



PHI 135: Introduction to the Philosophy of Science

A Historical Introduction to and Philosophical Analysis of Explanation and Causation

Centre College
Tahoe Semester
Spring 2022
3 Credits

Faculty Information

David Williams, Ph.D.
Professor of Philosophy

Electronic Syllabus Policy:

The official form of this syllabus is that of a shared Google document. No paper copies will be distributed. (You may, of course, print a copy for yourself if you wish.) Our tentative schedule may adapt to various conditions throughout the semester, and this online document will be updated periodically to reflect such changes. You should always assume that the *authoritative* version of the syllabus is the most *current* version shared in Google Drive.

Credit Hour Policy

To meet the identified course learning outcomes of this course, the expectations are that this 3-credit course, delivered over a 15-week term will approximate 3 hours per week of classroom or direct faculty instruction. In addition, out-of-class student work will approximate a minimum of 6 hours each week.

Purpose Statement of Centre College

Centre College is a small, independent, and selective educational community dedicated to study in the liberal arts as a means to develop the intellectual, personal, and moral potential of its students. Centre nurtures in its students the ability to think logically and critically, to work creatively, to analyze and compare values, and to write and speak with clarity and grace. It acquaints students with the range of accomplishments of the human mind and spirit in a variety of arts and theoretical disciplines. It enables students to choose and fulfill significant responsibilities in society. In short, Centre's highest priority is to prepare its students for lives of learning, leadership, and service.

A long and rich tradition of tolerance, freedom of enquiry, and community informs all aspects of college life. Centre accomplishes its goals in an atmosphere of caring and respectful relationships among faculty, students, and staff, aided by its broadly conceived, nonsectarian, Judeo-Christian heritage. This tradition commits Centre to a belief in the unconditional value of each human being, to an appreciation of the differences among people, and to a recognition of the close connection between responsible self-development and community well-being.

Course Description

This course is a philosophical inquiry into the origins of Western science. Analyzing the primary sources of the tradition reveals how philosophers from ancient Greece through the Scientific Revolution have interacted with and defined the practice of science.

Principle Learning Objectives and Outcomes

<i>Student Learning Outcome</i>	<i>IDEA Objective</i>	<i>Assignments Used to Assess</i>
Each student will be able to <i>understand</i> specific systems of philosophical thought and the implications of those systems for the 21st century.	Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories)	2,3
Each student will be able to <i>analyze</i> and <i>evaluate</i> the arguments and positions that support particular views in the central areas of philosophy.	Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view	1,2,3
Each student will <i>develop</i> their own ability to make and <i>evaluate</i> moral decisions.	Developing ethical reasoning and/or ethical decision making	2

Required Texts (in order of use)

Curd, P. (Ed.) *A Presocratics Reader: Selected Fragments and Testomina* (Hackett)
 ISBN:978-1-60384-305-8
 Plato. Five Dialogues (Second Edition) *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo* (Hackett)
 ISBN: 978-0-87220-633-5
 Aristotle. *Introductory Readings* (Hackett) ISBN: 0872203395
 Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett) ISBN: 0872201929
 Plumwood, V. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Routledge) ISBN-10: 041506810X
 Menand, L. *Pragmatism: A Reader* (Vintage) ISBN: 0679775447

Grading and Attendance

In accordance with university policy, grades are designed to reflect a student's performance as follows:

“A” work - Outstanding

“Above and beyond the requirements of the assignment; outstanding effort, significant achievement, and personal improvement are clearly evident. Some measure of remarkable skill, creativity, or energy is also evident.”

“B” work – Above Average

“Fulfills all aspects of the assignment and goes a bit beyond minimum competence to demonstrate extra effort, extra achievement or extra improvement.”

“C” work - Average

“Fulfills all aspects of the assignment with obvious competence and grace. Assignments are completed exactly as assigned.”

“D” work – Below Average

“Below average either because some aspect of the assignment has not been fulfilled or because a preponderance of errors (more than one or two per page) interferes with clear communication. A “D” may also indicate failure to follow directions, failure to follow specific recommendations, or failure to demonstrate personal effort and improvement.”

“F” work – Not Acceptable

“Not acceptable, either because the student did not complete the assignment as directed, or because the level of performance is below an acceptable level for college work.”

Grading scale for the course:

93-100=A	87-89=B+	77-79=C+	67-69=D+	0-59=F
90-92=A-	83-86=B	73-76=C	63-66=D	
	80-82=B-	70-72=C-	60-62=D-	

The final grade will be determined on the basis of the following assignments:

1. **Class Participation:** The nature of this class is such that its success depends on the active participation of each student. Thus, 10% of the final grade will be determined by participation in class sessions. Your participation will be evaluated using the following rubric:

“A” level participation indicates that the student comes to class prepared, contributes voluntarily and actively to class discussion without dominating it and makes thoughtful comments that show interest in the views of others while advancing the conversation.

“B” level participation indicates that the student comes to class prepared, makes thoughtful comments when called upon (but occasionally contributes without prompting), and respects the views of others by making comments that advance the conversation (though these comments may be less cogent and well-developed than the “A” level).

“C” level participation indicates that the student comes to class prepared, but does not voluntarily contribute and gives only minimal answers when called upon. This student has, however, shown interest in the discussion, actively listened and taken notes.

“D” level participation indicates that the student has either talked too much by making rambling, tangential comments, or not all because they have not read the material.

“F” level participation indicates that the student has been disruptive by radiating negativity via hostile or bored body language or overt rudeness in respecting the views of others.

2. Text Argument Summaries: At each course meeting you will have the opportunity to submit a Text Argument Summary (TAS) (or summaries) on the text(s) assigned for that week. You will use the TAS form to submit a brief typed statement that indicates the key terms, central arguments, thesis, and your questions for the reading presently under discussion. Your final score for this grade category will be calculated out of 90% of the total points possible. For example, if there are 15 opportunities to submit a TAS with each being worth up to 10 points, then grades for this assignment category will be calculated out of 140 possible points (you cannot earn more than 140 points). Hence, a score of 130 points would be necessary to earn a grade of "A" in this assignment category (i.e., 130 = 93% of 140 possible points). The window of opportunity for submitting a Text Argument Summary on the reading under consideration is closed at the start of class on the day during which that reading will be discussed. **NO EXCEPTIONS TO THE AFOREMENTIONED WILL BE PERMITTED.** You will submit an electronic copy prior to the start of class and bring a printed copy to each class meeting. The due dates for submitting Text Argument Summaries are indicated on the syllabus by "TAS".

Problem: What is the basic problem being addressed by the author? State this as a single sentence question.

Fundamental Points: What are three fundamental points made by the author?

Central Thesis: How do the three fundamental points you discovered combine to form an overall argument?

Questions: What questions does the reading raise for you? What seems problematic? If you could sit down with the author, what questions would you have?

Application: Assume that the author's arguments are good ones (they may not be). How would these arguments impact how you live?

Please consult the end of the syllabus for more guidance on how to write this assignment. *

3. Plenary Text Synthesis: You will be required to compose a paragraph (250-300 words) that explores the relationship between the texts we are considering in PHIL 1XX and the ideas discussed in the Plenary sessions. The due dates for submitting each Plenary Text Synthesis are indicated on the syllabus by "PTS".

4. Final Paper: An 10-12 page double-spaced essay will be required that deals with a specific topic of your choosing.

Your final course grade will be comprised of the following:

Class Attendance/Participation 10%

Text Analysis Submission 35%

Plenary Text Synthesis 25%

Final Paper 30%

Make-Up Work Policy

Extensions on assignment due dates will be granted automatically for cases of documented illness or family emergency. In all other cases, students must petition faculty for an extension for the petition to be approved. If no extension is granted, late assignments will be graded as zeros.

Incomplete Policy

Students who wish to receive an Incomplete "I" grade for this course in order to complete assignments after the conclusion of the semester must be granted a petition. A full rationale for the requested Incomplete grade must be provided by the student. If an Incomplete grade is not granted, then a failing "F" grade will be entered.

Assignment Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment
The Origins of Western Science		
Tu 2/7		Weil: <i>The Iliad, Poem of Might</i> (TAS)
Th 2/9		Presocratics: Thales (TAS)
Tu 2/14		Presocratics: Pythagoras (TAS)
Th 2/16	The Problem of Change Part I	Presocratics: Heraclitus (TAS)
Winter Trek: 2/20 - 24		
Tu 2/28	The Problem of Change Part II	Presocratics: Parmenides (TAS)
The Triumph of Teleology		
Th 3/2		Plato: <i>Meno</i> (TAS)
Tu 3/7		Plato: <i>Phaedo</i> (PTS)
Th 3/9		Aristotle: <i>Physics</i> Book II (TAS)
Tu 3/14		Aristotle: <i>Posterior Analytics</i> Book I (TAS)
Th 3/16		Aristotle: <i>Parts of Animals</i> Books I and II.1 (PTS)
Tu 3/21	Spring Break	
Th 3/23	Spring Break	
The Rejection of Teleology and Modernity		

Oceans and Coastal Processes: Morro Bay Excursion 3/28 - 4/1		
Tu 3/28		Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> One and Two (TAS)
Th 3/30		Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> Three and Four (TAS)
Tu 4/4		Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> Five and Six (PTS)
A Feminist Critique of Science		
Th 4/6		Plumwood: <i>Feminism and the Mastery of Nature</i> 1 - 68 (TAS)
Tu 4/11		Plumwood: <i>Feminism and the Mastery of Nature</i> 69 - 140 (TAS)
Th 4/13		Plumwood: <i>Feminism and the Mastery of Nature</i> 140 - 196 (TAS)
Pragmatism and Science		
Tu 4/18		Emerson: <i>Circles</i> and <i>The American Scholar</i> (TAS)
Th 4/20		Peirce: <i>Some Consequences of Four Incapacities</i> and <i>The Fixation of Belief</i> (TAS)
Rivers and Glacial Processes: Yosemite National Park Excursion 4/24 - 4/28		
T 4/25		James: <i>The Will to Believe</i> and <i>A Pluralistic Universe</i> (TAS)
Th 4/27		Rorty: <i>Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism</i> (PTS)
Tu 5/2		Paper Consultations
Th 5/4		Paper Consultations
Mo 5/8		Final Paper Rough Draft Due
Th 5/11		Final Paper Due

The instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule to meet the specific needs and pace of the class. Any changes will be announced prior to going into effect.

***Text Argument Summary Guidance**

Try reading the text several times over, each reading progressing to a more focused and detailed study. An alternative to this is carefully reading the text once. This alternative might work very well for many of you. Personally, I find that, especially in the case of difficult texts, an initial “skim” followed by a second, more detail-oriented, run through the text improves comprehension and makes the text seem less daunting. In this read, it is important to not worry about trying to memorize what the author is trying to say or even trying to understand what the author is trying to say if it is not immediately clear. You should feel perfectly justified in skipping whole sentences and even whole paragraphs. You should stop reading the author when you stop understanding the author and proceed to the next word/sentence/paragraph that DOES seem to make sense to you. The point of this is that at the end of the reading you should know the topic, general flow, and maybe even have a vague guess at the central thesis. Following this skim reading, you should return to the text in search of greater detail and to see what the specific topic, specific flow, and specific thesis really were. You may want to have a pencil in hand as you do this reading so you can mark what you think is the “key” sentence in EACH paragraph. (Ideally, the author has limited each paragraph to one main idea.) After this, you may want to reread the underlined sentences, marking the one that you believe is a clear statement of the author’s thesis (i.e. what the author is ultimately arguing for) and also marking three you believe to be clear statements of three fundamental points. You may also want to circle any key terms you find in these sentences. With this sort of notation, much of the Text Argument Summary work is already done immediately after you read the text.

1. **Problem:** State, in a single sentence question, what you take to be the main problem that that the author is addressing. Why was this written? What is Plato trying to accomplish in this section of the argument?
2. **Three Fundamental Points:** You will most likely need three sentences of your own words (you need not quote the text) to explain each fundamental point: one sentence clearly and concisely states the point, another sentence elaborates/explains further the point (perhaps by explaining how the author argues for the point), and a final sentence explains why the point is fundamental to the author’s argument.
3. **Central Thesis:** In this approach, one sentence clearly and concisely states the central thesis, while the other sentence explains how the author argues for the thesis. ***This section should not simply repeat the fundamental points, but explain how the fundamental points fit together.***
4. **Questions:** Questions might ask for clarification about the text’s content or they might suggest an initial critique of the author’s argument or they might suggest connections between ideas we have previously discussed or they might assume a variety of other forms so long as they are sincere and pertain to the reading.

5. **Application:** Assume that the section of text presents a cogent argument (the argument may or may not be valid). How would it change the way you live if it were correct?

Please use the following format:

Text:	Date:
Problem: What is the basic problem being addressed by the author? Please state your answer as a single sentence question.	
Fundamental Points: State in your own words the three key points of what you take to be the overall argument (do not use quotes, but give page references from the text to support your claims). Each point will require around 2-3 sentences.	
Central Thesis: State in two sentences how the three fundamental points listed above combine to form a single argument.	

Questions: What questions do you have?

Application: Assume that the author's arguments are good ones (though they may not be). How would these arguments impact how you live?

The instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule to meet the specific needs and pace of the class. Any changes will be announced prior to going into effect.



Instructor: Scott Valentine, Ph.D.
E-mail: valentine@tcc.edu

ENS 226 Introduction to Earth Science

This course will provide students with an introduction to the earth sciences. Students will explore areas from the California coast to Yosemite and the deserts beyond, all while living and studying along the shores of Lake Tahoe. Students will investigate the relationships between the geosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere while also developing scientific skills pertinent to modern society.

This lecture and lab course can be used to satisfy the science general education requirement for physical science.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course will give you an opportunity to learn how to evaluate complex situations and use scientific and moral reasoning to make decisions based on observations and evidence.

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Analyze landforms and natural processes based on scientific observations.
2. Communicate scientific principles and processes effectively.
3. Apply scientific principles and critical thinking skills to identify issues, understand relationships, and solve problems.
4. Evaluate course concepts and the role of science in local and global contexts.

Instructor Contact

I will make myself available to you before and after class, but email is the best way to contact me. We can also set up a time to chat over the phone or via zoom if that works better for you.

Scott Valentine: valentine@tcc.edu

Grading

Grades are a measure of effort...and how you ultimately apply what you have learned. Please use the scale below to see how you will be evaluated.

Quizzes (10): 100pts

Assignments (10): 200pts
 Term Project*: 100pts
Total: 400pts

*The Term Project will consist of a paper and a presentation related to our course studies and will be explained in more detail at a later date.

Textbook/Study Materials

As an instructor, I am committed to lowering the cost of education for my students. There is so much free information readily available via the internet, that forcing students to buy a textbook seems overly harsh. We will use [Jeremy Patrich's free online text](#) for this course.

You will likely supplement your learning with online resources beyond this text. The issue however, is that anything can be published on the internet without review or oversight, and the majority of information obtained from the internet is more opinion than fact. You will have to become critical consumers of information. When collecting information for this course (be it from the library, the internet, newspapers, television, etc.), you will need to be able to identify credible and academic sources of information.

Course Schedule

Date	Reading	Topic	Assignments
Fr 2/3	Ch 1	Science and Geography	Location and Map Skills
Fr 2/10	Ch 5	Space, Place, and Time	Geologic Mapping
Fr 2/17	Ch 3	Geologic Time	Relative Dating
2/20-24	Winter Trek		
Fr 3/3	Ch 13	Earth's Tectonic Forces	Plate Boundary Maps
Fr 3/10	Ch 14 & 15	Geology of Lake Tahoe	Landscape Feature Identification
Fr 3/17	Ch 12	Weathering, Erosion, and Deposition	Field Observations
3/18-26	Spring Break		
Fr 3/31	Ch 6	Weather	Data Interpretation
4/3-7	Ch 16	Oceans and Coastal Processes: Morro Bay Excursion	
Fr 4/14	Ch 7	Climate Processes	Climate Maps
4/20-23	Ch 19	Glacial Processes: Yosemite National Park Excursion	
Fr 4/28	Ch 17	River and Wind Processes	Field Excursion

Fr 5/5	Ch 18	Lake Tahoe Issues and Management	Field Excursion
Fr 5/12	Term Project Presentations		

Course Time, Lab/Field Time, & Assignments

This Lecture/Lab course is scheduled to have 3 hours of lecture and 3 hours of lab per week. Some lab activities will be conducted on site, whereas others will be conducted in the field. Many of our lab activities will be scheduled during our longer field excursions (meaning, we might not have a lab activity every week). Please be flexible as we work out the logistics for these overnight field excursions.

Assignments are worth 20 points each. There will be 10 course assignments that coincide with lecture topics. In general, assignments are related to weekly lecture topics and involve making observations, collecting data, and arriving at logical conclusions based on evidence. Students will keep a field journal, use critical thinking to answer essay questions, work with maps, specimens, and be able to interpret tabular and graphical data. Weekly assignment topics are listed on the course schedule found on the previous page.

Extra Credit

No one likes doing extra work. You don't like doing it and I don't like grading it. If you are reading the modules and keeping up with the class you won't have an issue, but I understand that life happens and you may accidentally miss an assignment. Please contact me about being able to make up some points (up to 25) by writing a 300-500 word paper on a specific (Earth Science-related) topic.

An Important Message From Your Instructor

My Commitment to You

I will do my best to respond to your comments, emails, and course assignments in a timely manner. Please don't expect me to check emails over the weekend, but during the week I will respond within 48 hours. I will also communicate my expectations and provide weekly feedback on your assignments.

Your Commitment to Me

This course is based on interactive teaching, learning, and communication. To acquire knowledge and build skills, you are expected to:

- Read and become familiar with the course syllabus and the faculty's expectations.
- Keep up with assignments and readings.
- Ask for clarifications about material or course expectations.
- Analyze assigned readings and provide thoughtful responses on assignments.

You are a member of a scholarly community. The benefits of this community come in many forms, such as critical dialogue with faculty, collaborative learning with peers and access to academic support resources.

While faculty and staff are here to facilitate this experience, you are expected to play an active role in your scholarly journey, and I expect that you take ownership of your actions so that you can succeed.

Tolerance and Diversity

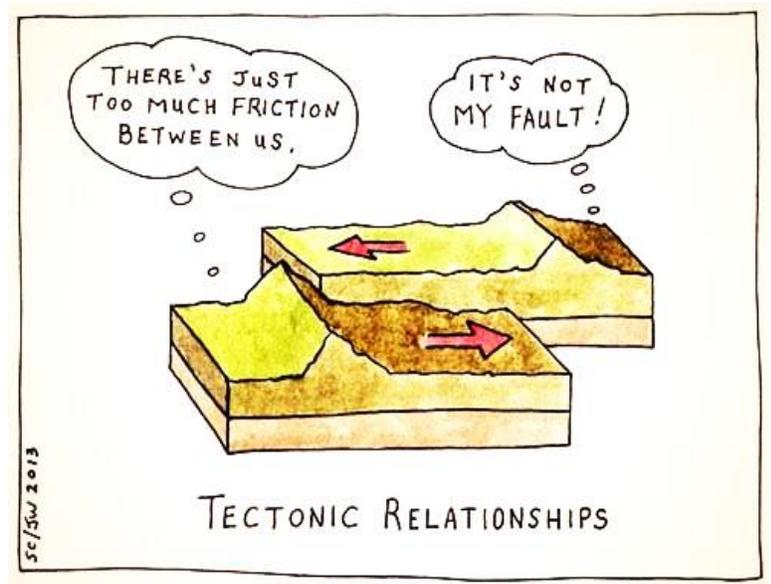
I promote a positive learning environment and culture based on open-mindedness, critical thinking, inclusion, tolerance, equity, and respect. Free speech is at the core of higher education, but I will not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, or any other forms of discriminatory language or behavior. Hate speech and other such language or behavior, will result in disciplinary action.

Dishonesty and Plagiarism

Using any method other than your own honest efforts to complete and earn grades for exams, quizzes, or assignments, using another's language, work, or ideas without giving proper credit to the original source, or assisting another student to commit any of the aforementioned infractions is grounds for disciplinary action. Students will receive a zero on any assignment where dishonesty or plagiarism has been identified. Offences may also result in further disciplinary action.

Course Content

Many observations are open to interpretation. As a result, course content can be controversial at times. Course topics are rooted in physical processes and theories that are observable and measurable through current scientific methods. Science changes as new observations are made. What we teach today may be upended or revised by the science of the future. There is great power in our ability to reflect, review, and continually revise and grow our thinking. This is the glory of science. I am very open-minded and realize that many people have different philosophical beliefs and scientific interpretations. While some of these types of discussions may not always be appropriate for class, I encourage you to speak with me if you have questions about course content.





**Religion and Nature
REL 245**

Instructor: Aron Tillema
E-mail: amtillema@ucdavis.edu

Course Description: Studying religion takes us to the heart of culture and the core of human values. Every society is shaped by religious practices, including ours. Religion thus shapes one's understanding of the environment. Yet at the same time, the environment also shapes one's religious sensibilities. This course will provide students a grounding in theoretical texts from religious studies and the social sciences to examine how religious traditions shape and are shaped by nature and their environment. We will closely read sacred texts from religions as diverse as Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Indigenous religions, and new religious movements, and ask which texts take precedence over others when thinking about the environment. We will investigate the close relationship religion consistently has to place and what this might mean for broader understandings of how communities relate to their environment. Finally, we will reflect on how religions change to meet new problems, the relationship between society's parallel treatment of the environment and women and ecofeminist responses, and how religious systems square new ethical systems with ancient texts that possess their own values and concerns.

Learning Goals and Outcomes:

By the end of this course students will:

1. Read and theorize alongside major theorists of religion such as Emile Durkheim, J.Z. Smith, and Rosemary Radford Ruether.
2. Gain familiarity with sacred texts from several religious traditions such as the Hebrew Bible, the Purusha Sukta, the Qur'an and Hadith, and Papal Encyclicals.
3. Identify several examples of how religions understand nature and how this translates to political issues, aesthetic sensibilities, and more.
4. Argue for the appropriate tools to reduce, prevent, and/or resolve environmental conflict by understanding how religions function.
5. Learn how to create an argument and support it with evidence from course material and the student's own experience.

What To Expect:

This 3-hour course meets weekly and is primarily a lecture and discussion format, with lecture accounting for the first two-thirds of the class and discussion in the final third. We will also spend time thinking through the material together during the three excursions (winter backpacking, Morro Bay, Yosemite) throughout the semester as well as a few of the field trips that tie into the course very well like the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center & Museum. There is also the occasional piece of media we watch together (e.g. the documentary *In the Light of Reverence* and an audio clip from Jonestown).

I grade through a combination of formal papers (3 of them) and participation. The first paper asks students to analyze some examples of nature they find. They can be anything from artwork to their own experience. Most of all, it provides students a chance to ask themselves what they think nature is (and is not) at the beginning of the class. Students also share their examples with one another and justify why they chose it. The second paper returns to what the students wrote for the first, and asks them to analyze it through one of the many theoretical lenses we have acquired during the semester. To what extent do these theories illuminate aspects we may have missed? To what extent do we see that this or that theory misses something that we found important and why might that be? The third and final paper (consisting of the “final exam”) has two parts. The first is a list of key terms and ideas we have discussed throughout the semester. The second part is a roundtable discussion on a popular piece of art (broadly conceived) where students are required to consider it in light of the key terms and ideas.

Participation has two parts as well. The first is the more traditional question of the quantity and quality of the student's interaction in class with the readings and their peers. The second piece is an online form that asks students to ask at least two questions of the week's readings in order to gauge interest, see what the student's peers are writing, and ensure that students read. I often start class with one of these questions.

Grading Criteria:

28% Paper 1 (1-2 pages)

28% Paper 2 (3-5 pages)

28% Paper 3 (4-6 pages)

16% Participation and Weekly Reading Questions

Class Participation and Weekly Reading Questions (16% of Total Grade)

Attendance is mandatory for all lectures, though I will not take formal attendance and I don't need doctors' notes or explanations for classes you missed. However, you are expected to come to every class, and missing classes has consequences: you can't do well unless you show up and participate. In addition to attendance, full participation in the course involves carefully reading through the week's readings and coming to class able to discuss them. Your participation in the class determines how successful it will be.

If you are struggling with attendance because of ongoing, serious health or personal issues, please come speak to me as soon as you can and we will work together to figure out what to do. I cannot help you if you just stop coming to class and don't ask for help until the end of the semester!

You are responsible for notes, instructions, or announcements from the classes you missed, so please make sure you have at least two other students in the class whom you can ask to borrow notes.

Each week you will submit two reading questions centered on the readings each week online by the end of the week. You can choose any of the readings to ask questions of. Be sure to ask questions that find the balance of something that interests you and somehow related to the

reading. I will anonymously address some of the questions each week at the beginning of class. Undoubtedly, your fellow students will likely have similar questions. These constitute a significant portion of your grade so please be prompt in your submissions. I will be reading each and every one of them!

Paper One (1-2 pages, 28% of Total Grade)

Describe a religious experience you've seen in literature, art, or for yourself that occurred in nature. If you are providing an example from your own experience, remember that we are using open definitions of religion from our class so they need not be within the confines of the "traditional religions" we've discussed.

Paper Two (3-5 pages, 28% of Total Grade)

Use the tools from the class so far to analyze a religious experience from Paper One or choose another. Rather than attempt to analyze every aspect of the experience, focus on a particular issue you are interested in. For example, analyze an aspect of a ritual or idea from the perspective of Durkheim or Douglas. Take the approach as far as you can, but note the limits of it as well.

Paper Three (4-6 pages, 28% of Total Grade)

Students will construct their own argument based on course readings and their own research. We will vote on a piece of art (broadly conceived) and view it together. More details of the third paper will be discussed mid-semester.

Late Submissions

Apart from legitimate emergencies, late work will be accepted with a grade deduction.

**Tentative* Course Schedule*

Unit 1: Studying Religion and Nature

Week 1 (2/7) – What is Religion? How do we study it academically? What is Religious Studies?

Handout on "Definitions of Religion"

Handout on "Theological vs. Academic Statements on Religion"

Handout on "Problems of Evolutionary Models of Religion"

Introducing Emile Durkheim's *Elementary Forms*

Week 2 (2/14) – What do we mean when we talk about Nature and what does it have to do with Religion?

Mary Douglas, Selections from *Purity and Danger*

Belden Lane, "Giving Voice to Place: Three Models for Understanding American Sacred Space," in *Landscapes of the Sacred*, 38–61.

(Optional) Jenkins, Willis, and Christopher Key Chapple. "Religion and Environment." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 36, no. 1 (2011): 441–463.

Week 3 (2/21) – Winter Trek Week

Teff-Seker, Yael, Daniel E Orenstein, and Leah Gibbs. “The ‘Desert Experience’: Evaluating the Cultural Ecosystem Services of Drylands through Walking and Focusing.” *People and Nature* (Hoboken, N.J.) 1.2 (2019): 234–248.

Week 4 (2/28) – Narratives of Religious Experiences in Nature/Pilgrimage

Holt, John. “Pilgrimage and The Structure of Sinhalese Buddhism”; 1982.

Selections from Kimmerer’s (Potawatomi) *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge*

Selections from Malcolm X’s Letter on his Pilgrimage to Mecca

Unit 2: Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism... Or Something Else?

Week 5 (3/7) – Christianity and Crisis, or The Lynn White Thesis

Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of the Current Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155 (1967), 1203–1207.

Jenkins, Willis. “After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems.” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 37, no. 2 (2009): 283–309. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40378046>.

To be read in class:

Genesis 1-3

Psalm 8

Selections from *Laudato Si’*

(Optional) Hunter Jr, M.L., Redford, K.H., and Lindenmaryer, D.B. (2014). The complementary niches of anthropocentric and biocentric conversationists. *Conservation Biology*, 28(3), 641-645.

Week 6 (3/14) – What role do sacred texts really play in religious communities and their perception of the environment? When do they matter?

Read *One* Chapter of “Part IV. Jonah the Angry Prophet” in *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings* by Robert Gregg. Come prepared to present a bit on it.

To be read in class:

Jonah 1-4 (Judaism/Christianity)

Psalm 104 (Judaism/Christianity)

Surah Anbiya (Islam)

Purusha Sukta (Hinduism)

Michaels, J. L., Hao, F., Smirnov, J., & Kulkarni, I. (2020). Beyond stewardship and dominion? Towards a social psychological explanation of the relationship between religious attitudes and environmental concern. *Environmental Politics*, 1-22.

SPRING BREAK – 3/21-3/27

MORRO BAY – 3/28-4/1

Week 7 (4/4) – How do religions adapt (or not) to new problems?

Selections from *Cave Rock: Climbers, Courts, and a Washoe Indian Sacred Place* by Matthew and Michael Makley

Washoe Tribal Booklet (2009, 2021)

[Appeals court backs climbing ban at sacred site](#) News Article

(Optional) Urban, Hugh B. “Fair Game: Secrecy, Security, and the Church of Scientology in Cold War America.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74, no. 2 (2006): 356–89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4094037>.

To be watched in class:
Documentary “Altar of Fire”

Unit 3: Non-Dominant Religions and their Approaches to Nature

Week 8 (4/11) – North American Indigenous Understandings of Nature

Nadasdy, Paul. “Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism.” *Ethnohistory* 52.2 (2005): 291–331.

Selections from *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community* by John Grim

“Indigenous Environmental Perspectives: A North American Primer” in *Native American Voices: A Reader* by Winona LaDuke (Ojibwe Nation)

Watch documentary *In the Light of Reverence* (Lakota, Hopi, Wintu) **[IN CLASS]**

Week 9 (4/18) – Religion, Nature, and Gender

Selections from *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* by Anne McClintock

Chapters 1-2 from *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* by Rosemary Radford Ruether

Harris, Melanie L. “Ecowomanism: An Introduction.” *Worldviews* 20, no. 1 (2016): 5–14. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26552243>.

Hugh Urban, “Wicca and Neopaganism: Magic, Feminism, and Environmentalism,” in *New Age, Neopagan, and New Religious Movements: Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America* (University of California, 2015): 157–178.

Unit 4 – Religion and Animals

Week 10 (4/25) – What are animals and how do they function in religious systems?

Harrison, Peter. “Descartes on Animals.” *The Philosophical Quarterly* (1950-) 42, no. 167 (1992): 219–27.

Selections from Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* on Sacrifice

Reed, Annette. “From Sacrifice to the Slaughterhouse: Ancient and Modern Approaches to Meat, Animals, and Civilization” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* (2013).

Week 11 (5/2) – Do all religions sacrifice? Why or why not?

Katha Upanishad Part 1, 69-72

Mundaka Upanishad Part 1, Chapter 2, 187-8.

McClymond, Kathryn (2002). “Death be not proud: Reevaluating the role of killing in sacrifice” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 6: 221-42.

Selections from *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*

Unit 6 – Contemporary Stories and Environmental Crisis

Week 12 (5/9) – Contemporary Problem-Solving in Religious Communities

Shmueli, D. F. (2008). Environmental justice in the Israeli context. *Environment and Planning A*, 40 (10), 2384-2401.

“Praise God and Pass the Plasticware”, *Religion New Service*: <https://religionnews.com/2018/09/26/praise-god-and-pass-the-plasticware-israelis-campaign-against-holiday-waste/>

“Rabbis Join Call to Cut Down Single-Use Plastics”, *Times of Israel*: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rabbis-join-call-to-cut-single-use-plastic-starting-with-religious-holidays/>

“Religion and Views on Climate and Energy Issues” Pew Research Center, 2015

Additional readings to be added throughout the semester:

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Nutmeg’s Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Belden Lane, “The Correspondence of Spiritual and Material Worlds in Shaker Spirituality,” in *Landscapes of the Sacred*, 160–179.



HUM 235: What is Nature?

Plenary Practicum: Film and Nature (Optional)

Tahoe Semester Plenary

Centre College
Tahoe Semester
Spring 2023
3 Credits
4 Credits with Plenary Practicum: Film and Nature

Faculty Information

David Williams
Professor of Philosophy
david.williams@centre.edu
559-676-3240

Electronic Syllabus Policy:

The official form of this syllabus is that of a shared Google document. No paper copies will be distributed. Our tentative schedule may adapt to various conditions throughout the semester, and this online document will be updated periodically to reflect such changes. You should always assume that the *authoritative* version of the syllabus is the most *current* version shared in Google Drive.

Course Hour Policy

To meet the identified course learning outcomes of this three-credit course, the expectations are that this course, delivered over a 15-week term, will approximate 3 hours per week of classroom or direct faculty instruction. In addition, out-of-class student work will approximate a minimum of 6 hours each week. There are three trek experiences connected to this course (see Assignment Schedule below) which will require travel away from our main campus and extended time in the backcountry. The trips total approximately 15 days of the semester.

If the optional practicum experience is added to the course, the expectations are that this 1-credit course, delivered over a 15-week term will approximate two hours per week of classroom or direct faculty instruction. In addition, out-of-class student work will approximate a minimum of 2 hours each week.

Purpose Statement of Centre College

Centre College is a small, independent, and selective educational community dedicated to study in the liberal arts as a means to develop the intellectual, personal, and moral potential of its students. Centre nurtures in its students the ability to think logically and critically, to work creatively, to analyze and compare values, and to write and speak with clarity and grace. It acquaints students with the range of accomplishments of the human mind and spirit in a variety of arts and theoretical disciplines. It enables students to choose and fulfill significant

responsibilities in society. In short, Centre's highest priority is to prepare its students for lives of learning, leadership, and service.

A long and rich tradition of tolerance, freedom of enquiry, and community informs all aspects of college life. Centre accomplishes its goals in an atmosphere of caring and respectful relationships among faculty, students, and staff, aided by its broadly conceived, nonsectarian, Judeo-Christian heritage. This tradition commits Centre to a belief in the unconditional value of each human being, to an appreciation of the differences among people, and to a recognition of the close connection between responsible self-development and community well-being.

Course Description

The plenary course explores the question, "What is nature?" by integrating the disciplinary lenses employed by all Tahoe Semester courses and by exploring the connections between these ways of understanding the world. The course accomplishes this end in three distinct ways. First, we examine the historical context for how the "What is nature?" question has been asked and answered from a variety of historical periods and cultural contexts. This content is delivered and discussed on every *Tuesday* of the semester. Second, the course takes an applied approach to our central question every *Thursday* of the semester. Through guest speakers, discussions of current topics and field excursions we endeavor to understand how nature is being understood in contemporary American society and how that impacts where we are living in the Tahoe Basin. Third, the course pursues an experiential approach to the question, "What is nature?" by embarking on three treks over the course of the semester. The first trip focuses entirely on our bodies in nature and consists of a six-day backpacking trip to build community and teach leadership skills. The second trip to the California coast adds coursework into our trek, integrating the ability to not just move bodily through nature, but to incorporate academic exploration as well. The final trip to Yosemite National park focuses on the integration of all three components: body, mind and spirit. We spend a week in Yosemite where each day is divided into three parts dealing with each of the three components of body, mind and spirit. The final assignment for the course is to write, using all the resources amassed through the course of the semester, an interdisciplinary paper answering the question, "What is nature?"

The plenary course can be augmented by participating in "Plenary Practicum: Film and Nature", a one-credit addendum that employs the lens of contemporary film in approaching our central question, What is nature? The description, assignments, grading criteria and assignment schedule for this practicum experience can be found in the final section of the syllabus.

Required Texts (in order of use)

Electronic Course Reading Pack

Finney, C. *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (University of North Carolina Press) ISBN-13: 978-1469614489

Student Learning Outcomes and Expected Competencies

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. **Describe** a variety of cultural viewpoints on the ethical value of the natural environment and human responsibility toward it through an integration of the sciences and the humanities.

2. **Articulate** how their own view of nature and their civic responsibility to the environment has been changed by an examination of ecological issues through the lenses of body, spirit and mind.
3. **Lead** groups in overcoming practical challenges and reaching concrete goals on a wilderness trip, while also considering broader theoretical issues of civic leadership and responsibility toward the natural world.
4. **Critically evaluate** a research-oriented topic that answers the question, "What is nature?"

Assignments

1. **Environmental Autobiography (50 Points):** Students will reflect on their past experience with the environment and how it has shaped their attitudes toward nature. This blog post establishes a "baseline" for student growth during the semester.
2. **Leadership Practicum (50 Points):** Students practice leadership skills in a hands-on, supervised way while leading groups of students on a five-day winter trek in the Sierra. During the trek, students are required not only to actively lead but also to complete exercises designed to help them reflect on their own leadership styles.
3. **Response Paper 1 (50 Points):** Students will be required to analyze the positions considered in class on how to understand nature and synthesize them with their experience on Trek I. (Length: 300-500 words; see Course Schedule below for specific due dates).
4. **Response Paper 2 (50 Points):** Students will be required to analyze the positions considered in class on how to understand nature and synthesize them with their experience on Trek II. (Length: 300-500 words; see Course Schedule below for specific due dates).
5. **Plenary Participation (50 Points):** This is a measure of the quality of each student's attendance and contribution in plenary sessions, determined at the discretion of the faculty. Every class meeting will be considered in the final participation score.
6. **Final Plenary Presentation (50 Points):** Students will provide an oral presentation summarizing their semester journey and conclusions in answering the question, "What is nature?"
7. **Final Paper (100 Points):** Students will produce a final paper answering the question, "What is nature?" integrating the resources from all the courses and field experiences provided over the course of the term. Wide topical latitude will be allowed to ensure that students are generating answers that will assist their efficacy in caring for and engaging the natural world.

Graded Elements Summary:

Assignment	Points
Environmental Autobiography	50
Leadership Practicum	50
Response Paper 1	50
Response Paper 2	50
Plenary Participation	50
Final Plenary Presentation	50
Final Paper	100
Total	400

Attendance Requirement:

Students are permitted one unexcused absence for the semester. Two or more unexcused absences are considered grounds for failing the course. *Excused* absences may be granted for reasons of illness or family emergency.

Make-Up Work Policy:

Extensions on assignment due dates will be granted automatically for cases of documented illness or family emergency. In all other cases, students must petition faculty for an extension and all faculty must be in agreement for the petition to be approved. If no extension is granted, late assignments will be graded as zeros.

Incomplete Policy

Students who wish to receive an Incomplete "I" grade for this course in order to complete assignments after the conclusion of the semester must be granted a petition from all active faculty. A full rationale for the requested Incomplete grade must be provided by the student. If an Incomplete grade is not granted, then a failing "F" grade will be entered.

Student Learning Outcome Rubric:

Student Learning Outcome	IDEA Objective	Assignments Used to Assess
Describe the role of mind, body and spirit as they relate to the ethical value of the natural environment and human responsibility toward it.	Developing knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or other cultures.	3, 4, 5
Articulate how diverse communities interact with and respond to the natural environment and a sense of "origin," "place," or "home."	Developing knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or	1, 5, 6, 7

	other cultures.	
Lead groups in overcoming practical challenges and reaching concrete goals, while also considering broader theoretical issues of intercultural leadership and civic responsibility in relationship to the natural world.	Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team.	2
Critically Evaluate a research-oriented topic.	Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.	3, 4, 6, 7

Assignment Schedule

Date	What is Nature? <i>A History of Ideas</i> TUESDAYS	What is Nature? <i>Application</i> THURSDAYS
2/2	Introduction to Plenary: Why do this?	
2/7	Environmental Autobiography I	
2/7	Mesopotamia Reading: Assignment: Course Pack - Epic of Gilgamesh	Film: The Tree of Life (Terence Malik)
2/9	Hinduism Guest Lecturer: Manas Rajagopalan Reading: Course Pack - Upanishads	Trek I Preparation
2/14-16	Greece Reading: Course Pack - The Presocratics	Trek I Preparation
2/20-24	<i>Trek I: The Winter Sierra</i>	
2/28-30	Buddhism Guest Lecturer: Meaghan Kirchoff Reading: Course Pack - Buddhism Selections	Rita Mustasia, U.S. Forest Service
2/30	Response Paper I	
3/7-9	Confucianism Reading: Course Pack - Analects	Backcountry Film Festival, Art Haus, Tahoe City

3/14-16	Middle Ages Reading: Course Pack - Aquinas	Race and Nature speaker: Sara Ottley, Founder of Adventure Risk Challenge
3/21-23	Spring Break	Spring Break
3/27-31	Trek II: Morro Bay Excursion Local speaker on coastal indigenous peoples The Reformation Reading: Course Pack - Luther and Calvin	
4/4-6	The Social Contract Reading: Course Pack - Hobbes and Locke	Stewart Indian School Cultural Center & Museum
4/6	Response Paper II	
4/11-13	The Washo People Guest Lecturer: Patrick Burt Reading: TBA	Cave Rock Discussion
4/18-20	Romanticism I Reading: Course Pack - Rousseau	Romanticism II Reading: Course Pack - William Blake
4/25-27	Trek III: Yosemite National Park Excursion American Romanticism: Emerson Reading: <i>Circles, The American Scholar</i> Buffalo Soldiers presentation in Yosemite	
5/2-4	Race and Nature Reading: <i>Black Spaces, White Faces</i>	Race and Nature Reading: <i>Black Spaces, White Faces</i>
5/9	Final Plenary: Environmental Autobiography II	
5/11	Final Paper: Response Paper III	

Plenary Practicum: Film and Nature (Optional One-Credit Addendum)

Course Description

The Plenary course employs a variety of lenses including field experiences, immersive experiences in the natural world, guest speakers and traditional lectures and reading assignments that attempt to provide an integrative approach to the question, What is nature? An additional lens to employ is that of contemporary film. The eleven works in this optional film forum are chosen for their ability to allow students to augment their experience with Tahoe Semester courses in philosophy, religious studies and environmental science through film. The films will be viewed communally and open to all students in the Tahoe Semester (but required for practicum participants) on Thursday evenings with an instructor-led discussion to follow each

film. The intent of the discussions will be to explore how contemporary filmmakers from a variety of cultural perspectives portray nature and our relationship to it and to connect these viewpoints to the Tahoe Semester courses.

Assignments

1. **Film Response Papers (10 Points each):** Students will be required to analyze each film and use the subsequent discussion to formulate a two-page response that will be due on the immediately following Monday. Students will be required to submit 10 total film response papers.
2. **Film Discussion Participation:** Students will be assessed on their ability to contribute meaningfully to the discussions that will occur after each film. (The same criteria for “Class Discussion” listed above will be applied here.)
3. **Final Paper (100 Points):** Students will produce a final paper answering the question, “What is nature?” drawing upon Wide topical latitude will be allowed to ensure that students are generating answers that will assist their efficacy in caring for and engaging the natural world.

Graded Elements Summary:

Assignment	Points
Film Response Papers (10)	100
Film Discussion Participation	50
Final Paper	100
Total	250

Assignment Schedule

Date	Film	Assignment
Th 2/9	<i>Spirited Away</i> (2001) Hayao Miyazaki	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 2/16	<i>The Tree of Life</i> (2011) Terrence Malick	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 3/2	Backcountry Film Festival, Art Haus, Tahoe City	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 3/9	<i>Yellow Colt</i> (2013) Khoroldorj Choijoovanchig	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 3/16	<i>First Reformed</i> (2017) Paul Schrader	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)

Th 3/30	<i>El abrazo de la serpiente</i> (2015) <i>Ciro Guerra</i>	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Tu 4/4	<i>Into the Wild</i> (2007) <i>Sean Penn</i>	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 4/6	<i>Silence</i> (2016) <i>Martin Scorsese</i>	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 4/13	<i>Smoke Signals</i> (1998) <i>Chris Eyre</i>	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 4/20	<i>Free Solo</i> (2018) <i>Jimmy Chin, Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi</i>	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 4/27	<i>Pocahontas</i> (1995) <i>Mike Gabriel, Eric Goldberg</i>	Film Response Paper (Due following Monday)
Th 5/4		Paper Consultations
Mo 5/8		Final Paper Rough Draft Due
Th 5/11		Final Paper Due

“We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience.”

John Dewey

The instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule to meet the specific needs and pace of the class. Any changes will be announced prior to going into effect.