



Environmental Ethics
FALL 2009

PHIL/ES 229
MWF 1:10-2:10

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Course Description

Emerging in the 1970s, the field of environmental ethics began by sparking a rich line of philosophical inquiry largely focused on the moral status of the natural world and the non-human entities within it. What reasons do we have to give moral consideration to animals? What would it mean for us as moral agents to give this consideration? Are moral duties owed to individuals within a species, to a species as a whole, to ecosystems, or....? Do we owe the environment moral consideration because it has value for us, or because it is valuable in itself? The first half of this course invites you to reflect on key philosophical works that engage these and other related questions. In the second half of the course, we will take up newer issues within the field, including our ethical relations to the urban environment, the debate over the value of wilderness preservation; the place of the local and the global in environmental ethics, and the relationship between environmental ethics and sustainability.

Learning goals

The learning goals for this course are organized around three themes: substance, skills, and self-awareness.

With respect to substance, this course is designed to help you acquire a critical understanding of: (a) the primary reasons that led to the development of environmental ethics as a field of philosophical inquiry, including the relationship between environmental ethics and traditional normative ethical theory; (b) key concepts, issues and debates within environmental ethics, as well as the primary positions associated with these debates and reasons for and against holding these views; (c) the “unthought” in “first generation” environmental ethics, and attempts to address these omissions; (d) the relationship between environmental ethics and sustainability.

The design of this course is also intended to give you a way of developing key skills associated with philosophy in particular and the liberal arts in general. By the end of this semester, you should be better able to: (a) read “thorny” material with an inquisitive and critical mind; (b) identify and frame environmental-related ethical issues; (c) analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments; and (d) construct and defend your own philosophical positions and present them persuasively in written form.

Self-awareness as a philosophical learning goal has its roots in Socrates’ dictum that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” I hope this course will expand your capacities for (a) reasoning about ethical issues and questions of moral value associated with the environment; (b) responding ethically to environmental issues; (c) understanding the assumptions and predispositions you bring to the consideration of questions in environmental ethics; and (d) respecting well-reasoned philosophical positions, even when these positions may be at odds with your own.

Required Texts

Environmental Ethics, Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, eds. Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

The Economy of the Earth: Philosophy, Law, and the Environment, 2nd edition, Mark Sagoff. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Sense of Place, Sense of Planet, Ursula Heise, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Selected journal articles available online or on library reserve

Academic Integrity

In many environments, the principle of “reduce, reuse, recycle” is good advice. Not so, though, for environments whose primary purpose is to facilitate successful individual

learning and to model best scholarly practices. In reviewing your work, I will adhere to the College's *Academic Integrity Policy* as published in the *Student Handbook*.

Through the gift of your attention, you also help support the integrity of the learning environment. For your own sake and that of your fellow students, please no texting, tweeting, or the like while in class.

Coursework

For this course, you will be asked to submit three papers and to take a midterm and a final exam. The final will not be comprehensive.

The first paper, 5-8 pages in length, will ask you to take a “wide angle” approach to thinking about environmental ethics, and to give you practice at putting your ideas in motion. Beginning from a definition of “the environment” (which you will need to briefly defend), you’ll be asked to identify the specific entities to which moral consideration ought to be given, and why. *Unexcused late papers will be accepted up to one week after the due date, but you will lose half a grade (e.g. A- to B+) on the first day your paper is late, and every two days thereafter.*

The second paper, again 5-8 pages, will invite you to expand on one of the stances you take in your first paper, or to take a stand on the role of place in environmental ethics, using the contrasting views of Mark Sagoff and Ursula Heise as a starting point. Because the purpose of this paper is to develop a stance on one of the issues in environmental ethics where competing views exist, the overall shape of what you write will have the form of a “position paper” in philosophy. Guidelines for writing a position paper will be distributed in class. Based on the comments you receive on this paper, you may elect to revise and resubmit it to improve your grade. *Unexcused late papers may be turned in up to one week after the due date, but may not be revised and resubmitted.*

The third paper, 10-15 pages in length, will be a term paper on a topic related to our readings and discussions. Suggestions for paper topics will be distributed in class. You will be asked to develop a draft of this paper prior to the Thanksgiving break. I’ll return that draft with comments, but without a grade. The final draft, which is mandatory, will be due at the beginning of the last week of class. *Unexcused papers, either the first or final draft, will be accepted up to one week after the due date, but you will lose half a grade on the first day your paper is later, and every two days thereafter.*

Late papers will be accepted without penalty if (a) you let me know in advance your paper will be late; and (b) you have a reason that is acceptable and confirmed in writing, either from a physician, Health Services, or the Dean of Students’ Office.

The midterm and the final will comprise short-answer and essay questions. The final will be held during finals week at the scheduled time: Friday, December 18 from 10:30-12:30.

Coursework evaluation

Your final grade for this class will be based on the following percentages:

First paper	15%
Second paper	20%
Third paper	35%
Midterm	15%
Final	15%

This course will move at a quick pace. I encourage you to participate in class through raising questions, taking part in discussions, etc. In this context, it is not how often you speak but what you say that matters. Class participation can improve or detract from your grade by one-half a grade point (e.g. from A- to A or B+). At a minimum, I expect you to attend class regularly.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, Exams, and Paper Due Dates

Please come to each class meeting prepared to talk about the reading assignment for that particular day. This schedule may change at the discretion of the instructor.

Week One

9 September	Welcome and orientation to the course
11 September	Why environmental ethics in the first place? Light/Rolston, "Introduction: Ethics and Environmental Ethics," 1-11. Richard Sylvan (Routley), "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethics?" L/R 47-52

Week Two

14 September	Individual-based approaches to environmental ethics Peter Singer, "Not for Humans Only," L/R 55-64 Gary Varner, selection from <i>In Nature's Interests?</i> (on e- reserve)
16 September	Paul Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," L/R 74-84
18 September	J. Baird Callicott, "Non-Anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics," <i>American Philosophical Quarterly</i> 21 (4), 199-209 http://www.jstor.org/stable/20014060

Week Three

21 September	Holistic-based approaches to environmental ethics Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," L/R 38-46, "Marshland Elegy; "The Land Health Concept and Conservation" (on e-reserve).
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- 23 September J. Baird Callicott, "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic," from *Companion to a Sand County Almanac* (on e-reserve)
- 25 September Arne Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," L/R 262-274
Warwick Fox, "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of our Time?" L/R 252-261
- Week Four**
28 September **Contested issues: instrumental value vs. intrinsic value**
John O'Neill, "The Varieties of Intrinsic Value," L/R 131-142
FIRST PAPER DUE
- 30 September Holmes Rolston III, "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value," L/R 142-153
- 2 October Brian Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," L/R 163-174
- Week Five**
5 October **Contested issues: protecting the environment vs. protecting the rights of animals**
H. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair," *Environmental Ethics* 2 (1980), 311-338 (on e-reserve)
- 7 October Dale Jamieson, "[Animal Liberation is an Environmental Ethics](#)"
Eric Katz, "Is there a Place for Animals in the Moral Consideration of Nature?" L/R 85-94
- Of special interest:** the [Macalester International Roundtable: Global Environment: The Eleventh Hour?](#) October 8-10
- 9 October Gary Varner, "Can Animal Rights Activists be Environmentalists?" L/R 95-113
- Week Six**
12 October **Contested issues: species preservation**
[US Endangered Species Act](#), Sections 1-4
Lilly Marlene-Russow, "Why do Species Matter?" *Environmental Ethics* 3 (1980), 101-112 (on e-reserve)
- 14 October Holmes Rolston III, "Diversity and Complexity Values," in *Conserving Natural Value* (on e-reserve)
- 16 October I will be attending a Scholars at Risk board meeting in New York. Class time will be used for library research that will help you get started on your term paper. Please use this time to identify the topic for your term paper and the provisional thesis that you'll be defending, along

with at least three sources upon which you'll draw in the course of your thinking, and e-mail these to me by the beginning of class on 21 October.

Week Seven
19 October

MIDTERM

Emerging Themes in Environmental Ethics

The Place of the Local and the Global

21 October J. Baird Callicott, "The Future of Environmental Philosophy"
Ethics and the Environment 12 (2), 119-120
<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.macalester.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=keh&AN=29363022&site=ehost-live>
Bill McKibben, "[What Green Means](#)"

23 October Mark Sagoff, Chapters 1 and 8, Ursula Heise, Introduction

Week Eight

26 October Heise, Chapter 1

28 October Sagoff, Chapters 9 and 10

SECOND PAPER DUE

30 October Fall Break—no class meeting

Week Nine

2 November Heise, Chapters 2 and 3

Debates over the Ethics of Wilderness Protection

4 November [US Wilderness Act of 1964](#), Sections 1-4
Michael Nelson, "An Amalgamation of Wilderness Protection Arguments," L/R 413-435

6 November Ramachandra Guha, "[Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique.](#)"
Thomas H. Birch, "[The Incarceration of Wildness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons](#)"

Week Ten

9 November J. Baird Callicott, "A Critique of an Alternative to the Wilderness Idea," L/R 437-443; Reed F. Noss, "Wilderness--Now More than Ever: A Response to Callicott," L/R 444-447

11 November Eric Katz, "The Call of the Wild: The Struggle Against Domination and the Technological Fix of Nature"; Val Plumwood, "Wilderness Skepticism and Wilderness Dualism" (on e- reserve)

- 13 November Feedback Friday: small group conversations on third paper drafts
- Week Eleven**
16 November **Consumption and Consumerism**
Sagoff, Chapters 3 and 6
- 18 November Robin Attfield, “Mediated Responsibilities, Global Warming, and the Scope of Ethics” in *Journal of Social Philosophy* 40 (2), pp. 225-236
http://www.cceia.org/media/4975_facultydev_envethics.pdf
- 20 November Peter S. Wenz, “Synergistic Environmental Virtues: Consumerism and Human Flourishing,” (on e-reserve)
- Week Twelve**
23 November **Urban Environments and Environmental Ethics**
Andrew Light, [“The Urban Blind Spot in Environmental Ethics”](#)
- 25 November Dale Jamieson, “The City Around Us,” (on e-reserve)
FIRST DRAFT OF TERM PAPER DUE
- 27 November Thanksgiving Holiday—no class meeting
- Week Thirteen**
30 November **Environmental Ethics and Sustainability**
[Unofficial UNESCO statement on ethics and sustainability](#)
Guest speaker: Dr. Suzanne Savanick Hanson,
College Sustainability Manager
- 2 December Donald Scherer, “The Ethics of Sustainable Resources,” L/R 334-355
John B. Cobb, Jr., “Toward a Just and Sustainable Economic Order”
L/R359-370
- 4 December Holmes Rolston, III, “Feeding People versus Saving Nature?”
L/R 451-462
- Week Fourteen**
7 December Robin Attfield, “Saving Nature, Feeding People, and Ethics,” L/R 463-471
- 9 December Brian Barry, “Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice,” L/R 487-499
FINAL DRAFT OF TERM PAPER DUE
- 11 December Dale Jamieson, “Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming,”
L/R 371-379; [“Ethics and Intentional Climate Change.”](#)
- Week Fifteen**
14 December End-of-semester course wrap-up
- 18 December 10:30-11:30 **FINAL EXAM**

