clarifies key philosophical concepts effectively, typically uses philosophical language in keeping with established professional usage, frequently identifies relevant competing philosophical points of view (and arguments), and shows a general tendency to reason carefully from clearly stated premises, as well as a noticeable sensitivity to important implications and consequences. A level work displays excellent philosophical reasoning and analytic skills. The work is consistently at a high level of intellectual excellence. A level work also consistently displays great depth and breadth, as well as originality of thought.

UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

Philosophy relies on the practices of rational analysis, critical thinking, argument analysis, and argument formation or justification. While all of these may be done mentally or orally, they cannot be done as well as when combined with writing. Clear thinking and clear writing are necessary to each other; without the ability to state clearly your beliefs, positions, and reasoning there is little chance that you will be able to philosophize clearly. Because philosophy relies upon an exchange of ideas and criticisms in a search for the truth, the clearest and best way of working is to write and use what you write as a starting point for further thinking and discussion. Writing is the basis of thinking, verbal argument, and analysis; as a colleague once said when I asked her what she thought about a particular philosophical problem, "I won't know what I think until I finish writing it down."

Students are often intimidated by philosophy and hesitant to commit themselves orally in class, it's too much like going out on a limb, but with the time to think and record your thoughts there is some "hard copy" to fall back on when venturing out onto the limb. Thus, writing forces you to think about intimidating topics and serves as a foundation for almost every philosophical activity: to "have to" write down what you believe requires careful formulation of the belief itself. Even when you may not have time to write down your thoughts, the process of "thinking on your feet" is improved by previous written practice and trains your mind to think logically before writing down your thoughts. "Writing-to-learn" means more than learning to write.

You will be asked, very often, to do in-class and at-home writing assignments that will be ungraded, in fact, some may not even be collected. The purpose of these assignments is not to earn a grade, but to understand and retain the material, and develop clear patterns of thought. Having something written down means that you have thought about the material, formulated some clear opinions, and can at least read what you've written to the class, thus opening up discussion. Since writing is very much like other skills, the more you practice the better you get, so think of these assignments as practice papers for your graded assignments. After all, can you imagine a football coach just explaining to his team at last week's practice what to do on game day today, then letting them go home until the game? Surely they should practice executing what he has explained so they can play well during the real game. Writing works the same way because it too is a skill: your graded papers will benefit from the practice sessions just as the football players benefit from practices that don't count on their conference record.

The purpose of the writing is to help you understand and think about the course materials and issues. There is a good deal of evidence that people retain information more effectively, think more clearly, and understand things more thoroughly when they combine writing with their other thought processes. The concept behind the "W" class is to take advantage of this fact in order to help students learn and understand course materials. This process works at the time of the writing, not as a result of grading or even receiving comments by the instructor. Immediate feedback and comments are helpful and can be just as effective if given by other students individually or in groups. Therefore, the ungraded writing assignments need not be turned in, though some will be, to fulfill their purpose, namely, to help you learn and understand the course work.

POLICIES and STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

For each written essay assignment there will be a "Gateway Criteria" checklist or detailed assignment

sheet handed out. For each exam explicit instructions will be given. It is the STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to be aware of, understand and comply with directions and expectations relative to tests, exams, assignments, debates or group work.

Attendance will be taken and class participation will be noted. Both will be figured into your final average as explained in the section "Exams and Papers" above. The reason for this policy is simply that this is a discussion class in which you help each other learn, if you are not there or cannot participate when asked, you haven't helped anyone (least of all yourself). Philosophy in this class is a cooperative effort, to cooperate means you must be in class and prepared. Even if you feel you have mastered the material on your own, you do have an obligation to help others who may not have as easy a time learning on their own; share your abilities and knowledge and it will benefit you more than you might imagine. It is the STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to attend classes and meet specific class expectations and requirements. Students are responsible for, and must accept, any negative impacts or penalties due to missed classes, late arrival, late assignments, missed assignments, in class work, tests or examinations regardless of cause.

All work is expected to be done and handed in on the assigned due date. In class exams or essays must be taken on the day scheduled. Late penalties will apply at the rate of 5% off per week late. The due dates are absolute, barring serious illness. Printer problems, too many other assignments, and other such excuses are not sufficient. If you are absent the day of exams or due dates for papers, this is not an excuse and late penalties apply, unless serious illness can be shown. It is the STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to be aware of times, dates, places and policies set out in the syllabus or in class. Students must also accept the realities of given situations that require changes in schedules, plans, or policy and assist in making adjustments as smooth as possible. It is the STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITY to be in class when changes are made orally or passed out in print, OR to obtain such information if they are not in class for any reason.

All papers must be typed or produced on a computer. Handwritten papers or papers done on sheets torn from notebooks will not be accepted; this does not apply to take-home worksheets or in-class exams.

Ungraded assignments that are collected will be recorded. Missed assignments will count as an absence.

No exam scores will be dropped. No extra credit will be given. No rewrites will be allowed unless the assignment specifically included this option as part of the original instructions.

You are expected to purchase and use every text listed on page one. Assigned readings are expected to be done, even if we do not discuss them in class. Readings often form the background for discussions, debates and future exams, failure to keep up with the reading will hinder you in all these activities. Exams will include material from the assigned readings even if it has not been covered in class. It is the STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to generate personal interest in the course materials and ideas. This means students are expected to be self-motivating and to accept that some knowledge or learning is acquired only with effort on their part. It is the STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to clearly demonstrate and communicate their knowledge and skills. They must accept that in each class the instructor is the judge and arbiter of what is clear, relevant, appropriate and correct.

Courtesy in discussions and debate is expected. When someone is talking, do not interrupt. Raise your hand when you wish to comment and you will be called on as soon as possible, or else join the discussion when there is a pause. Listen to what others are saying before you try to respond. Do not talk privately to others while discussions or lectures are in progress. I may not correct you openly but I will take disruptive behavior into account when deciding class participation grades - being disruptive will count against you. It is the STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to act in an appropriate manner that is not disruptive to the learning and teaching process. This means to refrain from disruptive talking, eating, doing other work or other such behavior during lectures, discussions or other in class activities. Students who create problems regularly may be asked to leave the room for the remainder of the class period, in accordance

with Delta's disruptive student policy.

Incomplete grades will only be given if you have requested one, I will not turn in an incomplete if you have missing work; in such cases the missing work will be weighted and averaged at the discretion of the instructor (most often they will be averaged as a zero). Be aware that the completion rate is under 50%.

The student must understand that there may be times when the instructor will be occupied elsewhere for professional reasons (conferences, presentations, etc.) and cannot attend class. Under these circumstances prior arrangements will have been made for the class session (group work, film, library assignment, etc...) and students will be expected to attend the class. This will not happen often, however, if at all.

In the event of illness, bad weather or other such circumstances affecting the instructor every attempt to notify the secretary will be made if the class is canceled. The secretary will make every attempt to contact students and inform them of any cancellations. However, this may not always result in reaching every student, for which I apologize ahead of time. In the case of extreme weather, if you believe a class may be canceled, even if Delta College itself is open, IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to contact the secretary to confirm the status of the class meeting.

EXPLANATION OF PLAGIARISM:

Briefly, plagiarism is ***"Representing someone else's work as your own". This includes falsifying sources or quotations, purchasing of papers from outside suppliers, having someone else write your paper for you, or copying someone else's work without attribution, even if this is just a paraphrase of the other person's work.*** Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Most often it is unintentional and results from simply not recognizing when to cite a source or give credit to another for their contribution to your own paper. Some things that you should be aware of when deciding if you must cite a source or if a particular work of yours contains any plagiarized materials:

1. If you have either directly quoted or paraphrased an author or outside source, you must cite the source clearly, using an acceptable citation format. If there is any question in your mind that a source needs to be cited, **CITE IT!** There is no penalty for citing a source when unnecessary, but there is for not citing one when necessary. Take no chances.
2. Any material taken from or found on the Internet and used in your paper, whether directly quoted or paraphrased, must be cited according to the same rules outlined in #1 above. Material on the Internet is **NOT** there for public use without citation. The same rules that govern the use of printed or spoken material govern use of Internet material. When in doubt **CITE IT!**
3. Any paper that is completely copied from any source constitutes plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for the course. Even if this were not plagiarism, there is no paper for this class that is not supposed to be your own work and thought, therefore turning in someone else's work can never fulfill the assignment.
4. If you are quoting someone's spoken words (from an in class lecture, for example), be sure to cite this fact. Here you may simply write: "Oral lecture" or "Personal conversation" or some other appropriate description indicating that you are quoting someone's spoken words.

The penalties for plagiarism are up to the discretion of the instructor. If the plagiarism is the result of a simple error (typing, forgetting to include a footnote citation, unclear citation, etc...) and is not deemed to be intentional, the penalty may be slight. If the plagiarism is determined to be extensive, intentional, or the result of other forms of cheating, the penalty will be failure for the entire course. If an entire paper is copied, reproduced, downloaded, borrowed or otherwise taken from some outside source, this will mean an "E" for the class - there are no acceptable excuses for this action. Determination of the seriousness of the plagiarism is up to the instructor (see the Delta College Catalogue, p. 92, for details). Rulings are subject to the appeals process as outlined in the Delta Senate Handbook section 4.090.