

What Good is Nature?
2:00 - 2:50 Tuesday, 127 Chiles

ENVS 199: College Connections
Fall 2008, CRN: 15901

FIG Instructor: Ted Toadvine, toadvine@uoregon.edu
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Office: Douglas Hall; Office Hours: MW 1:00 - 3:00, TR 4:00 - 5:00

Other Courses in the FIG: ENVS 201: Intro. to Environmental Studies: Social Sciences (Peter Walker)
PHIL 110: Human Nature (John Lysaker)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our course is designed to introduce you to life at the university and to challenging ideas about the place of humans in nature. Drawing on the topics of your two FIG courses, we will ponder the following questions: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be a part of nature? How are we to understand the intersection of these two aspects of our lives, and how can we be true to each? Are humans essentially alienated from the rest of nature, so that the best thing that we can do is to leave it alone? Or is there some way that we can lead fulfilling lives as humans while still being a part of, and integrated into, the ecosystem around us? We will consider what our answers to these questions mean for the concrete decisions that we make in our lives day-to-day.

While pursuing these ideas, we will also have the goal of helping you adjust to the university and introducing you to its many resources and opportunities. We will help you to develop essential academic survival skills, provide you with a support network, answer your questions about how the university works, help you to understand the learning process better, and generally encourage you to make the most of your college experience.

REQUIRED TEXT

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit* (Bantam Books, 1995)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

- Prepare work in accordance with acceptable university standards
- Participate comfortably in class discussions and in individual interactions with faculty members
- Present material to the class in a relaxed and professional manner
- Use the Knight library and current technology for research and other academic purposes
- Use good study habits and time-management skills
- Identify their own degree goals and plan a practical path to the completion of their degrees
- Become active enquirers and learners
- Recognize connections between courses in different disciplines and the relevance of these courses to their own lives

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is offered on a Pass/No Pass basis. To pass the class, you must do the following:

1. Attend and participate in the regularly scheduled class meetings. You are permitted one absence. If you miss a second class, you must schedule a make-up meeting with Seth or complete a special additional assignment. Permission should be sought in advance of any absence. If you miss more than two class periods, you will not pass the course. Three late arrivals will count as one absence.
2. Meet one-on-one with Seth at least twice during the term.

3. Complete a two-year educational plan.
4. Complete in a satisfactory way at least four of the following assignments:
 - a. **Personal Reflection Essay:** Complete a one-page, single-spaced, typed essay describing the kind of person that you hope to be when you graduate from college;
 - b. **Library Tour:** Attend a Knight library tour guided by Seth, to be scheduled outside of regular class time;
 - c. **Library Research Assignment:** Complete a library research assignment designed by Seth
 - d. **Faculty Interview:** Visit one of your current faculty member's office hours, conduct a brief interview, and submit a one-page, single-spaced, typed summary of what you learned;
 - e. **Campus Resource Presentation:** Work with a group of your classmates to investigate a campus resource and report your findings in a brief (~3 minutes) presentation to the class.

CALENDAR

WEEK 1:

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| Tuesday, September 30 | Welcome and Introduction to the course
Examine syllabi from ENVS 201 and PHIL 110

Assign Personal Reflection Essay
Assign first Ishmael reading
Sign up for first one-on-one meeting with Seth |
| Friday, October 3 | Pizza at Track Town (Franklin Blvd. across from UO), 4:00 pm |

WEEK 2:

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| Tuesday, October 7 | Discussion: Are Humans "Natural"? (Read <i>Ishmael</i> , 1-63)
Sign up for library tours
Personal Reflection Essay due |
| Saturday, October 11 | Meet Seth and travel by bus to the Lane County Farmer's Market, 11 am |

WEEK 3:

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| Monday, October 13
Thursday, October 16 | Library Tours (divided into two groups), times and groups to be announced |
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WEEK 4:

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| Tuesday, October 21 | Discussion: Are humans bad for nature? (Read <i>Ishmael</i> , 67-110)
Library Research Assignment due |
| Friday, October 24 | Friday Afternoon Movie, 3:15 - 5:00, location TBA
<i>Blue Vinyl: The World's First Toxic Comedy</i> |

WEEK 5:

Tuesday, October 28 Academic Planning Session: Creating your Two-Year Plan
Make an individual appointment with the Advising Office
Sign up for Campus Resource Presentations

WEEK 6:

Tuesday, November 4 Discussion: How much technology is enough? (Read *Ishmael*, 113-184)
Sign up for second one-on-one meeting with Seth
Two-Year Plan due

Saturday, November 8 Field Trip: GrassRoots Garden, 1:00 - 4:00 pm (details coming later)

WEEK 7:

Tuesday, November 11 Campus Resource Presentations

WEEK 8:

Tuesday, November 18th Discussion: Envisioning a Sustainable Society (Read *Ishmael*, 187-263)
Formulate questions for next week's round-table
Faculty Interview Summary due

WEEK 9:

Tuesday, November 25 4 pm (held jointly with "The Examined Life" FIG), location TBA
Human Nature and Environmental Crisis: A Round-Table Conversation with
John Lysaker and Peter Walker

Friday, November 28 Seth's Sustainable Swing Dancing: time & place to be announced

WEEK 10:

Tuesday, December 2 Discussion: What I Wish I'd known 10 Weeks Ago
Refreshments & Course Evaluations