

Prof. Albert W. Lenel  
InterAmerican Campus  
Department of Communications, Arts, and Philosophy  
Topic: A Water Ethic for South Florida

Unlike most of our assignments, student will post a response to this topic prior to our in class discussion. Students should read the following paragraph, and then write a response based on their own view concerning the value of water:

Water: we are surrounded by it, we are composed of it (57% by weight), and life arose in it. Water seems to so abundant that we could never run out. No matter what direction you walk, north, east, south, or west, you will eventually run into water. 70% of the Earth's surface is covered by water. Dig a hole and what do you find? The hole will fill up with water. Water even falls out of the sky from above us! Thales, the Ancient Ionian philosopher, supposed that ultimately, everything came from, and is made out of water. Given its apparent abundance, it may seem that one problem we do not need to worry about is how we use water. After all, won't more of it simply fall from the sky? Why should we worry about how we use water?

Your writing assignment for this week concerns water. Prior to a class presentation of discussion on the topic, each of you will consider the concept of a water ethic. What do YOU think is meant by that? Write a full paragraph response, posted in Angel, offering your opinion on what is meant by a water ethic. Also, consider our situation here in South Florida, where water is not only seemly abundant, but also the basis of our tourist economy (Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, Biscayne Bay, the Everglades). What might be a specific water ethic for South Florida? Write a second paragraph on that topic. Post your two paragraph response in Angel by next class.

Next week we will, as a class, review the opinions offered by each student on the concept of a water ethic. Following the class discussion, we will research the topic online and consider the views of individuals including Luna Leopold, Cynthia Barnett, Jeremy Schmidt, Sandra Postel, and others. We will also explore web sites from Collins Center for Public Policy, [netzerowater](http://netzerowater.com), and [green.miamidade.gov](http://green.miamidade.gov), [www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch](http://www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch). as well as others. After having researched the topic, students will review their own original posts on the topic of a water ethic, and update and revise them based on the information provided by our class discussion and online research.

In my classes, students are required to post 12 writing assignments in the Angel Learning Management Suite during the semester. Each writing assignment concerns a topic involving critical thinking applied to an ethical issue. Usually, students are asked to post a response to an issue recently covered in class, giving each student an opportunity to offer their own opinion on the issue, hopefully including a well-reasoned justification for their view. After attending the EEI/CTD Workshop including very informative presentations by both Cynthia Barnett and Maribel Balbin, I decided that I would approach the issue of the ethics of water use a bit differently.

Rather than cover the information I received at the presentation to my students and then ask for a response, I think it might be more effective to have students do their writing assignment first, and then present the topic in class. I suspect that many of my students believe that, given the ease at which we can all access a seemingly endless supply of clean water (just turn on a tap!); many suppose that our use and consumption of water is not really an ethical issue at all. I plan to present the issue by reminding students of the seemingly endless supply of water. Then, I will ask for each student to post a response to the question of what a water ethic might be. I would like them to offer an opinion on both the general concept of a water ethic, and then consider what might be an appropriate water ethic for South Florida. Here is how I plan to pose the issue for which I will ask each student to offer a response: