



Environmental responsibility

TD866 - Environmental Responsibility, what to expect?

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I'm Martin Reynolds. I'm a Lecturer in Systems and Environments, and I'm the Chair of Environmental Responsibility. I came to be interested in Environmental Responsibility at quite a very young age. I enjoyed Biology and I ended up teaching Biology in secondary school level for a while, and then I lived in Botswana for ten years, and I guess it's during that time in Botswana that I started really getting an interest in Environmental Responsibility and that started me on my studies around environmental management and international development. And the course is about exploring responsibility and we look at it in two ways. We see it in terms of caring for the environment as we are integral parts of the environment, and being accountable to the harm and wrong done to the environment. So we try to get to grips with the whole sort of complexity of environmental issues. There's a whole raft of things like bio-diversity, species protection, climate change, energy waste, water, food security, all that sort of stuff, poverty alleviation as well, at different levels. We look at the level of the individual, the family, at local community, national levels, regional levels, international global levels. There's a complexity also around different perspectives, individual perspectives. There's perspectives coming from the Government, from business, from activist groups, and each one of those perspectives, if you like, incorporates different aspects of guilt and blame, apathy, fatalism, scepticism, optimism, hope, and even trust, so there's a whole raft of different perspectives around there. And it gets very difficult, I think, for people to get a grip on what is meant by being environmentally responsible, so the course is really about how do we understand environmental responsibility, how do we do it, in a sense, and how can we be environmentally responsible? It can be seen of in terms of a caring attitude, it's actually rather like if you look at a family responsibilities. There are two types of responsibility there, when you're in a family you have a caring attitude towards members of your family, towards your children, and so forth, and you also have a kind of a sense of accountability as well, particularly in bringing up children, so it's a similar sort of thing with the environment, there is a natural kind of inclination for caring for our environment, for caring for the natural world in which we're a part, and that kind of integral nature of our relationship as humans with the natural world is becoming much more evident. So there's a way of trying to develop that sense of responsibility in a kind of a caring, proactive mode, and there's a way of looking at responsibility in terms of accountability, of actually being accountable for any harm done to the environment, particularly things like climate change brings out those kind of issues in a very, very stark way, and also being accountable for our wrongdoing to the environment. The course is aimed at people who are interested in the environment, who simply pick up the news every day whether it's by radio or by reading the newspapers, or by listening to conversations with colleagues about environmental issues, and every day these things are being raised, and people should be concerned about them. So there's one set of people, there's also more specifically there are people who are involved in environmental decision-making in various different organisations, whether they're in businesses, whether they're in government agencies, whether they may be in activist groups or local community groups, who may want to get a better handle on how to deal with these very complex issues. I think we'll probably be attracting people who tend to have quite strong feelings about the environment. We'll also be attracting people who may be a bit perplexed about the strength of feeling around these kind of issues, and want to really try to get a handle and try to appreciate other perspectives around this. I think that a lot of people will take the course in order to provide them with the ability to talk more eloquently about the issues that they're dealing with on a day-to-day basis so they can engage with their colleagues and discuss these kind of issues in a more informed manner basically. But it also, I think, will attract a more academically inclined set of people who may wish to develop their, particularly their interdisciplinary skills because these kind of issues provide a very good fulcrum, if you like, for dealing with interdisciplinary studies and, again, it's becoming much more important on the academic front as well.

