Tompkins Cortland Community College

Master Course Syllabus

Course Discipline and Number: ENVS 105 **Year: 2025-2026**

Course Title: Environmental Ethics **Credit Hours: 3**

I. Course Description: This humanities course will function as a framework for analyzing the belief systems that underlie environmental controversies and for discussing the application of ethical theories to environmental decisions. At heart, all environmental controversies are composed of ethical dilemmas. For example, how much value should be placed on endangered species? What is the equitable way to control greenhouse gas emissions? What moral obligations do we have to non-human animals? Ultimately, this course will ask the student to articulate their own ethical approach to the natural world. Local and global issues are addressed. Intended for all students, regardless of major field of study. ENVS 105 fulfills the SUNY General Education Humanities requirement. Prerequisites: Prior completion of, or concurrent enrollment in, ENGL 100 and RDNG 116 if required by placement. 3 Cr. (3 Lec.) Fall and spring semesters.

II. Additional Course Information:

1. The course may be used for a liberal arts, humanities, or unrestricted elective requirement; however, it will not satisfy a science elective requirement.
2. ENVS 105 uses OER resources. No text need be purchased.
3. Discussion is a large part of the course, and informal presentations are required.

III. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate personal beliefs in a coherent and persuasive manner
2. Summarize and explain values underlying environmental policies and perspectives
3. Summarize and explain ethical theories as they relate to environmental issues

IV. Tompkins Cortland Institutional Learning Outcomes; Program Learning Outcomes; SUNY General Education Outcomes

Tompkins Cortland ILOs

Complete this section for “service” courses only (e.g. courses that are required of all students; courses that are not program specific but satisfy liberal arts requirements; or commonly used in multiple academic programs to meet non-program-specific requirements). Check only Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that are meaningfully developed and assessed in this course. For each ILO chosen, include the SLO to which it aligns.

Students will:

☒ Communicate effectively, in oral and written forms, taking into consideration audience and purpose.

SLO #1: Articulate personal beliefs in a coherent and persuasive manner

☐ Apply principles and methods of scientific inquiry and quantitative reasoning appropriate to their discipline.

☐ Use information, critical thinking, and the creative process to solve problems and reach conclusions.

☐ Use technology appropriate to their discipline.

☒ Describe the ways in which social, economic, or environmental sustainability depends on their own and the collective contributions of a diversity of ideas and people.

SLO #3: Summarize and explain ethical theories as they relate to environmental issues

Program Learning Outcomes

Complete this section for program-specific courses (e.g. those that share the same 4 letter designation as the academic program or satisfy requirements in related programs). List the academic program(s) here and note which Student Learning Outcomes align to specific Programmatic Learning Outcomes. Please see the MCS Instructions for more details.

Specify the Academic Program

Environmental Studies A.S.

PLO	SLO
Communicate information effectively to appropriate stakeholders. (ILOs: Critical and Creative Reasoning, Communication, and Technology)	Articulate personal beliefs in a coherent and persuasive manner
Describe the social, economic, and ecological dimensions of sustainability. (ILO: Sustainability)	Summarize and explain values underlying environmental policies and perspectives
Evaluate solutions to environmental problems. (ILO: Critical and Creative Reasoning)	Summarize and explain ethical theories as they relate to environmental issues

SUNY General Education Outcomes

If this course **assesses** a SUNY GEN ED Outcome, check all that apply and indicate which course outcome(s) address each checked item:

☒ CRITICAL THINKING - Students will:

a. identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work; and
b. develop well-reasoned arguments.

All of the SLOs align with this outcome.

☐ INFORMATION MANAGEMENT - Students will:

a. perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
b. understand and use basic research techniques; and
c. locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

☒ GENERAL EDUCATION CATEGORY - Area(s): Humanities

“Students will demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.”

SLO #3: Summarize and explain ethical theories as they relate to environmental issues

☐ This course does not address any of the above Tompkins Cortland ILOs, PLOs, or SUNY General Education Outcomes.

V. Essential Topics/Themes

1. Philosophy of Science
2. Historical Attitudes Towards Nature
3. Ethical Theory
4. Animal Rights
5. Human Population Growth
6. Species
7. Genetic Engineering
8. Environmental Justice
9. Technology
10. Climate Change

VI. Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	**% Course Grade**
1. Exams	20-50%
2. Writing Assignments	20-60%
3. Reading Responses	0-20 %
4. Oral Presentations	0-20%

VII. Texts – ☐ Required ☒ Recommended ☐ Used for more than one course (list courses)

1. Sewell, Patrick. *Environmental Ethics.* (OER)
2. Sandler, Ronald. *Environmental Ethics: Theory in Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.

VIII. Bibliography of Supplemental Materials

1. Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1949.
2. Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*. New York: New York Review, 1975.
3. Stone, Christopher D. *Should Trees Have Standing?* Los Altos, CA: William Kaufmann, Inc., 1974.
4. Taylor, Paul. *Respect for Nature*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.

Revised 09-21/P. Sewell

IX. Other Learning Resources

Audiovisual: None specified
Electronic: None specified
Other: None specified

Attendance Policy: *To maintain good grades, regular attendance in class is necessary. Absence from class is considered a serious matter and absence never excuses a student from class work. It is the responsibility of all instructors to distribute reasonable attendance policies in writing during the first week of class. Students are required to comply with the attendance policy set by each of their instructors. Students are not penalized if they are unable to attend classes or participate in exams on particular days because of religious beliefs, in accordance with Chapter 161, Section 224-a of the Education Law of the State of New York. Students who plan to be absent from classroom activity for religious reasons should discuss the absence in advance with their instructors. See college catalog for more information.*

Services for Students with Disabilities: *It is the College's policy to provide, on an individual basis, appropriate academic adjustments for students with disabilities, which may affect their ability to fully participate in program or course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Coordinator of Access and Equity Services, to discuss their particular need for academic adjustments. All course materials are available in alternate formats upon request.*

Academic Integrity: *Every student at Tompkins Cortland Community College is expected to act in an academically honest fashion in all aspects of his or her academic work: in writing papers and reports, in taking examinations, in performing laboratory experiments and reporting the results, in clinical and cooperative learning experiences, and in attending to paperwork such as registration forms.*
Any written work submitted by a student must be his or her own. If the student uses the words or ideas of someone else, he or she must cite the source by such means as a footnote. Our guiding principle is that any honest evaluation of a student's performance must be based on that student's work. Any action taken by a student that would result in misrepresentation of someone else's work or actions as the student's own — such as cheating on a test, submitting for credit a paper written by another person, or forging an advisor's signature — is intellectually dishonest and deserving of censure.
Several degree programs offer student learning opportunities (such as internships, field work, and clinical experiences) outside the standard classroom setting. As part of the learning process, students must understand and engage in conduct that adheres to principles guiding employment within the professional workplace. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, academic integrity, accountability, reliability, respect, use of appropriate language and dress, civility, professional ethics, honesty, and trustworthiness. Disciplinary action may be initiated for inappropriate conduct occurring while participating in any course-related project or event.