

FIL 4532 Kontinentalfilosofi / Continental philosophy

Fall semester 2021

Teacher: Professor Arne Johan Vetlesen

The topic:

The relationship between humans and the natural world has traditionally been portrayed as dominated, rightfully, by human supremacy and human entitlement. This assertion of superiority on the part of humans has been systematically enacted in the course of the last centuries, culturally and individually, with consequences that now prove dangerous and destructive, perhaps irreversibly so. How did we get here? Does philosophy play a role in it? And is there a way out that philosophy may help illuminate?

A number of approaches to these questions will be discussed: ontological, ethical and cultural. The connection between how we think – as members of a particular culture – about, say, animals, and how we act toward them, is a central issue. So is value: is value something that human agents attribute to various objects (or beings), or is it a property encountered in them (*in re*), as claimed in moral realism? Why would this matter – say, for the notion of responsibility for ongoing destruction of the natural world? And what does it take to qualify as a grievable life, one whose loss calls for mourning? Do other-than-human lives qualify, and if so, what are the implications, ethically and culturally?

Reading list:

Jay Bernstein: Adorno. Disenchantment and Ethics. Cambridge U. P., 2001.

Judith Butler: Precarious Life. Verso, 2004.

Alice Crary: Inside Ethics. Harvard U. P., 2016.

Eileen Crist: Abundant Earth. The University of Chicago Press, 2019.

Val Plumwood: Environmental Culture. Routledge, 2002.

Arne Johan Vetlesen: The Denial of Nature. Routledge, 2015.