

SATURDAY ENRICHMENT SPRING 2019

ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Instructor: Jordan Sherry-Wagner M.Ed.

Instructor Email: jsherr13@uw.edu

Loew Hall 117

Course Description

Taking up a central theme of environmental philosophy, this course builds alongside student interests as we work together to make sense of our roles, relationships, and responsibilities in the context of a changing ecological landscape. Through use of a range of play and story-based prompts, we will think together about ideas of justice, altruism, agency, interdependence, and more. In this course, children will identify and ask philosophical questions at the intersection of nature and culture while developing skills in reasoning, reflection, and respectful social interaction with others whose viewpoints may differ from their own. Although the practice of philosophy will remain at the foreground of this class, we will also move flexibly into more scientific areas to support our collective understandings. Appropriate for new and returning philosophers, this will be a space for collaborative investigation into increasingly relevant philosophical questions about our place in the natural world.

Essential Questions

- What is important for a good life?
- What does it mean for something to be alive?
- What is the nature of relationships with other living things?
- What are our/do we have obligations to other living things?
- What makes a good reason?
- What does it mean to know something? How do you know that you know?
- How can human decisions impact other living things?

Learning Outcomes

- What students will know:
 - Critical reflection can help us reach deeper understanding.
 - Collaborative inquiry is essential to meaningful knowledge.
 - Everyone is capable of meaningful questioning and participation in dialogue.
- What students will understand:
 - How human decisions might impact complex ecological systems.
 - There is seldom one “right answer” to a philosophical question.
- What students will be able to do:
 - Pose environmental questions at the borders of philosophy/science and nature/culture.
 - Be respectful and reflective listeners.
 - Provide logical justifications for their viewpoints.

Instructional Strategies

Most classes will begin with an activity, story, or other prompt designed to stimulate curiosity about a topic of philosophical interest. Following this introduction, students are asked to share questions that come up for them as they reflect on the prompt. The class will then collectively identify a handful of particularly interesting questions and we will spend the bulk of the session discussing them. Near the end of the class, we will reflect on our discussion and identify potential conclusions that have been drawn, as well as lingering questions for future discussion. Overall, this class operates on the belief that philosophy is not a knowledge set to be passed on, but a collaborative practice of thinking deeply and exploring ideas together through collaborative dialogue. As such, there are no rigid learning goals set by the instructor. Students are invited to take up topics in ways that are most meaningful to them, though they are encouraged to articulate how their questions and insights are connected to previous topics. Because of this focus on guided instruction, the schedule and activities listed here are subject to change based on students' interests and the instructor's discretion.

Student Assessment

There is no formal assessment for this course.

Resources and Materials

There are no required materials for this course, however students are welcome to bring a notebook and writing utensil to class.

Tentative Course Schedule

(Please note that there will be no classes April 20th and May 25th)

Date	Topic(s)	In-Class Activities
April 6	Introductions and Norms	What is a philosophical question? What do you wonder?
April 13	Wondering about Reality	How do I know I'm not dreaming? The "problem" of other people
April 27	Wondering about Reasons	Guess the claim: What's your reason? Two truths and a lie
May 4	Wondering about Power	Very good to very bad (and why?) Ring of Gyges / Trolley Problem
May 11	Wondering about the Environment	What is alive? <i>The Lorax</i>
May 18	Wondering about Perspective	Robin Hood: Hero and/or Thief? <i>The Giving Tree</i>
June 1	Wondering about Childhood	What's it like to be an adult? What does it mean to like to grow up?
June 8	Wrapping up and lingering questions	Student choice <i>Oh the Places You'll Go</i>