



Introduction to Environmental Ethics

Lecturer: Dr. Ofer Margalit

3 hours per week ,3 academic credits, Undergraduate

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.



- Absence from class for any reason (including illness) is permitted for max. 3 hours without penalty, but the Academic Department and the lecturer must be notified in advance.
- Students with 4 to 9 hours absences will lose 15 points for each 3-hour missed from their total attendance grade. Hence grade levels will go down according to the points reduced.
- Absenteeism for any reason that exceeds 9 hours (more than 3 weeks) will be a “Fail” grade.

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 based on case studies, at the end of the semester.

Grading

Attendance	15%
Active Participation	20%
Short personal presentation (or short assignment instead)	25%
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	
Class1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should I take this course? A Course overview and main themes • A short history of Environmental Ethics • Key learning points & expectations 	
Class 2	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A short philosophical journey: Investigating ethics • Homo sapiens and Nature – it's complicated. • Intrinsic and extrinsic values 	<p>Excerpts from "Walking" by Henry David Thoreau, <i>The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art and Politics</i>, 1862.</p> <p>"Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online), 2002/2019.</p>

Class 3	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homo sapiens and Nature: Anthropocentrism Biocentrism and Ecocentrism • The Land Ethics • Explaining personal presentations 	Leopold, Aldo (1949). "The Land Ethics" in <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> , pp. 27-32.
Class 4	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal and plants rights • Speciesism and Carnism • Animal ethics in animal research 	Singer, Peter (1974). "All Animals Are Equal," in <i>Philosophic Exchange</i> (Vol. 5, Article 6).
Class 5	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis • Abrahamic Religions and Indigenous Religions • Religion in an Age of Environmental Crisis 	White, Lynn (1967). "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", in <i>Science</i> 155, pp. 103-120.
Class 6	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Justice • Bookchin's Social Ecology 	Bookchin, Murray (1982). <i>The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy</i> (Ch. 2), pp. 16-43.
Class 7	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life boat ethics • International polarization and the tragedy of the commons 	Hardin Garrett (1974). "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor", in <i>Psychology Today</i> (Vol. 8), pp. 38-43.
Class 8	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Generations and the temporal aspect of responsibility • The heuristic of fear 	Partridge Ernest (2001). "Future Generations", in <i>A Companion to Environmental Philosophy</i> , pp. 428-436.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future generations and population control • Beginning of personal presentations 	
Applied Environmental Ethics	
Class 9	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are we progressing? • Technology and its challenges • Technological optimism • Personal presentations 	Kyle Powys Whyte et al. (2017). "Is Technology Use Insidious?", in <i>Philosophy, Technology, and the Environment</i> , pp. 41-61.
Class 10	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics of climate change • Climate change and civil Disobedience • Guest lecture: TBA • Personal presentations 	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.
Class11	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical consumerism • Food Ethics • Is GMO technology insidious? • Personal presentations 	Wager Rob, Miller I. Henry (2018). "The future of food is genetic engineering", in <i>Journal of Commercial Biotechnology</i> 24 (3).
Class12	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco-feminism and Deep Ecology • Eco-phenomenology and Thoreau "Walking" • Course summary • Q&A and practicing for the final exam 	Warren, Karen J. (1990). "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism" in <i>Environmental Ethics</i> 12 (2), pp. 133-146.
Final exam	