Overview
The goal of this course is to acquaint ourselves with a few of the more salient issues and positions in environmental ethics. Because the issues do not neatly fall into any one or two specific disciplines our approach will instead be problem-oriented. We'll strive, in other words, to attend to the different dimensions of each issue, and thereby to advance a more rounded and comprehensive set of possible solutions. We will draw from history, biology, chemistry, political science, geography, philosophy and various other disciplines in our pursuit. We will be particularly attuned to the ethical and meta-ethical dimensions of these issues: we will ask what kind of value is being ascribed to different entities in the natural world, what the source of that value is, and what moral implications it might carry.

First Year Seminar Course
Hugging Trees is a First year Seminar, meaning that only freshman are enrolled in the class and that the class is capped at 25 students. The aim of these courses is to help ease first-year students into the college experience. This means that we will spend a fair bit of time discussing things like study habits, when and how to read and take notes, how to best use the library, how to improve your studies outside of the classroom, different social outings on campus and the like. We are very fortunate to have Ian McArthur as our peer mentor this semester. Ian will be assisting me with various aspects of the course, but is there primarily to help you all acclimate to life at college and at UWGB.

Goals
Method
• Learn to read (sometimes) difficult materials carefully
• Attend to the argument of a reading by understanding the argument's structure
• Be able to identify potential strengths and weaknesses in arguments
• Learn to better articulate and defend your reaction to readings
• Improve your conversational skills with others, particularly as regards disagreements
• Acquaint yourself with the information resources that surround you (No Wikipedia!)
• Learn how to approach real-world problems from a multi-faceted perspective

Application
• Gain an awareness and understanding of competing ethical theories
• Engage in thoughtful and meaningful ethical discourse, both with oneself and amongst others
• Gain an awareness and understanding of different environmental concerns facing our planet
• Be able to situate these concerns in a broad and problem-focused setting
• Use thinking and research skills so as to propose and investigate possible solutions
• Work with other students on a presentation of your idea, and deliver it to the class
• Attend 4 or more co-curricular activities

Requests
I ask that you read the day's assigned reading before each class. I ask that you come to class prepared to discuss the material, meaning that you have a fair understanding of its contours and several questions about its content. I ask that you are courteous in class, meaning that you arrive on time, refrain from talking, texting or using laptops in class, respect myself and your colleagues, do not pack up early and the like. I hope that each class will be a terrific
learning experience for you, and that each class will extend your understand a bit and strengthen your critical thinking and speaking skills a bit more.

Ways you'll Demonstrate your Progress
You'll demonstrate your progress in a number of different ways. For starters, we'll often have short quizzes at the beginning of class to see how well you've understood the reading. Sometimes I'll ask you to write up a short reaction to some aspect of the reading, other times I'll simply give you a few multiple choice questions about it. These quizzes cannot be made up – if you are late or miss class altogether, or even just forget to include your name, you will receive a zero for the quiz. I will also sometimes ask you to submit short writing assignments about the reading, also due at the beginning of class. These are meant to help you attend to the logical structure of the reading. I might ask, for example, for you to identify the five most important claims, or to briefly sketch an outline of the reading's argument. On each such assignment you will receive a check-minus, check, or check-plus, which correspond roughly to a 50%, 80% or 100%. If you do not submit the assignment you get a zero. These exercises are meant to encourage you to prepare for each class, and collectively are worth 20% of your grade.

At the close of the semester we will hold a mini-conference in class. This conference will consist of groups who are assigned specific topics from our course. Each group will be asked to research their topic, identify different dimensions to the problem, design a workable and defensible solution to this problem, and present their findings to the class. Your efforts on this project will account for another 10% of your final grade.

This being a first-year seminar, in addition to our coursework the class is aimed also at helping you to familiarize yourself with the broader campus – both its opportunities and people. With this aim in mind, you are required to attend at least four co-curricular activities. These are various kinds of events around campus. Some have to do with diversity (like speakers who will be giving public lectures on their lives), others might concern current events (like a speech on the chaos of climate change discussions today), yet others involve sustaining healthy relationships (events put on by the Relationships Task Force), or a host of others. College is meant to open expand your awareness of the world beyond the classroom, and these activities are a prime opportunity to do so. Ian will keep a list of possible co-curricular activities. Whenever you attend one you will fill out a short co-curricular activities form (posted on our D2L page) and submit it to Ian or myself within one week of the event. These will be graded on a check-minus, check, and check-plus format – if you've clearly attended the event and reflected on your experience you'll do just fine. These will count for 10% of your final grade. In addition, you can do up to four extra-credit co-curricular assignments. These assignments will replace quizzes or short-writing assignments that you missed or did poorly on.

The shorter writing assignments are designed to help you all write short papers. You'll write three such papers, which will be 2-4 pages long. These papers will need to be structured properly, informed, thoughtful and grammatically sound. We'll talk about these in greater detail in class as the semester progresses. Each paper will be worth 10% of your grade, so that collectively they will be worth 30%.

I will also ask you to complete a take-home midterm exam. We will spend the class on Oct. 17 discussing the exam, which I will then distribute at the close of class. (Obviously, you are required to be in class that day if you would like a copy of the exam.) You will have until Friday, Oct. 21 at 5:00 pm to submit the exam to me via e-mail. This will account for 15% of your grade. We will also have a cumulative final exam, which will consist of several short-essays. This too will count for 15% of your final grade.

Your final grade breaks down as follows:
Random Reading Quizzes & Short Writing Assignments: 20%
Mini-Conference Work: 10%
Co-curricular Activities: 10%
Short Papers: 3 at 10% each, so 30%
Exams: 2 at 15% each, so 30%
I use the following grade scheme. A = 93 and above. AB = 88-92. B = 83-87. BC = 78-82. C = 73-77. CD = 68-72. D = 63-67. F = 62 or below. An A paper will receive a 95, an AB a 90, a B an 85, a BC an 80, C a 75, a CD a 70, D a 65 and F a 55.

**Policies**

This course will have a D2L site where I will post the syllabus, co-curricular activities form, handouts on your papers and any other handouts I may write up for you as the semester progresses. The D2L page also includes an easy way to track your grades. In addition, you can post questions on the D2L page under the Discussion tab. I will do my best to monitor these and to respond to any questions posted there. You might also use this as a way to communicate with your fellow classmates outside of the classroom, especially if you would like to arrange a study-session, time to meet with your presentation group outside of class, or anything else.

I do not allow cellphones or laptops in class. Texting or surfing the web is insulting to my efforts to teach the class, and quite a distraction. If I see you texting or on a computer I will ask you to leave class for the day.

To reiterate from before, if you miss a reading quiz or fail to submit a short-writing assignment when it is due (beginning of class) you will receive a zero for the assignment. Any papers that are submitted late will be docked a half-grade per day overdue. If the paper is due on a Wednesday and I receive it on Thursday your grade will be dropped a half-letter grade, from a B to a C/B for instance. If you fail to submit the midterm or to take the final exam you will automatically fail the course.

If you are struggling, have questions, or would like some clarification on anything having to do with the course please stop by my office hours. I am here to guide you but also to help. There are always ways to improve your progress through the course, and the earlier we talk about them the better. Don't allow yourself to become frustrated and, as a result, write myself or the class off. Instead, work through your frustration by talking to me, altering your efforts in some way, and succeeding.

Ian, who has been through many different courses with many different faculty members, is also there to help you. He has my full support in advising you with anything regarding our course. For anything outside of class (personal issues, social issues, campus issues and the like) my door is of course still open. However, if you would like to talk to a peer, Ian's door is open as well, and his experiences in college and, more particularly, around campus and residence life, provide him with a wealth of information to draw from. He is a valuable resource – use it. He is the 3322 Community Advisor.

Lastly, students with a documented disability who need accommodations must contact the Disability Services Office at 465-2841. Reasonable accommodations can be made unless they alter the essential components of the class. Contact the instructor and Disability Services Coordinator in a timely manner to formulate alternative arrangements.

**Texts**

*The Weather Makers*, Tim Flannery

*Writing Philosophy*, Lewi Vughn

*William Harvey*

**2013 Schedule**

**Sept. 3:** Course Introduction, Acclimation

**Sept. 5:** Read “Learning the Trees” by Howard Nemerov aloud, Silent Hike

Reflect on the topic(s), language, and meaning of the poem. Then compose a one-page single-spaced reflection.

**What is climate change and how might it affect us?**

**Sept. 10:** The Great Aerial Ocean & The Gaseous Greenhouse (*The Weather Makers*)
Sept. 12: “The Climax of Humanity” by George Musser (D2L)

Sept. 17: Civilization: Out with a Whimper (The Weather Makers)

Sept. 19: Selection from Eaarth, by Bill McKibben

Sept. 24: Chip Ward: Is the Crown of Creation a Dunce Cap?

Sept. 26: Library Day

What grounds moral value? How should we best gauge it?
Oct. 1: Peril at the Poles (The Weather Makers)

Oct. 3: 2050: The Great Stumpy Reef (The Weather Makers)

Oct. 8: A Warning from the Golden Toad (The Weather Makers)

Oct. 10: Class Discussion: Why, exactly, ought we to protect endangered species? Specify as best you can what principle best grounds or establishes our need to protect them. (Desjardins – D2L) Prompts ethical theories discussion – relativism, utilitarianism, deontology, and natural law. -- different ethical theories

What kind of thing is value? Where (if anywhere) does it reside?
Oct. 15: “Humans as Moral Ends” by Thomas Aquinas (D2L)

Oct. 17: “Walking” by Henry David Thoreau (D2L)


Oct. 24 “The Land Ethic” from Aldo Leopold’s Sand County Almanac (D2L)

Oct. 29: Class Discussion: Does moral value emanate from human beings, or is it already there in the world for us to discover? -- Where, exactly, is value in the world?

Oct. 31: Gaia (The Weather Makers) and “Gaia as Seen through the Atmosphere” by James Lovelock (D2L)

Nov. 5: “Value in Nature and the Nature of Value” by Holmes Rolston III (D2L)

Nov. 7: “Superorganisms” from Tim Flannery’s Here on Earth (D2L)

Nov. 12: “Ascent of the Ultimate Superorganism” from Tim Flannery’s Here on Earth (D2L)

Looking ahead
Nov. 14: Are We the Problem? from Watersheds (D2L)
Nov. 19: Are We the Problem? (Watersheds)

Nov. 21 “The Ends of the World as We Know Them” by Jared Diamond (D2L)

Nov. 26: “The Eleventh Hour” and “Man the Disrupter” from Tim Flannery’s Here on Earth (D2L)

Nov. 28 Thanksgiving -- Class Cancelled

How we might address these Issues
Dec. 3: “Bright as Sunlight, Light as Wind” and “Nuclear Lazarus?” (The Weather Makers)

Dec. 5: “Sunshade for Planet Earth” by Robert Kunzig (D2L)

Dec. 10: “A New Toolkit” from Tim Flannery’s Here on Earth (D2L)

Final Exam: Your final exam, which I will distribute at the close of class on Dec. 10, will be due to our dropbox folder by 11:59 PM on Sunday, Dec. 15. For our final meeting, which is Tuesday, Dec. 17, 10:30-12:30 (when you might otherwise take an in-class exam) you will present, in groups of three, one policy idea whose strengths and weaknesses you have researched. You will have 8-10 minutes in which to present your conclusions to the class.