

PHIL/EETH 4220 Environmental Ethics

10:10am – 11:00am MWF Peabody Hall Room 220

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Office Hours: 11:00am – 12:00pm MWF & by appointment

Course Description:

Is environmental degradation and destruction morally reprehensible? *Why?*

Environmental ethics is a field of philosophical ethics which endeavors to identify and articulate the moral grounds for protecting nonhuman animals (individuals as well as species), and for preserving and restoring the natural environment. As you might imagine, there is a healthy degree of disagreement among philosophers with regard to how we should answer the second question above – *Why is environmental degradation and destruction morally reprehensible?*

One of the more fundamental undertakings in environmental ethics asks us to consider the kind(s) of value that exists in the nonhuman natural world. Nature clearly has *instrumental* value for human beings, but does it also have *intrinsic* value? The western tradition in ethics has historically answered the questions - *Who/ what has intrinsic value? Who/what is directly morally considerable?* - with “only human beings” (often excluding large classes of human beings). In this course, we will explore several schools of thought in environmental ethics that challenge this assumption by arguing that non-human nature (parts and/or wholes) is directly morally considerable. We will also consider and evaluate ways of grounding moral duties to protect and preserve the natural environment which do *not* fundamentally challenge the notion that only human beings are directly morally considerable.

Course Objectives:

1. To familiarize students with the fundamental issues and questions in environmental ethics
2. To increase students' proficiency in the use of moral language and concepts
3. To develop students' ability to recognize, critique, and compose philosophical arguments
4. To encourage and invite students to participate in philosophical dialogue with assigned authors and fellow classmates

Required Texts:

Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works ed. David Schmidtz and Elizabeth Willott (Oxford University Press, 2002).

Additional reading assignments are available via the library's electronic reserve system.

Additional Resources:

Depending on your background, you may come across names and/or concepts in the assigned reading that you are unfamiliar with; you may also just wish to seek out additional information or clarification. The following sources are good places to look first:

Encyclopedia of Ethics, eds. Lawrence C. Becker and Charlotte B. Becker (New York: Routledge) 2001. (Main Library 1st Floor Reference)

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
<http://plato.stanford.edu/>

For a more in-depth look at three of the most prevalent theories in contemporary philosophical ethics I suggest *Three Methods of Ethics* (Blackwell, 1997) co-authored by Marcia Baron, Philip Pettit, and Michael Slote.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance & Participation

This is not a traditional lecture course. Each class meeting will combine lecture and discussion. It is vital to keep pace with the reading assignments. Students will receive discussion questions by email in advance of each class meeting. Students should come to class prepared to discuss these questions and to introduce their own questions provoked by the assigned reading. Meaningful participation in classroom discussions depends upon a careful and thoughtful reading. Aim to read *carefully, charitably, and critically*.

Attendance Policy: Only excused, documented absences are acceptable. If you have 5 or more unexcused absences, you cannot score higher than a B in this class; 7 or more, no higher than a C; 9 or more, no higher than a D; 11 or more, no higher than an F.

2. Quizzes

There will be at least five quizzes during the course of the semester. Quizzes will typically be announced at least one class period in advance. However, to insure that everyone is prepared for discussion, occasional unannounced quizzes may be required. Make up quizzes will be given **only** in cases of illness, which must be documented by a

physician. It is the student's responsibility to provide appropriate documentation and schedule a make up quiz within one week of the excused absence.

3. Papers

Students will be required to write three 5-7 page papers (double-spaced). In each paper, students will be expected to defend a particular position or thesis. These papers will not require any research beyond the assigned reading for the course. Paper topics will be distributed in advance, however students may also write on a topic of their choice – provided that the topic has been approved by the instructor. More detailed instructions will be distributed with the first paper topics.

Please note the following dates:

Monday, October 1st.....Paper #1 Due
Wednesday, November 7th.....Paper #2 Due
Tuesday, December 4th.....Paper #3 Due

Late papers will be penalized 5 percentage points for every day late.

4. Final Exam

The final exam for this course will be in-class and closed book. The format of the exam will be essay questions. Students will have 3 hours to complete the exam. Please note that the final exam period for this course is **Friday, December 14th at 8:00am**. This exam cannot be rescheduled, so plan accordingly.

Evaluation:

Your final grade will be calculated according to the following distribution:

Attendance & Participation.....	15%
Quizzes.....	5%
3 Papers.....	60% (20% each)
Final Exam.....	20%

And the following grade scale:

100% - 94% = A	76% - 74% = C
93% - 90% = A-	73% - 70% = C-
89% - 87% = B+	69% - 67% = D+
86% - 84% = B	66% - 64% = D
83% - 80% = B-	63% - 60% = D-
79% - 77% = C+	59% - 0% = F

Academic Dishonesty:

All work you submit for this course should be exclusively yours. While you are encouraged to discuss course material with fellow classmates, collaborative work on papers, quizzes, and the final exam is unacceptable. Your work should convey your own ideas, expressed in your own words. Reference to the words and/or ideas of others must be clearly cited. Students should familiarize themselves with the University of Georgia's Academic Honesty Policy located at <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>. Failure to comply with these standards will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the University.

Reading Schedule (Subject to Change)

(All page numbers refer to Schmidtz & Willott.)

I. Challenging Anthropocentrism in the Western Tradition

Week 1

- Mon. 08/20: Aristotle, *Politics* Book I Chapters 1-8
Genesis 1-3
Locke, "On Property"
Kant, excerpts from: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
& *Metaphysics of Morals*
- Wed. 08/22: Richard Sylvan (Routley), "Is There a Need for a New, an
Environmental Ethics?"
- Fri. 08/24: Singer, "All Animals Are Equal" (pp. 17-27)

Week 2: Nonhuman Animals

- Mon. 08/27: Carl Cohen, "The Moral Inequality of Species" (*ER*)
Joel Feinberg, "The Rights of Animals" (pp. 50-58)
- Wed. 08/29: Tom Reagan, "The Case for Animal Rights" (*ER*)
Martha Nussbaum, "Beyond Compassion and Humanity: Justice
for Nonhuman Animals" (*ER*)
- Fri. 08/31: Mark Sagoff, "Animal Liberation and Environmental Values: Bad
Marriage, Quick Divorce" (pp. 38-44)

Week 3: Other Parts of Nature

- Mon. 09/03: **LABOR DAY NO CLASS**
- Wed. 09/05: Christopher D. Stone, "Should Trees Have Moral Standing?"
(pp. 46-50)
- Friday 09/07: Albert Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life" (*ER*)
Gary Varner, "Biocentric Individualism" (pp. 108-120)

Week 4: Biocentricism & Species

- Mon. 09/10: Paul Taylor, “The Ethics of Respect for Nature” (pp. 83-95)
- Wed. 09/12: David Schmidtz, “Are All Species Equal?” (pp. 96-103)
Lilly-Marlene Russow, “Why Do Species Matter?” (pp. 137-144)
- Fri. 09/14: Tom Regan, “How to Worry About Endangered Species” (pp. 105-108)

Week 5: Holism: The Land Ethic

- Mon. 09/17: Aldo Leopold, *The Land Ethic* (pp. 27-32)
J. Baird Callicott, “The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic” (*ER*)
- Wed. 09/19: Harley Cahen, “Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems” (*ER*)
- Friday 09/21: ???

Week 6: Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology

- Mon. 09/24: Karen Warren, “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism” (pp. 234-247)
- Wed. 09/26: Roger J. King, “Caring about Nature: Feminist Ethics and the Environment” (*ER*)
- Fri. 09/28: Arne Naess, “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects” (*ER*)

II. Anthropocentric Approaches

Week 7: Virtue, Excellence, and the Good Life

- Mon. 10/01: Thomas E. Hill, Jr., “Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments” (pp. 189-199)
FIRST PAPER DUE
- Wed. 10/03: Philip Cafaro, “Gluttony, Arrogance, Greed, and Apathy: An Exploration of Environmental Vice” (*ER*)
- Fri. 10/05: Mark Sagoff, “Do We Consume Too Much?” (pp. 205-221)

Week 8: Human Flourishing, Aesthetics & Recreation

- Mon. 10/08: TBA
- Wed. 10/10: TBA
- Fri. 10/12: TBA

Week 9: Obligations to Future Generations

- Mon. 10/15: Joel Feinberg, “Future Generations” (pp. 266-267)
Garrett Hardin, “Who Cares for Posterity?” (*ER*)
- Wed. 10/17: Martin Golding, “Limited Obligations to Future Generations” (*ER*)
- Fri. 10/19: Brian Barry, “Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice” (*ER*)

III. Institutions & International Justice

Week 10:

- Mon. 10/22: Holmes Rolston III, “Feeding People Versus Saving Nature” (pp. 404-416)
- Wed. 10/24: Robin Attfield, “Saving Nature, Feeding People, and Ethics” (*ER*)
- Fri. 10/26: **FALL BREAK NO CLASS**

Week 11:

- Mon. 10/29: Henry Shue, “Global Environment and International Inequality” (pp. 394-404)
- Wed. 10/31: Peter Wenz, “Just Garbage: The Problem of Environmental Racism” (*ER*)
- Friday 11/02: Michael Martin, “Ecosabotage and Civil Disobedience” (*ER*)

IV. Environmental Practice: Preservation, Restoration, and Sustainability

Week 12: Preservation

- Mon. 11/05 : Ramachandra Guha, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique” (pp. 285-293)
- Wed. 11/07: Ian J. White, “Headaches and Heartaches: The Elephant Management Dilemma” (pp. 293-305)
SECOND PAPER DUE
- Fri. 11/09: David Schmitz, “When Preservationism Doesn’t Preserve” (pp. 320-329)

Week 13: Restoration

- Mon. 11/12: Robert Elliot, “Faking Nature” (*ER*)
- Wed. 11/14: Martin H. Krieger, “What’s Wrong with Plastic Trees?” (pp. 159-171)
- Fri. 11/16: Andrew Light, “Ecological Restoration and the Culture of Nature” (pp. 178-187)
- Mon. 11/19: Eric Katz, “The Big Lie: Human Restoration of Nature” (*ER*)

Week 14: Sustainability

- Mon. 11/26: Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” (pp. 331-340)
- Wed. 11/28: Donald Scherer, “The Ethics of Sustainable Resources” (*ER*)
- Fri. 11/30: John B. Cobb, Jr., “Toward a Just and Sustainable Economic Order” (*ER*)

Week 15: Case Studies

- Mon. 12/03: TBA
- Tues: 12/04: TBA
THIRD PAPER DUE
- Wed: 12/05: TBA