

## Philosophy 3530: Environmental Ethics

301 Family Life Bldg. | MWF 9:30 – 10:20

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*Office Hours:* Thursday 9:00 – 11:00, or by appointment

*Course Website:* [phil3530.posthaven.com](http://phil3530.posthaven.com)

**I. Course Description:** As the human population grows, transforming ecosystems and consuming the Earth's resources at increasing rates, various conflicts arise over our use of the environment and our relationship with nature and nonhuman species. Such conflicts stem from divergent understandings of values and responsibilities— i.e. conflicting views about what is good and right, and how we should live. In this course, we will examine a wide range of arguments and positions concerning the *ethical* dimensions of our relationship to the natural world, and to future generations of human beings, etc. Students will be introduced to some major perspectives in normative ethics (i.e. utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics). These perspectives will provide insight as we explore philosophical debates over land and wilderness ethics, pollution, over-population, animal rights, biodiversity preservation, climate change, and so on.

There are two main objectives for the course. First, students should leave the course with a deeper understanding of the ethical issues surrounding our use of non-human contents in the natural world, and with a deeper understanding of the ethical theories that attempt to explain our relationship to nature. Students should leave knowing what philosophers have said, and why they have said it. Second, the course should develop each student's ability to make informed decisions, and to contribute to ongoing moral discussions. In other words, the course should enhance your ability to reason— to think, discuss, and write more clearly about moral issues (i.e. critical thinking skills, and communication skills). This involves understand difficult readings, reflecting on their truth and significance, and evaluating arguments on both sides of an environmental issue.

### II. Required Texts:

(1) Environmental Ethics: The Big Question (ed. David Keller) Wiley-Blackwell (2010)

- Several additional readings will be posted on the course website [phil3530.posthaven.com](http://phil3530.posthaven.com)

### III. Requirements:

(1) Attendance and Participation—10% of course grade.

(2) Quiz One—15% of course grade.

(3) Quiz Two—15% of course grade.

(4) Three Response Papers (1-page reflection papers discussing an assigned reading; must be turned in during lecture the day the reading is discussed)—30% of course grade (10% each).

(5) Final Paper (3-4 pages)— 30% of course grade.

Evaluation of papers and written exams will be based on three criteria: (a) the clarity and organization of your written work, (b) the degree of understanding demonstrated, and (c) the depth of personal engagement and argumentation.

The purpose of a response paper is two-fold—(i) response papers are assigned to get you to engage individual readings at a deeper level, and (ii) response papers are assigned in order to enhance discussion in the classroom. For this reason, response papers must be turned in during class, and only by students who attended the lecture(s) in which that particular reading was discussed. That said, you get to decide for yourself which assigned readings you will write responses to.

Late work will not be accepted. Do not use the work of another student, and do not use anything from the web when writing your papers. If you must use the web (although I urge you not to), quote and cite everything you have used. If you do not quote and cite material that you have used, it is plagiarism. Any student caught plagiarizing will certainly fail the class, and will potentially be expelled from the university.

Handouts will be made available on all topics; they will not be posted on the website or emailed to you. Handouts are to be treated as lecture notes. They can be acquired by attending class or office hours.

#### **IV. Tentative Schedule:**

##### **Topic 1: Introduction to Ethics and Logic**

*Readings:* [1] Perry and Bratman, “The Logical Toolkit” [2] Keller, “What is environmental Ethics?” (Introduction, pg. 1-3 and 10-20)

##### **Topic 2: Anthropocentrism, God, and Nature**

*Readings:* [1] Aquinas, “Humans as Moral Ends” [2] Bacon, “The Mastery of Nature” [3] Locke “Nature as Economic Resource” [4] Routley-Sylvan, “Is there A Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?” [5] Beckerman and Pasek, “In Defense of Anthropocentrism”

##### **Topic 3: Toward a Non-Anthropocentric Ethic**

*Readings:* [1] Passmore, “Man’s Responsibility for Nature” [2] Norton, “The Cultural Approach to Conservation Biology” [3] Howarth, “Neither Use nor Ornament: A Consumers Guide to Care” [4] Muir, “The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West (recommended)

##### **Topic 4: Utilitarian and Economic Valuation**

*Readings:* [1] J.S. Mill, “Utilitarianism” (Ch. 2) [2] E.O. Wilson, “The Environmental Ethic” [3] Pearce, Markandya & Barber, “Economic Valuation of Environmental Goods” [4] Pearce “A Reply to Some Criticisms” [5] Sagoff, “Some Problems with Environmental Economics”

\* *Quiz 1: Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> (in class)*

### **Topic 5: Environmental Goods, Population, and Cooperation**

*Readings:* [1] Hardin, “The Ecological Necessity of Confronting the Problem of Human Overpopulation” [2] J.L. Mackie, “Game Theory Analysis” [3] Malthus “An Essay on the Principle of Population” [4] Plato, “Republic (Book II)” [5] Ehrlich and Holdren, “Impact of Population Growth”

### **Topic 6: Duty, Value, and Respect for Nature**

*Readings:* [1] Immanuel Kant, “Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals (Section II),” [2] Immanuel Kant, “Indirect Duties to Non-Humans,” [3] Paul Taylor, “The Ethics of Respect for Nature,” [4] *Stanford Encyclopedia* “Biodiversity Preservation”

### **Topic 7: The Status of Non-Human Animals**

*Readings:* [1] Singer, “All Animals are Equal” [2] Regan “Animals as Subjects of a Life” [3] Sterba “Kantians and Utilitarians and the Moral Status of Nonhuman Animals”

### **Topic 6: Environmental Virtue Ethics**

*Readings:* [1] Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics” (selections) [2] Hepburn, “Wonder” [3] Hursthouse, “Environmental Virtue Ethics” [4] Sandler “Environmental Virtue Ethics” [5] Thoreau, “Walking” [6] Hursthouse, “Applying Virtue Ethics to our Treatment of Non-Human Animals”

*\*Quiz Two (Monday, October 31<sup>st</sup>)*

### **Topic 8: Science, Technology, and the Land Ethic**

*Readings:* [1] O’Neill, “Science, Wonder, and Lust of the Eyes” [2] J.S. Mill, “The Amoral Status of Nature” [3] Rolston III, “Can and Ought We to Follow Nature?” [4] Leopold “The Land Ethic” [5] Rothenberg, “Technology and the Limits of Nature”

### **Topic 9: A Deeper Ecology**

*Readings:* [1] Arne Naess, “The Shallow and Deep Ecology Movement” [2] “Identification, Oneness, Wholeness and Self-Realization” [2] Warwick Fox, “Transpersonal Ecology” [3] Plumwood, “Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism”

*\*Final Paper (Due Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup>)*