

Ethics and the Environment (Fall 2015)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces philosophical ethics through their application to environmental issues. It requires no prior background in philosophy. We will discuss an array of questions relevant to environmental ethics, including: are ethics “real” and does our ethical vocabulary refer to objective facts about the world? What ethical framework is appropriate for tackling environmental issues? What kinds of things (humans, animals, plants, and ecosystems) have moral worth or morally relevant interests? How do we weigh the interests of the current generation against the interests of future generations when choosing environmental policies? Are the emissions of western countries unjust? How do we balance conservation of species against the interests of indigenous people? Do our ethical obligations to protect the environment prohibit us from procreating? The two main goals of the course are to provide students with a more sophisticated conceptual vocabulary to make and evaluate ethical arguments and to engage students’ ethical reasoning and reflection on environmental issues in particular.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings
W 9/2	Outline of the course. Why environmental ethics?	Make sure you have access to Jamieson’s book <i>Ethics and the Environment</i> through Ebrary and to the course website where PDFs will be posted. <i>Recommended:</i> Jim Pryor’s guides to philosophical terms and methods, reading philosophy, and writing a philosophy paper, available here: http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html , http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html , http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html
M 9/7	Labor Day: No Class	
Unit 1: Some Background in Ethical Theory		
W 9/9	Environmental problems as ethical	Jamieson, ch. 1, “The environment as an ethical question”

	problems	Brennan and Lo. "The Early Development of Environmental Ethics" from <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> (Sections 1 and 2), available online here: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/
M 9/14	Challenges to ethics: amoralism, theism, relativism ethics <i>Simulation Week: Is anyone really a nihilist?</i>	Jamieson, Ch.2, "Human morality"
W 9/16	Meta-ethics: What do we mean by 'right', 'wrong,' 'good,' 'bad'? Are there objective answers to ethical questions?	Jamieson, ch. 3, "Meta-ethics" Rachels, J., and Rachels S. 2011. "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism," from <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> . McGraw-Hill Education. Huemer, "Moral Knowledge," from <i>Ethical Intuitionism</i> . Palgrave Macmillan (Sections 5.1 and 5.5)
M 9/21	Normative ethical theories: consequentialism, deontology, virtue theory.	Jamieson, ch. 4, "Normative ethics."
Unit 2: Anthropocentric Issues in Environmental Ethics		
W 9/23	The Ethics of Belief	Clifford. 1877. "The Ethics of Belief," <i>Contemporary Review</i> . In-class Video: Political Irrationality
M 9/28	Utilitarianism and Overpopulation <i>Simulation Week: Tragedy of the commons</i>	Parfit, D. 2004. "Overpopulation and the Quality of Life" In J. Ryberg & T. Tännsjö (eds.), <i>The Repugnant Conclusion</i> . Kluwer Academic Publishers 7-22.

exercise

W 9/30	Populations growth, pollution, and resource over-exploitation	Hardin, G. 1968. "Tragedy of the Commons." <i>Science</i> , 162, 1243---1248.
M 10/5	The global carbon sink and the tragedy of the commons: climate change and global justice	Shue, H. 2010. "Global Environment and International Inequality." In Gardiner, S.M. et al. eds. <i>Climate Ethics: Essential Readings</i> . Oxford. (Accessible through Ebrary)

*Simulation week:
Production and Pollution
game*

W 10/7	Environmental justice	Shrader-Frechette. 2005. "Introduction" from <i>Environmental Justice: Creating Equality, Reclaiming Democracy</i> . Oxford. Visit the Environmental Protection Agency's website on environmental justice here: http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/
---------------	-----------------------	---

M 10/12 FALL RECESS: NO CLASS

T 10/13	Follow Monday schedule Sustainability, future generations, and the non-identity problem <i>Double Simulation week: 5 pts now or double later + Seed saving exercise</i>	Nolt. 2014. "Long-term Anthropocentrism," sec. 4.5—4.6.4. <i>Environmental Ethics for the Long Term: An Introduction</i> . Routledge. Parfit, D. 2010. "Energy Policy and the Further Future," in <i>Climate Ethics: Essential Readings</i> . Oxford. Available on NYU's Ebrary.
----------------	--	---

W 10/14	Speciesism and challenging anthropocentrism	Jamieson, ch. 5.1--5.2. Norton, B.G. 1984. "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism." <i>Environmental Ethics</i> , 6, 2.
----------------	---	---

Unit 3: Non-Anthropocentric Issues in Environmental Ethics

M 10/19 **Exam 1**

W 10/21	Eating animals	Jamieson, ch. 5.3-5.4 Pollan, M. 2003. "An Animal's Place." <i>New York Times</i> . Here: http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/an-animals-place/ Recommended: Wallace, D. F. 2004. "Consider the Lobster" <i>Gourmet</i> Here: http://www.gourmet.com/magazine/2000s/2004/08/consider_the_lobster18ff.html?currentPage=1
----------------	----------------	---

M 10/26 Anderson, E. 2004. "Animal Rights and the Values of Nonhuman Life" In Sunstein and Nussbaum (eds.). *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*. Oxford.

W 10/28	Zoos Short Paper Due	Jamieson, D. 2003. "Against Zoos." In <i>Morality's Progress: Essays on Humans, Other Animals, and the Rest of Nature</i> . Oxford.
----------------	------------------------------------	---

M 11/2	Biocentric Individualism	Jamieson, ch. 6.1. Woolf, V. 1942. "The Death of the Moth" from <i>The Death of the Moth: and other Essays</i> . New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co. Taylor. 1981. "Biocentric Egalitarianism," <i>Environmental Ethics</i> 3 Recommended: Schweitzer, A. "Reverence for Life" from <i>The Philosophy of Civilization</i> . Prometheus Books
---------------	--------------------------	---

W 11/4	Biocentric Holism	Partridge, E. 1993. "The Philosophical Foundations
---------------	-------------------	--

		of Aldo Leopold's 'Land Ethic'" igc.org/gadfly .
		Russow, L. 1981. "Why Do Species Matter?" <i>Environmental Ethics</i> , 3, 101--112.
M 11/9	Species Preservation and Conservation	Sober, Elliott. 1986. "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism." In B.G. Norton, ed. <i>The Preservation of Species</i> .
W 11/11	Plural Values, conservation, and human livelihoods	Jamieson, ch. 6.3--6.5. Recommended: Jacobson, R. 2011. "Number One With a Bullet." <i>Outside</i> . Here: http://www.outsideonline.com/1819076/number-one-bullet
M 11/16	Conservation and Indigenous People	Dowie, M. "Conservation Refugees" <i>Orion Magazine</i> . Here: https://orionmagazine.org/article/conservation-refugees/
W 11/18	Ecocentrism and Deep Ecology	Jamieson, 6.2. Naess, A. 1973. "The Shallow and the Deep, Long--Range Ecology Movement." <i>Inquiry</i> , 16, 95--100. <i>Recommended:</i> Stone, C. 1972. "Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects." <i>Southern California Law Review</i> , 45, 450--501.
M 11/23	Wilderness, Nature, and their critics <i>Simulation Week:</i> <i>Donation Simulation:</i> <i>What are your priorities?</i>	Muir, J. 1912. "Hetch Hetchy Valley" Vogel, S. 2011. "Why 'Nature' Has No Place in Environmental Ethics" in Kaebnick (ed.) <i>The Ideal of Nature: Debates about Biotechnology and the Environment</i> . Johns Hopkins University Press.
W 11/25	Thanksgiving Break	
M 11/30	Critiquing Wilderness Conservation	Guha, R. 1989. "Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: a Third World Critique." <i>Environmental Ethics</i> 11: 71--83

W 12/2	Exam 2	
M 12/7	Case Study: Climate Change and Procreation	<p>Having Children Brings High Carbon Impact: NYT (2009). Here: http://green.blogs.nytimes.com//2009/08/07/having-children-brings-high-carbon-impact/</p> <p>Young, T. 2001. "Overconsumption and Procreation: Are they Morally Equivalent?" <i>Journal of Applied Philosophy</i> 18(2).</p>
W 12/9	Case Study: Geo-engineering	Gardiner, S. 2010. "Is Arming the Future with Geo-engineering Really the Lesser Evil?" <i>In Climate Ethics: Essential Readings</i>
M 12/14	Long Paper Due	Final Class Period. Course recap.
