



Environmental Ethics

Lecturer: Dr. Ofer Margalit

2 lectures per week (1.5-hour lectures twice a week)

3 academic credits.

Course description

This course is an introductory survey of key issues and debates in contemporary environmental ethics and philosophy. It aims to introduce you to some of the main and controversial topics in the field of Environmental Ethics. The course will deal first with the glossary and principles of the definition of ethics. It will cover the historical roots and ideas of the way of thinking that eventually led to the current ecological crisis. We will also read and discuss some central texts in philosophy and especially in environmental philosophy; compare and contrast schools of thought, and explore the interaction of personal, social and political environmental issues. Throughout the course, students will encounter various topics and ethical dilemmas. The main goal of this course is to improve your ability to think critically, and to help you clarify our own values and life choices surrounding these topics.

Key topics include: anthropocentrism vs. ecocentrism, development vs. conservation, animal rights, nature in western and non-western religions, social ecology, Environmental Psychology, Future Generations.

Course expectations

Attendance and active participation

A fundamental requirement for the course is attending and being prepared to participate in class. The class is built equally on the reading materials, lectures, and dialogue. Active participation in discussions, asking thoughtful and meaningful questions, and listening to one another's perspective are core values of this course.

Short personal presentation

In class, students will present a 10–15-minute presentation on a selected environmental ethics theme. In their presentation, students will examine the ethical issue in the perspective of the questions and dilemmas that arise. Those who prefer not to present, have the option of writing an essay instead. More details on this assignment will be given in class.

Final exam

The final exam will be comprised of two essay questions at the end of the semester.

Grading

Attendance	10%
Active Participation	25%
Short personal presentation (or short assignment instead)	25%
Final Exam	40%

Readings:

The academic reading materials will be available in Google Docs.

Recommended reading and selected essays from:

Boylan Michael, ed. Environmental Ethics, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Jamieson Dale. Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction, Cambridge University Press, 2012 (Online publication. Print publication, 2008)

Pojman Louis P., Pojman Paul, McShaine Katie, eds. Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application, Cengage Learning, 2017.

SYLLABUS

Environmental Ethics in theory	
Week 1	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is ethics and how do we define an ethical dilemma? • History of Environmental Ethics • Course overview, expectations and learning styles 	<p>Excerpts from "Walking" by Henry David Thoreau, <i>The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art and Politics</i>, 1862.</p>
Week 2	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intrinsic and extrinsic values • Deep and shallow ecology • Explaining personal presentations 	<p>White, Lynn (1967). "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", in <i>Science</i> 155, pp. 103-120.</p>
Week 3	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthropocentrism Biocentrism and Ecocentrism • Abrahamic Religions and Indigenous Religions • Religion in an Age of Environmental Crisis 	<p>Leopold, Aldo (1949). "The Land Ethics" in <i>A Sand County Almanac</i>, pp. 27-32.</p>
Week 4	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Land Ethics • Speciesism and Carnism 	<p>Singer, Peter (1974). "All Animals Are Equal," in <i>Philosophic Exchange</i> (Vol. 5, Article 6).</p>
Week 5	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal and plants rights • Are all animals equal? • Animal ethics in animal research 	<p>Bookchin, Murray (1982). <i>The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy</i> (Ch. 2), pp. 16-43.</p>

Week 6	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Justice • Social Ecology • Ecofeminism 	Hardin Garrett (1974). "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor", in <i>Psychology Today</i> (Vol. 8), pp. 38–43.
Week 7	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life boat ethics • International polarization and the tragedy of the commons 	Partridge Ernest (2001). "Future Generations", in <i>A Companion to Environmental Philosophy</i> , pp. 428-436.
Week 8	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Generations and the temporal aspect of responsibility • The heuristic of fear • Future generations and population control 	Kyle Powys Whyte et al. (2017). "Is Technology Use Insidious?", in <i>Philosophy, Technology, and the Environment</i> , pp. 41-61.
Applied Environmental Ethics	
Week 9	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are we progressing? • Technology and its challenges • Technological optimism 	Gardiner M. Stephen (2006). "A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption", in <i>Environmental Values</i> (15), pp. 397–413.
Week 10	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics of climate change • Climate change and civil Disobedience • Guest lecture, Ilana Leizin: "Ethical Design and Consumption" 	Wager Rob, Miller I. Henry (2018). "The future of food is genetic engineering", in <i>Journal of Commercial Biotechnology</i> 24 (3).
Week 11	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical consumerism • How much is enough? • The future of food and Genetic Engineering 	Manolas, Evangelos (2015). "Promoting Pro-environmental Behavior: Overcoming Barriers", in <i>Aegean Journal of Environmental Sciences</i> (Vol. I), pp. 13-21

Environmental Ethics of responsibility	
Week 12	Readings for next week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 and the environment • Overcoming barriers and environmental behavior change • The moral responsibility of governments and individuals 	<p>Warren, Karen J. (1990). "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism" in <i>Environmental Ethics</i> 12 (2), pp. 133-146.</p>
Week 13	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phenomenology and science • Emotions and ethical interconnectivity • Secularism, spirituality and the sacred earth 	
Week 14	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course summary • Q&A and practicing for the final exam 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final exam- (date TBA) 	