COURSE DESCRIPTION

This subject considers progressive developments that are being generated through Indigenous and non-Indigenous dialogue and intersections in the context of Australian environmental thought. Students will critique and reconsider aspects of dominant Western ways of knowing and understanding, particularly deep-rooted assumptions surrounding the 'nonhuman'. Students will gain awareness of how these assumptions shape our lives and relationships with the world, and will examine connections between epistemology, life practices and environmental ethics. Students will explore topics such as eco-phenomenological perceptions of 'nature', other-than-human subjectivity and sentience, and their inclusion in epistemology, societal values, identity and belief. Through a study of Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous environmental thinkers, and drawing from Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships with the land, students will think about ethical, social and political issues, including connection to place, human and other-than-human rights, interspecies communication, environmental democracy, ecofeminism, Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, and decolonization.
WEEKLY TOPIC LIST

The following reading list is idiosyncratically structured according to indigenous, non-indigenous and internationalizing texts. Doing so is not intended to either acknowledge or erect a chasm between indigenous and non-indigenous Australian Environmental Philosophy, but rather serves as a platform for drawing attention to the commonalities and differences between and among them. For no such chasm exists—much of the engagement with indigenous environmental thought by non-indigenous philosophers has been performed by recent migrants to Australia, such as Stephen Muecke and Deborah Bird Rose, whereas Mary Graham is among the few indigenous scholars to have actively intruded aboriginal knowledge into otherwise Western, Environmental Philosophy. For this reason, texts that connect distinctly Australian Environmental Philosophy to global debates and issues are also included.

July 21
Pre-semester: Before Philosophy...

Before class begins you are asked to familiarize yourself with the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder, an astronomical facility designed to listen to the dawn of time on aboriginal homelands that are billions of years old, and which have been inhabited for at least 40,000 years.

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<thead>
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July 24
Week 1: Ecological “awakenings”

It is a commonplace to say that Environmental Philosophy began only in 1973. Quite independently, the Norwegian Arne Naess published a scientific article that attempted to characterize the two dominant strands of the ecology movement, at around the same time that Richard Routley, based in Canberra, Australia, argued more forcefully that what was in fact needed was “a new, an environmental, ethic”.

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<tr>
<td>Neidjie (1985a, 45–52);</td>
<td>R. Routley (1973);</td>
<td>Rose (1988)</td>
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July 31

**Week 2: Indigenous knowledges**

Is it possible or even advisable for the largely oral knowledges of aborigines to be brought into dialogue with a Philosophy derived from ancient Athens? Whilst Aboriginal Australians comprise some of the world’s oldest living cultures, this week we consider how their voices are variously absent, neglected, overlooked, marginalized, dismissed, and/or silenced.

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** Invited lecture: Gundijt Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

August 7

**Week 3: Contending circles**

Picture a large circle drawn on the ground at your feet. Whom and what would you include inside your circle if it was to represent the limits of your ethical concern? Would you distinguish between friends and strangers? What about non-human beings and things? Contemporary non-indigenous Australians have been central to these philosophical debates.

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August 14

**Week 4: Situating environmentalisms**

Few know that the world’s first environmental political party was founded in Tasmania, Australia, in the early 1970s. Fewer still realize that Australia still plays a key role in global efforts to mainstream or universalize environmentalism. However, taking a critical perspective, we find that “the environment” is also a potential site for conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous worldviews whose concern is often particular to place.

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Australian Environmental Philosophy: The University of Melbourne

August 21

**Week 5: Antipodean eco-feminisms**

Several Australians, such as Val Plumwood, helped pioneer eco-feminist theories and practices. Yet for some non-indigenous proponents, eco-feminism must simultaneously resolve two forms of domination (or, chauvinism, towards “nature” and women), without further entrenching the domination of aboriginal men and women (or, whiteness).

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August 28

**Week 6: Multispecies communities**

How often, if at all, do you locate yourself in the food chain? To be swooped by a magpie during mating season is one thing, but have you ever been in a position where you are mere food for another? Val Plumwood has, and she lived to tell the tale. Others, particularly indigenous peoples, have come to be highly attuned to such non-human animal behavior in both kinship and survival.

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September 4

**Week 7: Ecological selves**

Having situated ourselves as ecological beings, both philosophically and materially, this week we consider how this translates to our predicament globally, as citizens of an ecological community that are mutually implicated and co-constituted in the biosphere.

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September 11

**Week 8: Urban country**

Contemporary urban cities such as Melbourne, just like the “outback”, were once (and in some sense still are) aboriginal homelands. What's more, having problematized the categories of “wilderness” and “nature”, we might then ask whether there could be an Australian Environmental Philosophy of Bourke Street Mall and Barkley Square!

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September 18

**Week 9: Wilderness homelands**

What is “nature”? Is there such a thing as “wilderness”? How can aboriginal homelands, for instance, possibly be “(re)willed”? These are the sorts of enduring and vexing questions that beset environmental philosophers, even today. In lieu of finding answers, we consult the disciplines of History and Indigenous Studies for greater context.

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** Guest lecturer: Bruce Pascoe

September 25

**<Semester Break>**

October 2

**Week 10: Nuclear colonialisms**

Through the prism of the nuclear age, we stage an encounter with the continued colonization of aboriginal and remote communities, as well as multispecies communities living today. Given that the problem of nuclear harm persists into the far-future for up to 100,000 years, we are compelled to ethically consider future beings yet to be born, as well as the relationship between presently living and non-living beings and things.

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<tr>
<td>Langton (2012); Langton,</td>
<td>Taylor (2017); Vincent (2007)</td>
<td>Herzog (1985); Journeyman</td>
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</table>
** special lecture involving the screening of a virtual reality film produced by (Wallworth 2016).

October 9

**Week 11: Us/them dialogues**

Let’s try and be positive. How can, if we so chose, deploy what we have learned to bring about more favourable environmental, social, political and economic outcomes? Can we listen, or even speak, with birds and trees? Or, to venture further, if we afford the non-human world moral status in and of itself, ought we militarily intervene—and harm humans—on behalf of the environment as we do in response to a humanitarian crisis?

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October 16

**Week 12: Eco-humanities futures**

As we have seen, contemporary environmental problems are not merely scientific—they are also cultural, social, economic, and ethical. So, what role can the Humanities disciplines such as Indigenous Studies, Environmental Studies, and Philosophy, play in identifying, interpreting, understanding and perhaps even resolving past, present and future environmental challenges?

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TEXT LIST


Bradley, John, and Stephen Johnson. 2015. 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Can the West Come to Know?' PAN: Philosophy Activism Nature, no. 11.


Emmanouil, Nia. 2015. 'You've Got to Drown in It'. PAN: Philosophy Activism Nature, no. 11.


Fox, Warwick. 2000. 'Towards an Ethics (or at Least a Value Theory) of the Built Environment'. Ethics and the Built Environment, 207–21.


———. 2007b. ‘Tasteless: Towards a Food-Based Approach to Death’. In Forum on Religion and Ecology. Yale University, New Haven, NY.


———. 2017. 'Suffering between Nuclear Living and Dying in Australia'. Working paper.


## ASSESSMENT TASKS

**Assessment Task 1: Tutorial Dialogue**

Due: Assigned Week (from Week 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You choose the topic. You get the class thinking about it.</td>
<td>(1) critically engaging with the required text/s and ideas covered in lectures, as well as evidence of additional research; (2) the ability to clearly and succinctly evaluate the key themes and ideas being discussed; and (3) the ability to respect and listen to others, and to continually interrogate oneself.</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</table>

**Step 1:** In tutorials in Week 1, you are to select a weekly topic that you are passionate and/or interested in.

**Step 2:** In preparing for your assigned week, you consider the commonalities and differences between the set texts. Your task will be to introduce something that you deem interesting and important (i.e. an idea, text, opposing viewpoint, personal experience, news item, etc.) to illuminate your chosen topic.

**Step 3:** “Just do it!” Each student is allocated five (5) minutes (and no more than ten (10) minutes each) for this purpose at the beginning of the tutorial.

Please note, you are not required to give a formal presentation or “speech”, although you may. You are encouraged to instead use role play, simulations, staged dialogues/interviews, personal narratives, and other interactive activities to illuminate your argument. You are thereby encouraged to approach this task as one of experimentation and play—take risks, and so long as preparation and team work are evident, you will be rewarded.
**Assessment Task 2: 1,500-word “Exploratory” Essay**

Due: Week 4 (in tutorial) and Week 7 (online, by 11:59pm, Monday, September 4)

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>You pose the question. You deliver the answer.</td>
<td>(1) the ability to <strong>identify and interpret</strong> the major elements of Indigenous and/or non-Indigenous Australian Environmental Philosophy; (2) demonstrated knowledge of the <strong>cultural, social, political, and moral complexity</strong> of the topic chosen; and (3) the <strong>presentation and structure</strong> of your argument in a clear and convincing manner.</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong> Before consulting your lecturer, you are to choose and develop a topic relevant to Australian Environmental Philosophy in the widest possible sense (e.g. human relations with wild dogs). Bring a one-page, printed copy of an annotated bibliography for your chosen topic to the tutorial in Week 4.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 2:</strong> Together in tutorials, in Week 4, we will refine your topics into precise questions (e.g. How does, if at all, Peter Singer ethical treat “wild” dogs differently from domesticated ones?)</td>
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<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> Submission.</td>
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**Assessment Task 3: 2,500-word “Research” Essay**

Due: Week 9 (in tutorial) and Week 11 (online, by 11:59pm, Monday, October 9)

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<td>60%</td>
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**Step 1: Before consulting your lecturer, you are to choose and develop a topic relevant to Australian Environmental Philosophy in the widest possible sense (e.g. cross-cultural issues for learning Indigenous Environmental Philosophy). Bring a one-page, printed copy of an annotated bibliography for your chosen topic to the tutorial in Week 9.**

**Step 2: Together in tutorials, in Week 9, we will refine your topics into precise questions (e.g. Indigenous knowledge cannot be translated into Western Environmental Philosophy. Discuss.).**

**Step 3: Submission.**