

Natural Resource Ethics (Fall 2014)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will engage in a dialogue with classical and revolutionary theories of ethics and justice. We will use these theories to help us wrestle with ethical problems concerning natural resource issues and to develop an understanding of the reasoning behind the various positions. The course should help you to further develop intellectual prowess, thinking independently, being open to the arguments of your opponents, exercising fair-mindedness, assessing fallacies, and developing awareness of your preconceptions. We will consider questions such as:

Should people be able to own and patent genes? Ought we to prohibit lawn watering? How should we fairly distribute food? Do people have a right to clean air? Should livestock be allowed to graze on public lands? How should we decide where to place toxic waste? Should we limit what people can do on private property? Should the US be required to reduce its rate of energy consumption? Do future generations have a right to fossil fuels? Who should pay to clean up toxic wastes?

By the end of the course, you should have increased abilities of reflection, abstract thought, and critical thinking. Your ability to write clearly and concisely on abstract concepts will improve. And, hopefully, you'll leave the course challenged, provoked, and disturbed into thinking more about these theories and issues.

REQUIRED READING

Justice and Natural Resources: Concepts, Strategies and Applications; KM Mutz, GC Bryner, and DS Kenney (2002)—labeled “JNR” on the course schedule below

Watersheds 4: Ten Cases in Environmental Ethics; LH Newton, CK Dillingham, and J Choly (2006)—labeled “WS4” on the course schedule below

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (9/1-9/5 Course Intro: What is Nature, What is a Resource, What is Justice?)

Mon., 9/1: No Class

Wed., 9/3: Intro to the course/Syllabus/What is Philosophy? What is its value?

Fri., 9/5: What do we mean by “Nature,” “Resources,” and “Justice?”

Unit 1: Theories of Morality

Week 2 (9/8-9/12) The Nature of Morality: Relativism and Nihilism

Mon., 9/8: Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (Pdf)

Wed., 9/10: Macky, “The Subjectivity of Values” (Pdf: 58—61)

Huemer, “Ethical Intuitionism” (Pdf, 5.1 and 5.5)

Fri., 9/12: “The Extended Family: The Saga of the Great Apes” (WS4: chapter 6, pp. 98—106 and 110—113).

Week 3 (9/15-19) The Nature of Morality

Mon., 9/15: Plato, “Euthyphro” (Pdf)

Wed., 9/17: Mill, “Utilitarianism” (Pdf)

Averagism v. Totalism

Fri., 9/19: “Are We the Problem?: Addressing the New Population Dilemma” (WS4: chapter 8)

Parfit, “Overpopulation and the Quality of Life” (Pdf)

Week 4 (9/22-9/26) The Nature of Morality: Utilitarianism and its Critics

Mon., 9/22: Rachels, “Debate over Utilitarianism” (Pdf)

Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (Pdf)

Wed., 9/24: Ross, “What Makes Right Acts Right” (Pdf)

Fri., 9/26: “Biological Diversity: Saving the Uniqueness of the World” (WS4: ch. 10)

Unit 2: Environmental Justice

Week 5 (9/29-10/3) Society and Government

Mon., 9/29: Hobbes, “The Leviathan” (Pdf)

Wed., 10/1: Locke, “The Second Treatise of Civil Government” (Pdf)

Fri., 10/3: **Breakout Day**

Week 6 (10/6-10/10) Justice of distribution: Egalitarianism v. Libertarianism

Mon., 10/6: Guest Lecture: Rawls, “Justice as Fairness” (Pdf)

Wed., 10/8: Guest Lecture: Nozick, “Distributive Justice” (Pdf: 45—61)

Fri., 10/10: **Breakout Day**

Week 7 (10/13-10/17) Defining Environmental Justice: What counts? (JNR: chapters 1—4)

Mon., 10/13: Procedural Justice

Wed., 10/15: “Water, Poverty, and Equity in Colorado” (JNR: chapter 3)

Fri., 10/17: TBD

Week 8 (10/20-10/24) Causes of Environmental Injustice (JNR: chapters 5—7)

Mon., 10/22: “Oil on the Rocks: The Case of the Exxon Valdez” (WS4: ch. 5)

Wed., 10/24: JNR (chapters 5-7)

Fri., 10/26: TBD

Week 9 (10/27-10/31) Addressing Environmental Injustice (JNR: chapters 8—9)

Mon., 10/27: JNR, chapter 8

Wed., 10/29: JNR, chapter 9

Fri., 10/31: TBD

Week 10 (11/3-11/7) What is Property/Land? (JNR: chapters 10—11)

Mon., 11/3: What is Property? The Lockean conception

Wed., 11/5: JNR, chapters 10—11

Fri., 11/7: No New Reading

Unit 4 Challenges for Environmental Justice

Week 11 (11/10-11/14) Future People (JNR: chapters 12—14)

Mon., 11/10: Broome, “The Future vs. the Present” (Pdf: skip pgs. 144-147 and 153-155)

Wed., 11/12: Parfit, “The Non-identity Problem” (Pdf)

Fri., 11/14: No new reading

Week 12 (11/17-11/21) Challenges for Environmental Justice: Tragedy of the Commons
and Causal Impotence

Mon., 11/17: “Skunked: Crisis in the New England Fisheries” (WS4: chapter 3)

Wed., 11/19: Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” (Pdf)

Fri., 11/21: Guest Lecture: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligation” (Pdf)

Week 13 (11/24-11/28) Fall Break

Mon., 11/24: Continue discussion of “It’s Not My Fault”

Wed., 11/26: Fall Break

Fri., 11/28: Fall Break

Week 14 (12/1-12/5) Sustainable Societies

Mon., 12/1: Theories of Sustainability

Wed., 12/3: Challenges for Sustainability

Fri., 12/5: TBD

Week 15 (12/8-12/12)

Mon., 12/8: What is your natural resource ethic?

Wed., 12/10: Final In-class Assignment

Fri., 12/12: Open office hours for final project