

# ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

**TTh ##:##-##:## ♦ Room: ###**

Traditionally, Western ethicists have focused on the rights and duties of human beings. Increasingly, theorists argue that we ought to expand the sphere of moral concern beyond the human person to include animals and ecosystems. In this class, we survey some arguments in the growing field of environmental ethics. We begin with a focus on living organisms; we examine whether we ought to limit our moral concern to humans, or if some other living beings deserve our consideration as well. Next, we survey arguments about the intrinsic value of ecosystems. We next spend some time untangling dilemmas having to do with economics, natural resources and our obligations to future generations. We finish by looking at some moral issues in agriculture, water, energy and climate change.

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Office Location: ###  
Office Hours: TBD

## **Texts and Readings**

*All readings will be distributed through the university's online platform.*

## **Learning Outcomes**

This course serves as a survey of contemporary work in environmental ethics. Students will primarily consider arguments on a variety of topics in environmental ethics and reason through practical case studies. Throughout the course, students will also:

- » Gain familiarity with some basic moral frameworks.
- » Apply moral theories to and develop a personal stance on controversial issues in environmental ethics.
- » Understand the need for ethical decision making in caring for animals and ecosystems.
- » Practice reasoning well and articulating views clearly.
- » Write clear and articulate responses and papers that show an understanding of the subject matter.

## **Assessment**

To benefit from this course, you must be prepared and engaged in class. This means being on time and completing required assignments before class.

The grading distribution is as follows:

- » Written Responses: 35%. There will be four written assignments, each 2 to 3 pages in length. These assignments could consist of reaction papers, argument reconstructions or argument analyses.
- » Case Study Analyses: 20%. I will periodically assign and collect responses to case studies. In these assignments, students will summarize the case study and suggest an optimal outcome by appeal to the moral concepts we develop in class.

- » Media Project: 15%. Students may choose to do either an audio or video project. The audio project consists of a recorded interview with a professional in biology, ecology, environmental science or some related field. The video project will be a short "consciousness raising" clip to inform others about an issue in environmental law and policy.
- » Final Paper: 20%. Students will produce an argumentative paper on one of the topics we cover in class. Some outside research and secondary sources are required. Students may build on the research they have already done for the media project.
- » Participation: 10%. Students will be expected to attend class and participate in class discussions and activities.

### **Class Policies**

*Attendance* - Assignments are frequently handed out in class, so missing a significant amount of class will result in missed written responses, missed case study analyses and a reduced class participation grade. Students will also be responsible for lecture material on the final exam. Homework response assignments must be turned in on the online platform and as a hard copy in class. Any response assignments turned in only on the online platform will not be graded. Written assignments, case study analyses, the media project and the final exam cannot be made up without a formal excuse.

*Electronic Devices* - Without express permission from the instructor, no electronic devices are allowed in class.

*Late Assignments* - Late response assignments and case studies will not be accepted without a formal excuse. The final paper and media project will be accepted after the day they are due, but either will lose a third of a grade point for each day it is late. For example, an A paper turned in one day late will be assigned an A-. For those students who present a valid formal excuse, makeup work is due by the last day of classes.

*Disabilities or Special Needs* - Any student requiring special accommodations should speak to the instructor immediately.

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

No cheating or plagiarism will be tolerated. Clear cases of cheating or plagiarizing will result in an immediate F for the assignment. Be aware that unintentional plagiarism still counts as plagiarism. If you copy a passage or idea from your notes and forget where it came from, that still counts as plagiarism. It is up to you to make sure that you properly cite any claim, passage or idea that is not your own. Ideas in student writing that are not original or properly cited will count as plagiarism. Please look over the university's policy on plagiarism carefully.

**Course Outline**

Please make sure to do the readings *before* class.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>The Scope of Moral Concern</b>	
8\29 - 8\31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> Introduction to Environmental Ethics (no reading)</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> K. McShane "Environmental Ethics: An Overview"</li> </ul>
9\5 - 9\7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> K. Goodpaster "On Being Morally Considerable"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> P. Taylor "The Ethic of Respect for Nature"</li> </ul>
9\12 - 9\14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> N. Agar "Biocentrism and the Concept of Life"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> R. Attfield "The Good of Trees"</li> </ul>
9\19 - 9\21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> T. Regan "The Case for Animal Rights"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> R. Scruton "Animal Rights"</li> </ul>
9\26 - 9\28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> A. Leopold "The Land Ethic"; A. Naess "The Deep Ecological Movement"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> J.B. Callicott "Conceptual Foundations of a Land Ethic"</li> </ul>
10\3 - 10\5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> E. Sober "Some Problems for Environmentalism"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> H. Cahen "Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems"</li> </ul>
<b>Economics and the Environment</b>	
10\10 - 10\12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> Mid-Semester Break (no class)</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> A.M. Freeman "The Ethical Basis of the Economic View of the Environment"</li> </ul>
10\17 - 10\19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> M. Sagoff "At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> D. Schweickart "Is Sustainable Capitalism an Oxymoron?"</li> </ul>
<b>Obligations to Future Generations</b>	
10\24 - 10\26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> J. Feinberg "The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> D. Parfit "Future Generations: Further Problems"</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Resources</b>	
10\31 - 11\2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> G. Hardin "Tragedy of the Commons"; "Lifeboat Ethics"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> J. Simons "Can the Supply of Natural Resources Really Be Infinite? Yes!"</li> </ul>
<b>Food</b>	
11\7 - 11\9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>T</b> G. Comstock "Ethics and Genetically Modified Foods"</li> <li>- <b>Th</b> B. Hurst "The Omnivore's Delusion"; C. Bedford "Agri-Intellectual Reason"</li> </ul>

**Course Outline (continued)**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Content</b>
	Water
11\14 - 11\16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T S. Postel "A Water Ethic"</li> <li>- Th F. Segerfeldt "Water Privatization is a Good Idea"; J.W. Dellapenna "Markets for Water: Time to put the Myth to Rest?"</li> </ul>
	Sustainability
11\21 - 11\23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T V. Smil "Science, energy, ethics, and civilization"</li> <li>- Th C. Kermisch &amp; B. Taebi "Sustainability, Ethics and Nuclear Energy: Escaping the Dichotomy"</li> </ul>
	Climate Change
11\28 - 11\30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T IPCC Summary for Policymakers; J. Broome "The Ethics of Climate Change"</li> <li>- Th S.M. Gardiner "Ethics and Global Climate Change"</li> </ul>
12\5 - 12\7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T P. Singer "One Atmosphere"</li> <li>- Th M. Risse "Who Should Shoulder the Burden?"</li> </ul>