

Ethics and the Environment

Fall 2017



Description

This course examines the morality of our treatment of the environment. We start with a survey of ethical theory. Do we have moral obligations to plants, species, and ecosystems? Are we morally responsible for what we do collectively? And how should we treat people in other nations and future generations? We then apply these ideas to different environmental problems. For example, do we have a duty to conserve or preserve natural resources or the wilderness? And do we have a duty not to contribute to pollution or climate change? Finally, we consider how environmental ethics relates to other issues in applied ethics. For example, how would a commitment to protect the environment interact with our commitment to feed the hungry and respect individual human and nonhuman animals?

General Information

Class

Time: MW 2:00–3:15

Place: GCASL 369

Instructor: Jeff Sebo

Email: jeffsebo@nyu.edu

Office: 285 Mercer #902

Office Hours: TR 2pm-3pm

Recitation

R1: T 12:30–1:45, 45W4 B07

R2: T 3:30–4:45, 12WV L113

Instructor: Chris Scrambler

Email: cjs664@nyu.edu

Office: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Readings

The required books for this class are

- Dryzek et al, *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* (CCS)
- Gabrielson et al, *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory* (EPT)
- Gardiner & Thompson, *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics* (EE)
- Jamieson, *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy* (EP)

These books are available online as well as (for free) through the NYU library online. All readings not from the required books will be posted on Blackboard.

Grading

Your grades will be determined as follows:

- **Papers** (70%): You will write three papers explaining and evaluating the views and arguments discussed in lecture. You will email this paper to environmentalethicsfall17@gmail.com. For each paper, you can either create your own prompt (provided that you clear it with us in advance) or select from prompts we create. Paper 1 (20%) will be 6 pages long and papers 2 and 3 (25% each) will be 8 pages long.
- **Daily Writing** (15%): Prior to each session, you will send a brief email to environmentalethicsfall17@gmail.com with the subject heading Last Name Date (e.g. Smith 9/12) that (a) summarizes one of the main claims made in the reading and (b) presents a question or comment about that claim. This assignment is due no later than 4:30pm on the day of class and will be graded Pass/Fail.
- **Attendance and Participation** (15%): We expect regular attendance and thoughtful participation from all students, in lecture as well as in recitation.

Policies

- **Late Papers/Extensions/Incompletes**: Late papers will lose 1/3 letter grade for each day late. Late DW assignments will be accepted for half credit up until the start of class. Extensions and incompletes will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. If you want to request either, please do so in advance.
- **Academic Dishonesty**: Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to an academic dean. Plagiarism includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes or references; not citing every source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else's work as your own; or copying verbatim from any source. You are subject to the CAS guidelines on plagiarism: cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity.
- **Academic Accommodations**: Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, or learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

NYU Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003-6675
Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114
Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

Schedule

Part 1: Theory

- **Week 1 - Introduction**

9/4 - Labor day

No reading

9/6 - Henry David Thoreau, "Walking"
John Stuart Mill, "On nature"

- **Week 2 - Value**

9/11 - Allen Thompson, "Humanity" (EE)

Lori Gruen, "Conscious animals" (EE)

9/13 - Clare Palmer, "Living individuals" (EE)
Freya Mathews, "Deep ecology" (EP)

- **Week 3 - Ethics**

9/11 - Avram Hiller, "States of affairs" (EE)

Benjamin Hale, "Duty & obligation" (EE)

9/13 - Ronald Sandler, "Character" (EE)
Kyle Powys Whyte & Chris J. Cuomo, "Caring relations" (EE)

- **Week 4 - Politics**

9/25 - Derek Bell, "Justice" (EE)

Kerri Woods, "Environmental human rights" (EPT)

9/27 - Sheila Jasanoff, "Law" (EP)
A. Myrick Freeman III, "Economics" (EP)

- **Week 5 - Rationality**

10/2 - Garrett Hardin, "The tragedy of the commons"
Stephen Gardiner, "Cost-benefit paralysis"

10/4 - Jonathan Aldred, "Risk & precaution" (EE)
Kenneth Shockley, "Responsibility" (EE)

- **Week 6 - Knowledge**

10/9 - Fall break

No reading

10/11 - Sheila Jasanoff, "Cosmopolitan knowledge" (CCS)
Riley Dunlap and Aaron McCright, "Organized climate change denial" (CCS)

- **Week 7 - Globalization**

10/16 - Peter Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality"
Paul Baer, "International justice" (CCS)

10/18 - John Broome, "The future versus the present"
Richard Howarth, "Intergenerational justice" (CCS)

Part 2: Practice

- **Week 8 - Consumption**

- 10/23 - Kristin Shrader-Frechette, “Energy” (EP)
Bryan Norton, “Sustainability” (EE)
- 10/25 - Anna Lappe, “The climate crisis at the end of our fork”
Andrew Szasz, “Is green consumption part of the solution?” (CSS)

- **Week 9 - Pollution**

- 10/30 - Kevin Elliott, “Pollution” (EE)
Jennifer Clapp, “The distancing of waste”
- 11/1 - Henry Shue, “Global environment and international inequality”
Henry Shue, “Subsistence emissions and luxury emissions”

- **Week 10 - Population**

- 11/6 - Elizabeth Cripps, “Population” (EE)
Diana Coole, “Population, environmental discourse, and sustainability” (EPT)
- 11/8 - Jeremy David Bendik-Keymer and Chris Haufe, “Mass extinction” (EE)
Lori Gruen, “Animals in the wild”

- **Week 11 - Development**

- 11/13 - Stephen Gardiner, “Geoengineering” (EE)
Lori Gruen, “Technology” (EP)
- 11/15 - Marion Hourdequin, “Ecosystem management” (EE)
Mark Woods, “Wilderness” (EP)

- **Week 12 - Climate change**

- 11/20 - Stephen Gardiner, “A perfect moral storm”
Robyn Eckersley, “Responsibility for climate change as a structural injustice” (EPT)
- 11/22 - Thanksgiving
No class

- **Week 13 - Liberalism, democracy, and capitalism**

- 11/27 - Adrian Parr, “Capital, environmental degradation, and economic externalization” (EPT)
Elisabeth Ellis, “Democracy as constraint and possibility for environmental action” (EPT)
- 11/29 - Rafi Youatt, “Interspecies” (EPT)
Catriona Sandilands, “Floral sensations” (EPT)

- **Week 14 - Humans, animals, and the environment**

- 12/4 - Chris Cuomo, “Gender” (EE)
Luke Cole & Sheila Foster, “Environmental racism”
- 12/6 - Joan Martinez-Alier, “Global environmental justice and the environmentalism of the poor” (EPT)
Kyle Whyte, “Indigenous environmental movements and the function of governance” (EPT)

- **Week 15 - Activism, advocacy, and philanthropy**

- 12/11 - Ben Minteer, “Pragmatism” (EE)
Emily Ray & Sean Parson, “Reimagining radical environmentalism” (EPT)
- 12/12 - Robert Figueroa & Claudia Mills, “Environmental justice” (EP)
Ned Hettinger, “Environmental disobedience” (EP)
- 12/13 - Andrew Fiala, “Playing a requiem on the Titanic”
Brian Treanor, “Hope in the age of the Anthropocene”