Phil 3530  Environmental Ethics

Course Description

In this course, we will carefully consider moral questions that involve the environment. There is a wide range of topics to cover. We'll begin by thinking about what we'll call *ethical extensionism*. What is the appropriate range of moral obligations? Do we only have moral obligations to other *human* beings? All *sentient* beings? All *living* beings? Do we have obligations to ecosystems? Do we have obligations to abstractions like *species*? Can we have obligations to species that are more compelling than obligations to individual living beings?

We'll then turn to the issue of environmental justice. Whose interests should we have in mind when we create environmental policy? We'll look at this issue both locally and globally. We'll take into account the disproportionate impacts of environmental choices like where to place polluting institutions such as dumps and petrochemical plants. We'll also consider differing environmental needs and concerns in developing and non-western nations.

We'll talk about the nature of our moral obligations to non-human animals. What forms of life should be the subject of our moral concern? What moral principles justify arguments for various positions on this topic? What implications does that have for our eating, research, and entertainment practices?

We'll dedicate ourselves in the later part of the course to a cluster of questions related to global climate change. We'll think about whether we have obligations to future generations and, if so, what burdens society is obligated to take on to satisfy those obligations. We'll consider what our response to climate change ought to be. Is it morally acceptable to geoengineer the climate--to do things like changing the chemical composition of the stratosphere or the ocean--to roll back the effects of climate change?

Throughout, we'll be thinking about sustainability and which, if any, changes we ought to make to our ordinary practices in order to satisfy our moral obligations to all.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Understand the range and depth of moral challenges related to the environment.
2. Work through moral issues in nuanced and thoughtful ways.
3. Identify, understand, and reasonably respond to the points of view of people with whom you disagree.
4. Articulate a well-reasoned world-view on issues related to the environment.

Instructor

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Office Hours: Fridays 2:30-3:20 and by appointment on Zoom.

UTF Information

Cristian Chavez
chavez.cristian1736@gmail.com

Course Resources

Textbook:

- Other readings are available here on Canvas.

Course Requirements

Each student will:

1. Contribute to *weekly discussion boards*. Each student must provide their own response to the question prompt and respond *in a meaningful way* to the contribution of another student. (200 points, 20% of the course grade).
2. Take *two exams*, a midterm (250 points, 25% of the course grade) and a final (250 points, 25% of the course grade).
3. Complete an *environmental position paper* on the topic of the student's choosing.
   1. Rough draft. Due --- (100 points, 10% of the course grade).
   2. Final draft. Due -- (200 points, 20% of the course grade).
Evaluation Methods and Criteria

Every assignment will include a corresponding rubric that will allow the student to get a sense of the standards that will be employed in grading.

Grade Scheme

The following grading standards will be used in this class:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100 % to 93.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>&lt; 93.0 % to 90.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>&lt; 87.0 % to 83.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>&lt; 67.0 % to 60.0%</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Course Schedule/Outline

Week One (August 31st-September 4th): *Introduction to Ethics and Environmental Ethics*

*Reading: Textbook, Introduction (pg. 1) and What is Ethics (pg. 3)*

*Due (9/4): Discussion One.*

Week Two (September 7th-September 11th): *Subjectivism, Relativism, and Moral Theory*

*Reading(s):*

*Continued Discussion of What is Ethics? (pg. 3)*

*Due (9/11): Discussion Two.*
Week Three (September 14th-September 18th): Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism, and Ecocentrism

Reading(s):

Reverence for Life by Albert Schweitzer (pg.169)
The Land Ethic by Aldo Leopold (pg. 237)

Due (9/18): Discussion Three.

Week Four (September 21st-September 25th): Environmental Justice

Reading(s):

Overcoming Racism in Environmental Decision Making by Robert D. Bullard (pg. 315)

Due (9/25): Discussion Four.

Week Five (September 28th-October 2nd): Environmental Justice

Reading(s):

Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique (pg. 307)

Due (10/2): Discussion Five.

Week Six (October 5th-October 9th): Environmental Justice

Readings:

Indigenous Knowledge and Technology: Creating Environmental Justice in the Twenty-First Century by Linda Robyn (pg. 367).

Due (10/9): Discussion Six.

Week Seven (October 12th-October 16th): Review and Exam

Midterm Exam Available October 14th-October 16th on Canvas.

Week Eight (October 19th-October 23rd): Animal Ethics

Reading(s):
A Utilitarian Case for Animal Liberation by Peter Singer (pg. 96).

The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights by Tom Regan (pg 106).

Due (10/23): Discussion Seven.

Week Nine (October 26th-October 30th): Sustainability

Reading(s):

At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, or Why Political Questions are Not All Economic by Mark Sagoff (pg. 441).

The Challenge of the Future: Private Property, the City, the Globe, and a Sustainable Society by Louis B. Pojman (pg. 493).

Due (10/30): Discussion Eight.

Week Ten (November 2nd-November 6th): Food Ethics

Reading(s):

Slow Food Nation by Alice Waters (pg. 593).

One Thing to Do About Food, multiple authors, (pg. 595).

Due (11/2): Term Paper Rough Draft

Due (11/6): Discussion Nine.

Week Eleven (November 9th-November 13th): Population and Consumption

Reading(s):

A Special Moment in History: The Challenge of Overpopulation and Overconsumption by Bill McKibben (pg. 716).

The Unjust War Against Population by Jacqueline Kasun (pg. 749).

Due (11/13): Discussion Ten.

Week Twelve (November 16th-November 20th): Pollution

Reading(s):
You Are What You Breathe by Hilary French (pg. 781).

We All Live in Bhopal by David Watson (pg. 789).

Week Thirteen (November 23rd-November 27th): Thanksgiving, No Course Work.

Week Fourteen (November 30th-December 4th): Global Climate Change

Reading(s):

The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We're Not Wrong by Naomi Oreskes (pg. 608).

Ethics and Global Climate Change: An Introduction by Stephen M. Gardiner (pg. 674).

Week Fifteen (December 7th-December 10th): Geo-engineering

Reading(s):

Rethinking the Unthinkable: Environmental Ethics and the Presumptive Argument against Geoengineering by Christopher J. Preston (pg. 697).

Due (12/7) : Final Paper

Final Exam December 14th-18th on Canvas

Library Services

All USU students attending classes in Logan, at our Regional Campuses, or online can access all databases, e-journals, and e-books regardless of location. Additionally, the library will mail printed books to students, at no charge to them. Students can also borrow books from any Utah academic library. Take advantage of all library services and learn more at libguides.usu.edu/rc. (Links to an external site.)

Classroom Civility

Utah State University supports the principle of freedom of expression for both faculty and students. The University respects the rights of faculty to teach and students to learn.
Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede the learning process. Disruptive classroom behavior will not be tolerated. An individual engaging in such behavior may be subject to disciplinary action. Read Student Code Article V Section V-3 (Links to an external site.) for more information.

University Policies & Procedures

COVID-19 Classroom Protocols

In order to continue to provide a high standard of instruction at USU, and to limit the spread of COVID-19 during the pandemic, students are asked to follow certain classroom protocols during the fall 2020 semester. These protocols are in place not only for your safety but also the safety of the rest of the campus community. You will be asked to clean your desk area at the start of each class, sit in designated seats, wear face coverings, and follow dismission instructions. There may be individual medical circumstances that prevent some students from using face coverings. These circumstances will be rare, but if they do exist, we ask that everyone be respectful. It is imperative that we each do our part so that on-campus instruction can continue.

Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibilities

Academic freedom is the right to teach, study, discuss, investigate, discover, create, and publish freely. Academic freedom protects the rights of faculty members in teaching and of students in learning. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in teaching, research, and creative activities, subject to the limitations imposed by professional responsibility. Faculty Code Policy #403 (Links to an external site.) further defines academic freedom and professional responsibilities.

Academic Integrity – "The Honor System"

Each student has the right and duty to pursue his or her academic experience free of dishonesty. To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge: "I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity."

A student who lives by the Honor Pledge is a student who does more than not cheat, falsify, or plagiarize. A student who lives by the Honor Pledge:

- Espouses academic integrity as an underlying and essential principle of the Utah State University community;
- Understands that each act of academic dishonesty devalues every degree that is awarded by this institution; and
- Is a welcomed and valued member of Utah State University.

Academic Dishonesty
The instructor of this course will take appropriate actions in response to Academic Dishonesty, as defined the University’s Student Code. Acts of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- **Cheating**: using, attempting to use, or providing others with any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or in any other academic exercise or activity. Unauthorized assistance includes:
  - Working in a group when the instructor has designated that the quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity be done “individually;”
  - Depending on the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
  - Substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in taking an examination or preparing academic work;
  - Acquiring tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member, staff member, or another student without express permission;
  - Continuing to write after time has been called on a quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity;
  - Submitting substantially the same work for credit in more than one class, except with prior approval of the instructor; or engaging in any form of research fraud.

- **Falsification**: altering or fabricating any information or citation in an academic exercise or activity.

- **Plagiarism**: representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials.

For additional information go to: [ARTICLE VI. University Regulations Regarding Academic Integrity](Links to an external site.)

**Sexual Harassment/Title IX**

Utah State University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free from acts of sexual misconduct and discrimination and to fostering respect and dignity for all members of the USU community. Title IX and [USU Policy 339](Links to an external site.) address sexual harassment in the workplace and academic setting. The university responds promptly upon learning of any form of possible discrimination or sexual misconduct. Any individual may contact USU’s [Office of Equity](Links to an external site.) for available options and resources or clarification. The university has established a complaint procedure to handle all types of discrimination complaints, including sexual harassment ([USU Policy 305](Links to an external site.)), and has designated the Office of
Equity Director/Title IX Coordinator as the official responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of sexual harassment.

**Withdrawal Policy and "I" Grade Policy**

Students are required to complete all courses for which they are registered by the end of the semester. In some cases, a student may be unable to complete all of the coursework because of extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance or to retain financial aid. The term ‘extenuating’ circumstances includes: (1) incapacitating illness which prevents a student from attending classes for a minimum period of two weeks, (2) a death in the immediate family, (3) financial responsibilities requiring a student to alter a work schedule to secure employment, (4) change in work schedule as required by an employer, or (5) other emergencies deemed appropriate by the instructor.

**Students with Disabilities**

USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) (Links to an external site.) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, (435) 797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

Students who are at a higher risk for complications from COVID-19 or who contract COVID-19 may also be eligible for accommodations.

**Diversity Statement**

Regardless of intent, careless or ill-informed remarks can be offensive and hurtful to others and detract from the learning climate. If you feel uncomfortable in a classroom due to offensive language or actions by an instructor or student(s) regarding ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, contact:

- Division of Student Affairs: https://studentaffairs.usu.edu (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1712, studentservices@usu.edu, TSC 220
- Student Legal Services: https://ususa.usu.edu/student-association/student-advocacy/legal-services (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-2912, TSC 326,
- Access and Diversity: http://accesscenter.usu.edu (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, access@usu.edu; TSC 315
- Multicultural Programs: http://accesscenter.usu.edu/multiculture (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, TSC 315
- LGBTQA Programs: http://accesscenter.usu.edu/lgbtqa (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, TSC 3145
- Provost's Office Diversity Resources: https://www.usu.edu/provost/diversity (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-8176
You can learn about your student rights by visiting: The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University: https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode

Grievance Process
Students who feel they have been unfairly treated may file a grievance through the channels and procedures described in the Student Code: Article VII.

Full details for USU Academic Policies and Procedures can be found at:

- Student Conduct
- Student Code
- Academic Integrity
- USU Selected Academic Policies and Procedures
- USU Academic Policies and Procedures
- Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility Policy

Emergency Procedures
In the case of a drill or real emergency, classes will be notified to evacuate the building by the sound of the fire/emergency alarm system or by a building representative. In the event of a disaster that may interfere with either notification, evacuate as the situation dictates (i.e., in an earthquake when shaking ceases or immediately when a fire is discovered). Turn off computers and take any personal items with you. Elevators should not be used; instead, use the closest stairs.

Mental Health
Mental health is critically important for the success of USU students. As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Utah State University provides free services for students to assist them with addressing these and other concerns. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Students are also encouraged to download the “SafeUT App” to their smartphones. The SafeUT application is a 24/7 statewide crisis text and tip service that provides real-time crisis intervention to students through texting and a confidential tip program that can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship problems, mental health, or suicide related issues.