

Philosophy 3530: Environmental Ethics

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

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Office Hours: Tuesday 9:30 – 11:00, or by appointment

Course Website: 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, to animals, 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 the necessary insight as we explore philosophical debates over wilderness, pollution, over-population, biodiversity preservation, animal rights, climate change, and so on.

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

III. Requirements:

- (1) *Attendance and Participation*— 10% of course grade.
- (2) *Quiz One*— 15% of course grade
- (3) *Paper One*— 20% of course grade (3-4 pages, due Wednesday, October 18th)
- (4) *Quiz Two*— 15% of course grade
- (5) *Paper Two*— 20% of course grade (3-4 pages, due Monday, November 20th)
- (6) *Quiz Three*— 20% 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: A Philosophical Introduction to Ethics and Logic

Readings: [1] Perry and Bratman, “The Logical Toolkit”

Topic 2: Anthropocentrism: Religion 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?”

Topic 3: Non-Anthropocentrism and the Value in Nature

Readings: [1] Passmore, “Man’s Responsibility for Nature” [2] Norton, “The Cultural Approach to Conservation Biology” [3] Howarth, “Neither Use nor Ornament: Consumers Guide to Care”

Topic 4: Utilitarianism, Pleasure, 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: Monday, September 25th (in class)*

Topic 5: Tragedy of the Commons: Limits for Self-Interest

Readings: [1] Hardin, “The Ecological Necessity of Confronting the Problem of Human Overpopulation” and “The Tragedy of the Commons” [2] J.L. Mackie, “Game Theory Analysis” [3] Plato, “Republic (Book II)”

- **Over-population:** *Readings:* [1] Malthus “An Essay on the Principle of Population” [2] Ehrlich and Holdren, “Impact of Population Growth” [3] Sen “Population: Delusion and Reality”
- **Climate Change and Pollution:** *Readings:* [1] Gardiner, “Ethics and Climate Change” [2] Ridley, “Climate Wars”

Topic 6: Kantian Principles and the Respect for Nature

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

**Paper One: Due October 18th*

- **Biodiversity:** [1] *Stanford Encyclopedia* “Biodiversity Preservation” [2] Sarkar “Biodiversity and Environmental Philosophy” [3] Holmes Rolston III, “Biodiversity” [4] Sober, “Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism”
- **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” [4] Hursthouse, “Applying Virtue Ethics to our Treatment of Non-Human Animals”

**Quiz Two: Friday, November 3rd*

Topic 7: Environmental Virtue Ethics

Readings: [1] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (selections) [2] Hepburn, “Wonder” [3] Hursthouse, “Environmental Virtue Ethics” [5] Thoreau, “Walking” [6] Muir, “The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West,” [7] Cafaro, “Thoreau, Leopold, and Carson: Toward an Environmental Virtue Ethics”

**Paper Two: Due Monday, November 20th*

Topic 8: Science, Technology, and the Land Ethic

Readings: [1] O’Neill, “Science, Wonder, and Lust of the Eyes” [2] Carson, *Silent Spring* [3] Leopold, *Sandy County Almanac*, and “The Land Ethic” [4] Rothenberg, “Technology and the Limits of Nature”

Topic 9: Environmental Aesthetics and Environmental Justice

Readings: [1] John Fisher, “Environmental Aesthetics” [2] Carlson “Nature and Positive Aesthetics” [3] Posner and Sunstein “Climate Change Justice” [4] Moe-Lobeda “Resisting Structural Evil (introduction)”

**Quiz Three: Friday December 8th*