This intro-level course will investigate a wide range of issues concerning our place in and relation to the natural world. We’ll begin by asking what obligations, if any, we owe to other people, to animals, to plants, to endangered species, to entire ecosystems. Next we’ll consider the land in various guises including wilderness (we’ll ask if there is such a thing!), urban and national parks, agricultural terrain, gardens considered as works of art. For each case, we’ll consider proper modes of appreciation and preservation. Turning to social issues, we’ll take up such topics as overpopulation, pollution, scarcity and consumption, food and factory farming. A closing segment of the course will be devoted to specific problems that arise in Missouri and the bi-state area, including levees, locks, and flood plain development, genetically altered crops, TIF financing, development and sprawl.

There is one required text for the course, the new edition of Environmental Ethics published by Oxford University Press. Class time will be spent discussing articles in the book as well as material from an exciting new website, Philosophy and Food, maintained by the Philosophy Department at the University of North Texas.