



Introduction to Environmental Ethics

Lecturer: Dr. Ofer Margalit

3 weekly hours, 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: philosophical thinking, anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, , animal rights, Abrahamic and indigenous religions, social ecology, technology between optimism and concerns, Future Generations, Eco-feminism.

Course expectations

Active participation and class assignments

A fundamental requirement for the course is attending and being prepared to participate in class. Active participation in discussions, asking thoughtful and

meaningful questions, and listening to one another's perspective are core values of this course. The class is built equally on the reading materials, lectures, dialogue among the class members and the class's assignments. During the semester you will have a short writing assignments based on the given reading, that will help you to improve your philosophical and academic skills.

Attendance policy:

- 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%
Participation and reading assignments	20%
Short personal presentation	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, 2019.

SYLLABUS

Environmental Ethics in theory	
Class1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Should I take this course? A Course overview and main themes● Working in class on case studies● Key learning points & expectations	
Class 2	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Historical overview of Environmental Ethics○ What and why philosophy?○ Investigating ethics	Excerpts from "Walking" by Henry David Thoreau, <i>The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art and Politics</i> , 1862. "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online), 2002/2019.
Class 3	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Humans-Nature relation● Theory of value and valuation● Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism, Ecocentrism	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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Animal ethics in animal research ○ Speciesism and Carnism ● Explaining personal presentations 	<p>Singer, Peter (1974). "All Animals Are Equal," in <i>Philosophic Exchange</i> (Vol. 5, Article 6).</p>
Class 5	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis ● Abrahamic Religions and Indigenous Religions <p>Guest lecture: “Judaism: Anthropocentric or Biocentric? an exploration”, Rabbi Michael Cohen</p>	<p>White, Lynn (1967). "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", in <i>Science</i> 155, pp. 103-120.</p>
Class 6	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental Justice ● Bookchin’s Social Ecology 	<p>Bookchin, Murray (1982). <i>The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy</i> (Ch. 2), pp. 16-43.</p>
Class 7	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hardin’s Lifeboat ethics ● The tragedy of the commons and international polarization ● Beginning of personal presentations 	<p>Hardin Garrett (1974). "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor", in <i>Psychology Today</i> (Vol. 8), pp. 38–43.</p>
Class 8	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future Generations and the question of sustainable development (Case study: Future generations and population control) ● Personal presentations 	<p>Partridge Ernest (2001). "Future Generations", in <i>A Companion to Environmental Philosophy</i>, pp. 428-436.</p>
Applied Environmental Ethics	
Class 9	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is Technology Use Insidious? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological optimism • AI as case study – working in class • Personal presentations 	<p>Kyle Powys Whyte et al. (2017). "Is Technology Use Insidious?", in <i>Philosophy, Technology, and the Environment</i>, pp. 41-61.</p>
Class 10	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics of climate change • Climate change and civil Disobedience • personal presentations 	<p>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.</p>
Class11	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is GMO’s Technology insidious? • Personal presentations <p>Guest lecture: "Slow. Small. Sustainable – intro to ethics of consumerism", Illana Leizin</p>	<p>Wager Rob, Miller I. Henry (2018). "The future of food is genetic engineering", in <i>Journal of Commercial Biotechnology</i> 24 (3).</p>
Deep Ecology	
Class12	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep Ecology - ego, self and Self. (Alienation vs. self-realization) • Ethics of reciprocity (broadening the circles of responsibility) • Personal presentations 	<p>Naess, Arne (1985) “Ecosophy T: Deep versus Shallow Ecology. pp. 222-228 (<u>until the paragraph named: “Living beings have intrinsic value and a right to live and flourish”</u>). in Pojman Louis P., Pojman Paul, McShaine Katie, eds. <i>Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application</i>, Cengage Learning, 2019.</p>
Class 13	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep Ecology - continue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eco-feminism ○ Eco-spirituality & Mindfulness (connectivity and wonder) 	<p>Warren, Karen J. (1990). "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism" in <i>Environmental Ethics</i> 12 (2), pp. 133-146.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal presentations <p>Outdoor learning experience: Trip to Timna Park?</p>	
Class 14	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for final exam • Course summary and farewell 	

Final Exam