**Ethics of Nature (Siðfræði náttúrunnar: HSP722M):   
General information and syllabus 2023**

**Practical information**

**Lectures:** Three 40 minute class-hours per week consisting of lectures, student presentations, seminar discussions and exercises. Classes are taught on Mondays from 10:00 to 12:20 in Háskólatorg, HT-104.

**Teachers:** Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir (SÞ) is the supervisory teacher (sigrthor@hi.is) and Ole Martin Sandberg (OS) (oms@hi.is) is lecturing most classes.

**Structure of classes:** Group presentations. Teacher introductory lecture, Discussions and exercises in the classroom, in separate groups or individually. We expect ALL students to participate in discussions.

**Course evaluation:** 1) 3 online multiple choice tests (30%). 2) Group presentations (15%). 3) Individual applied project (20%). 4) Final written essay (35%). More information below.

**Texts:** The only book you must get for yourself is Páll Skúlason’s *Meditations at the Edge of Askja* which is available in the University bookstore or the library. The rest of the texts will be uploaded on the Canvas website of the course in the module for the respective week of the semester. The texts in the syllabus are required readings (about 30-40 pages for each class).

On the Canvas-course website you can also find the slides from lectures and other course related material. The syllabus may be subject to change, so please follow announcements and the course schedule on the Canvas-course website. Also remember to regularly check your university email for information and updates regarding the course.

**Components and descriptions of grade evaluation:**

**1) Three multiple choice exams (3 x 10% = 30%):**

The tests will take place on the course website (Canvas). What will be tested: Main arguments and contents of the texts from the previous weeks (in other words: this is just to make sure you read the material. We do have to make it a little tricky though). Each test will be open in a 24 hour window where you can start it when you are ready. Once you start it you will have 30 minutes to answer 10 questions. You are allowed to have all your literature and notes with you. Dates: See syllabus.

**2) Group presentations in class (15%):**

The students will be divided into groups at the beginning of the semester (you will find your group on Canvas) who will collaborate on a *15 minute* collective presentation in class. The presentations will be spread out over the course. The groups should choose an environmental organisation or issue and evaluate it practically, ethically, philosophically, and relate this to class readings and topics – try to include your own perspectives/evaluations/conclusions. The presentations must contain visible elements (a power point presentation or similar), and you will upload the slides on Canvas when you have given the presentation (include the names of all members of the group). The grade will be collective, and we expect all group members to participate. Dates of each presentation will be figured out in the beginning of the semester.

**3) Individual Applied Project (20%):**

In the beginning of the semester, all students should make a plan for a personal “experiment” relating to how you relate to nature or to an environmental issue. It can be a very personal project (like “I want to be more aware of the nature around me”) or very practical (like “I want to reduce my energy consumption”). Work on this project in your daily life throughout the course – you might want to keep a diary – and in the end you will write a short report (3-4 pages) about it. It is not important whether you “succeeded” in achieving your goal but that you learned something from it. In the report you may relate your project to the literature discussed in class but that is not required. What matters is that you reflect on what you learned: How did it affect you personally, what made it difficult or valuable, what philosophical thoughts could you take from it? Deadline: November 20th.

**4) Written essay at the end of the semester (35%)**

The final part of the grade is an online written test on Canvas. We will make 2 or 3 topics you can choose from (choose 1 of them), each with some questions that should be addressed in the form of a coherent essay. You will then have 4 hours to write an essay and upload it to Canvas. Use everything you have learned in class (and outside of it).

(The reason we are doing it this way, is that you don’t have to think about this until the day of the test and it makes for more consistent evaluation of the essays)

We try to make some topics that are relatively close to the texts covered in class and some that are a little more open, but in either case you should address the given questions and use relevant literature (from the class or outside of it). There is no required length or word-count, so write until you are done and use the most of your time. As for the questions, you should not answer them in bullet-form but write a coherent essay where you make sure you address them one way or another (in no particular order or priority, if you are more interested in one of them then you can let that take up most of the space).

The essays will be evaluated on 1) whether you adequately covered the topics and questions, 2) whether you related the topic to relevant literature (in or outside of the course), 3) the strength of your analysis and arguments 4) whether it is interesting (for lack of a better word) and has good ideas. Do not be afraid to write your thoughts and opinions!

Use proper referencing and literature lists (no particular style is required as long as it is clear where and when you are citing or referring to others and where we can find those). We do not base the grade on how good your English language is but please make sure it is understandable (use the “check grammar” function in your writing software or similar). You are allowed (and encouraged) to have all material with you. No plagiarism. Remember to cite your sources! Date: November 27th from 12-1600.

All assignments must be uploaded on the Canvas-course website. Put your name(s) in all documents.

**Students with special needs:** Please contact the teacher so they can be addressed.

**HSP725M Project in Ethics of Nature**: For those students that sign up for the independent project in conjunction with the class: We will have a meeting in the fourth week of the semester for you where we will discuss the project with you. In short, it is an optional extra project worth 4 ECTS where you write a longer and independent academic essay.

**Syllabus, Ethics of Nature (Siðfræði náttúrunnar: HSP722M), 2023**

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| **Week-Date-Lecturer** | **Topic** | **Required Texts** | **Other Information** |
| Week 1  21. Aug. | Introduction to course | “General information and syllabus” (this document) |  |
| Week 2  28. Aug.  (OS) | Environmental ethics:  History and concepts | - Jason Kawall, “A History of Environmental Ethics“ - UNEP: „Making Peace With Nature“ (just skim the first 17 short pages) | Groups will be formed |
| Week 3  4. Sep. | Connecting to (our) nature 1 | - Michel Loreau: "Nature That Makes Us Human" (chapters 7-9)  - Ólafur Páll Jónsson et al.: „On Being in nature: Aldo Leopold as an Educator for the 21st Century“ |  |
| Week 4  11. Sep. | Ecological processes | - Roope Oskari Kaaronen: “Reframing Tacit Human–Nature Relations” - Eugene Gendlin: “Body- Environment” (5 pages from *A Process Model*)  - Ole Sandberg (video): „Nature Philosophy in the land of Ice and Fire: Process thinking in an Icelandic context“ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzbDH0lro18>) | Student presentation – group 1 |
| Week 5  18. Sep. | Ethics of care and indigenous ethics | - Kyle Powys Whyte & Christine J. Cuomo: “Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics”  - Gregory Cajete: „Native Science - Natural Laws of Interdependence“  - Rune Hjarnø Rasmussen (video): „Viking Environmentalism“ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUjJ6NtA9T0>) | Student presentation – group 2  First multiple choice exam |
| Week 6  25. Sep. | Eco-feminism | - Karen J Warren: "Nature is a Feminist Issue"  - Janet Biehl: "Problems in Ecofeminism"  - Pinkola Estés: “Women who run with Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype” | Student presentation – group 3 |
| Week 7  2. Oct. | Animals and other sentient beings | - Peter Singer: “All Animals are Equal” - Morten Tønnessen & J Beever: "Beyond Sentience: Biosemiotics as Foundation for Animal and Environmental Ethics"  - „Melanie Challenger: "Animals in the Room, Why we can and should listen to other species“ (also available in audio form at <https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/animals-in-the-room/>) | Student presentation – group 4 |
| Week 8  9. Oct. | Politics of food | - Corine Pelluchon: „Nourishment - A Philosophy of the Political Body“ - Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing: "The Mushroom at the End of the World" - Interview with Chef Njathi Kabui: [https://ukombozireview.com/blog/decolonizing-our-food-a-chefs-quest-for-food-justice/](https://ukombozireview.com/blog/decolonizing-our-food-a-chefs-quest-for-food-justice/%20) | Student presentation – group 5 |
| Week 9  16. Oct. | Connecting to (our) nature 2 | - H.W. Schroeder: “The Felt Sense of Natural Environments”  - P. Skúlason: “Meditation at the Edge of Askja” | Student presentation – group 6  Second multiple choice exam |
| Week 10  23. Oct. | Connecting to (our) Nature 3 | - Sigríður Þorgeirsdottir: „The Embodied, Experiential and Elemental Turn in Environmental Ethics“ - Claire Petitmengin: „Anchoring in lived experience as an act of resistance” | Student presentation – group 7 |
| Week 11  30. Oct. | Climate change and social change | - Ole Sandberg: “Climate Disruption, Political Stability, and Collective Imagination”  - Nancy Tuana: “From a Lifeboat Ethic to Anthropocenean Sensibilities” | Student presentation – group 8 |
| Week 12  6. Nov. | Cooperation and collective action | - Elinor Ostrom: “Reflections on the Commons”  - Irina Papazu: “Authoring Participation”  (2 short videos that will help with understanding Ostrom: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYA1y405JW0> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vT99LqJaTeI>) | Student presentation – group 9 |
| Week 13  13. Nov. | + Practical information on exams, questions, etc. | To be announced (open for now) | Student presentation – group 10  Third multiple choice exam |

**More generally about this course**

This course always has a very diverse, and relatively large, group of students. You come from different countries and continents, and you all have different academic backgrounds. Not everyone is fluent in English, let alone academic English, and for some of you it might be the first time reading/discussing philosophy. We make an effort to have a variety of texts with different degrees of accessibility, covering different topics (sadly not everything can be covered). If you have difficulty reading or understanding some of them, do not hesitate to ask questions in class or come to the teacher after class. As a general advice: if a text contains some phrases or arguments you don’t understand, try to move through the rest of it and see if there is something else you can take away from it.

Although active class participation is expected from everyone, we know this is easier for some than for others, and that different people learn in different ways. We can all help each other by considering when it is a good time to speak and when it is better to listen. Especially because the class is so big, the teachers kindly ask all students to help create an environment where we can all grow together.

The course does not require any formal background in philosophy. This means we are not expecting you to have prior knowledge of technical terms or theories or to be trained in formal Philosophical Arguments(TM). In a way, this is a good thing: we strive to avoid thinking and teaching within rigid categories and templates and want to create an environment that encourages personal and creative thinking and feeling. We live in an age where environmental destruction has reached planetary levels and all the old social, economic and political models need to be changed – this includes the philosophical and ethical models too. So let us not be ashamed of being new, un-knowing, or inexperienced because everyone who takes the environmental challenges seriously, including the experts, are also desperately searching for answers.

Important recommendations: We strongly encourage the students to form study groups, whether online or in person, where you meet once in a while to discuss the texts and topics as well as your own thoughts. Sometimes just having a brief conversation can greatly improve understanding and can help you see the relevance or different perspectives of a text. We also strongly recommend that you keep a journal and take notes as you read the texts, attend class, have discussions etc. Even write down the ting you don’t understand as it might help you find answers later. This will help you with the texts and give you something to return to when you need to re-remember – both for the tests and your further paths in life.