
ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

ENVST-UA.400/PHL-UA.0053 - SYLLABUS – FALL 2013

T Th 2-3:15pm KIMM 808

INSTRUCTOR: David Frank | df81@nyu.edu | Office location: 285 Mercer ave. # 908 | Office hours: TTh 3:15-4:15pm (after class) or by appointment.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Ben Phillips | ben.s.phillips@gmail.com | Office location: TBA | Office hours: M 2-3pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces philosophical ethics through an engagement with environmental issues of population growth and resource use, pollution and environmental justice, sustainability, non-human animal welfare, biodiversity loss, and global climate change. No prior experience with philosophy is required. The two main goals of the course are to provide students with a more sophisticated conceptual vocabulary to make and evaluate ethical arguments across domains and to engage students' ethical reasoning and reflection on environmental issues in particular.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

1. Two in-class exams (short answer and essay questions) each worth 15% of the final grade;
2. Two < 1000-word (1.5-3 page) short papers, each worth 15% of the final grade;
3. One final 1500-2000-word (5-7 page) paper critically examining a philosophical argument and/or environmental issue, worth 20% of the final grade;
4. Class participation and attendance (at lectures and discussion sections) will count for 20% of the final grade. There will occasionally be short assignments (e.g. "write three critical questions about the reading") that will be turned in at lecture and/or discussion section and count toward participation.

REQUIRED TEXTS: 1. Jamieson, D. 2008. *Ethics and the Environment: an Introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2. Gardiner, S.M. et al. eds. 2010. *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings*. New York: Oxford University Press. These books are available at the

NYU bookstore and at online retailers. Other required and recommended readings will be made available on the course website.

COURSE WEBSITE: See the Blackboard site at <http://newclasses.nyu.edu/>

OTHER RESOURCES: The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is an excellent resource. Available here: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>. See also the links to Jim Pryor's helpful guides to philosophical terms, methods, and writing and reading philosophy, in the recommended reading for September 3.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WHAT IS ETHICS? WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENT?

T SEPT 3: Welcome to the course. Welcome to philosophy. Styles of ethical reasoning. Environmental problems. Outline of the course. No required reading.

Recommended: 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>

TH SEPT 5: Environmental problems as ethical problems.

Read: 1. Jamieson, ch. 1 and 2. Brennan, A. and Y. Lo 2008. "The Early Development of Environmental Ethics" from *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/#EarDevEnvEth>

Recommended: Kareiva and Marvier. 2011. *Conservation Science*, ch. 1. "Humans are the Dominant Ecological Force."

METAETHICS AND NORMATIVE ETHICS: A WHIRLWIND TOUR

T SEPT 10: Challenges to ethics: amoralism, theism, relativism

Read: Jamieson, ch. 2.

TH SEPT 12: Metaethics: what do we mean by 'right', 'wrong', 'good', 'bad'? Are there *objective* answers to ethical questions?

Read: Jamieson, ch. 3.

T SEPT 17: Normative ethics. Consequentialism, deontology, virtue theory.

Read: Jamieson, ch. 4.

NOTE: Depending on student interest and understanding, these discussions of metaethics and normative ethics may have to be extended a week, resulting in less time for climate ethics at the end of the semester.

ANTHROPOCENTRIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

TH SEPT 19: Population growth, pollution, and resource overexploitation as tragedies of the (unregulated) commons.

Read: Hardin, G. 1968. "Tragedy of the Commons." *Science*, 162, 1243-1248.

T SEPT 24: Environmental (in)justice.

Read: Shrader-Frechette, K. 2002. *Environmental Justice: Creating Equality, Reclaiming Democracy*, Introduction.

Recommended: Visit the Environmental Protection Agency's website on environmental justice here: <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/>

Drum, K. "America's Real Criminal Element: Lead." *Mother Jones*. 2013. Available here: <http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2013/01/lead-crime-link-gasoline>

TH SEPT 26: Sustainability, future generations, and the non-identity problem.

Read: 1. Sarkar, S. 2012. "Sustainability." In *Environmental Philosophy: From Theory to Practice*, ch. 7. 2. Nolt, J. "Arguments for and against Obligations to Future Generations." Available here: <http://web.utk.edu/~nolt/courses/346/futurgen.htm>

Recommended: Roberts, M. 2009. "The Non-Identity Problem." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available here: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nonidentity-problem/>

T OCT 1: Challenging anthropocentrism: the last person argument.

Read: 1. Sylvan, R. 1973. "Is there a Need for a New, Environmental, Ethic?" *Proceedings of the 15th World Congress of Philosophy*, 1, 205-210. 2. Norton, B.G. 1984. "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism." *Environmental Ethics*, 6, 2.

Short paper 1 due.

CHALLENGING ANTHROPOCENTRISM 1: NON-HUMAN ANIMALS

TH OCT 3: Humans, other animals, and speciesism: is species membership ethically relevant?

Read: 1. Jamieson, 5.1-5.2. and 2. Williams, B. 2006. "The Human Prejudice" in A.W. Moore ed. *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Recommended: Selections from Singer, P. 1975. *Animal Liberation*. and 2. Regan, T. 1985. "The Case for Animal Rights." In P. Singer ed. *In Defense of Animals*.

T OCT 8: Managing wild populations and zoo populations.

Read: 1. Whyte, "The Elephant Management Dilemma." 2. Jamieson, "Against Zoos."

TH OCT 10: Eating animals: factory farming, vegetarianism, veganism, and the conscientious omnivore.

Read: 1. Jamieson, 5.3-5.4. and 2. Gruen, L. 2011. *Ethics and Animals*, ch. 3 "Eating Animals."

Recommended: 1. Wallace, D.F. 2004. "Consider the Lobster." *Gourmet*.

T OCT 15: Fall recess: no class.

TH OCT 17: **Exam 1**. Covers moral theory, anthropocentric environmental ethics, and animal ethics.

CHALLENGING ANTHROPOCENTRISM 2: BIOCENTRISM, BIODIVERSITY, AND SPECIES LOSS

T OCT 22: Biocentrism and biocentric individualism.

Read: 1. Jamieson, 6.1; 2. Varner, G. 2002. "Biocentric Individualism." In David Schmidtz and Elizabeth Willot, eds., *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Work*. New York: Oxford University Press, 108-120.

TH OCT 24: Biodiversity and the value of species.

Read: 1. Rolston III, Holmes. 2001. "Biodiversity." In *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*. Jamieson, ed. New York: Blackwell. 402-415 and 2. Sober, Elliott. 1986. "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism." In B.G. Norton, ed. *The Preservation of Species*.

Recommended: Russow, L. 1981. "Why Do Species Matter?" *Environmental Ethics*, 3, 101-112.

T OCT 29: Biodiversity, species preservation, and ecological tradeoffs.

Read: 1. Jamieson, 6.5. and 2. Haider, S. and K. Jax. 2007. "The Application of Environmental Ethics in Biological Conservation: a Case Study from the Southernmost Tip of the Americas." *Biodiversity Conservation*, 16, 2559-2573.

Recommended: Kaufman, L. 2012. "To Save Some Species, Zoos Must Let Others Die." *New York Times*.

TH OCT 31: Plural values, biodiversity, and human livelihoods.

Read: 1. Jamieson, 6.4. and 2. Rolston, Holmes, III. 1996. "Feeding People versus Saving Nature?" in Aiken and LaFollette eds. *World Hunger and Morality*, 2nd.

Recommended: Jacobson, R. 2011. "Number One With a Bullet." *Outside*. Available here: <http://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/nature/Number-One-With-a-Bullet.html?page=all>

CHALLENGING ANTHROPOCENTRISM 3: ECOCENTRISM, DEEP ECOLOGY, AND WILDERNESS

T NOV 5: Ecocentric holism and deep ecology.

Read: 1. Jamieson, 6.2. and 2. Naess, A. 1973. "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement." *Inquiry*, 16, 95-100.

Recommended: Stone, C. 1972. "Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects." *Southern California Law Review*, 45, 450-501.

TH NOV 7: Wilderness.

Read: 1. Guha, R. 1989. "Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: a Third World Critique." *Environmental Ethics*, 11, 71-83 and 2. Cronon, W. 1995. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." In Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York: Norton, 69-90.

Short paper 2 due.

CASE STUDY 1: HYDRAULIC FRACTURING ("FRACKING") AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS OF DOMESTIC ENERGY PRODUCTION

T NOV 12: Background on the debate surrounding hydraulic fracturing.

Interactive explanations of hydraulic fracturing, from the New York Times and the Environmental Defense Fund:

NYT: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/02/27/us/fracking.html>

EDF: <http://www.edf.org/climate/five-areas-of-concern>

Read: 1. Report from advocacy group Environment America, “Fracking by the Numbers: Key Impacts of Dirty Drilling at the State and National Level,” especially the Executive Summary, and pages 1-28, available here:

http://www.environmentamerica.org/sites/environment/files/reports/EA_FrackingNumbers_scrn.pdf

2. Pro-fracking op-eds by Joe Nocera and Bjorn Lomborg, available here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/opinion/nocera-how-to-frack-responsibly.html>

and here:

<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-fracking-good-story-by-bjorn-lomborg>

3. Especially for Thursday’s class, read Steven Cohen’s short HuffPo piece on “The Political Minefield of Hydraulic Fracturing in New York State,” available here:

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steven-cohen/the-political-minefield-of-hydraulic-fracturing-in-new-york-state-ob-2758217.html>

Other optional readings:

Bill McKibben “Why Not Frack?” and response letters, available here:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/mar/08/why-not-frack/>

John Upton “Fracking won’t fix the climate,” available here:

<http://grist.org/news/fracking-wont-fix-the-climate/>

TH NOV 14: Class presentations on the NY State moratorium on hydraulic fracturing.

CASE STUDY 2: ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

T NOV 19: Climate change: science and economics.

Read: 1. IPCC 4th Assessment Report: Summary for Policymakers. 2. Selections from Stern, N. “The Economics of Climate Change” in Gardiner et al. eds. 2010.

TH NOV 21: Climate change ethics: A perfect moral storm?

Read: 1. Gardiner, S.M. "Ethics and Global Climate Change" in Gardiner et al. eds. 2010. 3-38. 2. Gardiner, S.M. "A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics, and the Problem of Corruption." In Gardiner et al. eds. 2010. 87-98.

T NOV 26: Exam 2. Covers biodiversity, biocentrism and ecocentrism, hydraulic fracturing case study, climate change basics.

TH NOV 28: Thanksgiving break: no class.

T DEC 3: Climate change and global justice.

Read: 1. Shue, H. "Global Environment and International Inequality" in Gardiner et al. eds. 2010. 101-111. 2. Caney, S. "Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change" in Gardiner et al. eds. 122-145.

TH DEC 5: Climate change and virtues.

Read: Jamieson, D. "When Utilitarians Should be Virtue Theorists." In Gardiner et al. eds. 315-331.

T DEC 10: Climate change and individual responsibility.

Read: Sinnott-Armstrong, W. "It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations." In Gardiner et al. eds. 332-346.

TH DEC 12: Wrapping up: the future of nature. Read: Jamieson, ch. 7.

Final paper due date TBA.

COURSE POLICIES

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS: Late assignments will not be accepted or late exams given, except in cases of medical and family emergencies. For example, oversleeping will not be accepted as a legitimate excuse for missing an exam.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course. If you are not sure what counts as plagiarism, ask your TA or see NYU Arts and Sciences policy on academic integrity here: <http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>, especially section II, "Some Guidelines."

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: All students with disabilities will be accommodated. These students should see the instructor at the beginning of the course with a letter from the Moses Center to make arrangements for the semester.