

INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Stanford University, Spring 2019

ETHICSOC 178M

(This course meets the Ethical Reasoning Requirement and it has 4-5 units.)

Tuesday & Thursday 3:00 – 4:20pm, Jordan Hall, main quad, room 050.

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Syllabus subject to revision.

Course Description:

How should human beings relate to the natural world? Do we have moral obligations toward non-human animals and other parts of nature? And what do we owe to other human beings with respect to the environment? In the first part of the course, we will examine such questions from the perspective of ethical, economic and political theory. Armed with this theoretical understanding, we will, in the second part, explore topics that arise in a policy context. Such topics will include: factory farming; in vitro meat; and an in-depth survey of climate change. A focal question of the course will be what our current ethical theories suggest regarding the extent and nature of our environmental obligations; and also what reflection on such obligations suggests about the adequacy of our ethical theories.

Office Hours:

I'll hold regular office hours by appointment between 4:30-5:15pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Stanford Law School's Cafe. If you'd like to meet another time, please don't hesitate to email me and we can make an appointment.

Class Policies:

1. I care both about your well-being and academic development. Please feel free to contact me anytime during the course. I know from experience that many students only come to office hours to discuss assignments. However, it would be great if you would also like to drop by to discuss your ideas/the readings that we cover in the class etc.
2. No electronic devices (e.g., laptops and mobile phones) in class.
3. Please show respect and courtesy at all times to your fellow students.

Readings:

All required readings will be made available on Canvas, so there are no required texts to purchase.

The required reading will come to around 50-75 pages per week. The texts demand careful attention, so please read them thoroughly and critically. You should expect to have to read some articles more than once to fully understand the arguments.

Papers:

There will be three paper assignments: two short papers (the first 750-1000 words and the second 1000-1200 words) and a longer final paper (2000-2500 words).

If you are taking the course for 5 credits the final paper must be 3000-3500 word.

The questions for the first two papers will be distributed in advance, as noted on the syllabus. The purposes of these first two papers is to develop your analytic skills in preparation for the final paper. You must select the topic of the third paper. It cannot overlap substantially with either of the first two papers that you have written. You can discuss ideas for the third paper with me during my office hours. You are also required to submit a title and a very brief plan for the third paper, as noted on the syllabus. After you have submitted the plan I will give you feedback to ensure that you are embarking on a feasible and promising topic.

Graduate students in the course may choose to write the assigned three papers or to write a longer final paper (7000 words) on a question of your choice. If you want to write a longer final paper, please let me know ASAP and before the submission due date of the first paper at the very latest.

The first two papers must be submitted as hard copies in class, as noted on the syllabus. The third paper must be submitted via Canvas in a .doc/docx format.

Late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day late, including weekends (for example: from A to A-, A- to B+, and so on). If you are unable to submit a paper on time because of a medical reason please let me know in advance of the submission due date.

Participation:

As a participant in class discussions, you are expected to find an appropriate balance between sensitive listening and thoughtful speaking. The quality of your classroom participation will be a significant part of your grade.

In order to be prepared for discussion it is essential that you come to each class having read the assigned material intelligently, and having given some thought as to how the readings relate to the course in general. You should come to class with considered views about (1) what the main claims offered in the texts or cases are; (2) the arguments offered in favor of these claims; (3) whether these are good or plausible arguments; (4) whether the claim is, all things considered, strong or plausible; (5) what alternatives to the claims and arguments exist; and (6) whether some alternative is superior to the claim under discussion.

Objections are important. But keep in mind that raising puzzles and problems (even interesting puzzles and problems) for a view is easy: we can be certain in advance that every view will face some problems. Still, we are trying to decide what to think about important issues, not playing a game or showing off debater's skills. The really hard part is to figure out what to think – what we should think – once we understand the range of theoretical options and competing arguments.

Various reading assignments (e.g., submitting questions about the readings in advance) will be assigned throughout the course.

Evaluation of Participation:

Participation will be evaluated on the following guidelines, which stress the quality rather than the quantity of contributions.

A range: The student is fully engaged and highly motivated. They are well prepared, having studied the assigned material and thought carefully about the materials' relation to issues raised in class. Furthermore, they complete all of the reading assignments and in class activities very well. This student's ideas and questions are substantive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. They listen and respond respectfully to other students' contributions.

B range: The student participates consistently in discussion. They are well prepared and contribute regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. Furthermore, they complete all of the reading assignments and in class activities reasonably well. This student refers to the materials discussed in lecture and shows interest in other students' contributions.

C range: The student meets the basic requirements of participation. They are usually prepared and participate once in a while but not regularly. This student's contributions both in class and through the reading assignments relate to the texts and the lectures and offer a few insightful ideas but do not help to build a coherent and productive discussion.

Failure to satisfactorily fulfill the criteria for participation will result in a grade of D or below.

Overall Grading Breakdown:

Short paper 1:	15%
Short paper 2:	20%
Outline for final paper:	5%
Final paper:	35%
Participation:	25%

Students with Disabilities:

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae>).

The Honor Code:

Violating the Honor Code is a serious offense, even when the violation is unintentional. The Honor Code is available at: studentaffairs.stanford.edu/judicialaffairs/policy/honor-code. You are responsible for understanding the University rules regarding academic integrity; you should familiarize yourself with the code if you have not already done so. In brief, conduct

prohibited by the Honor Code includes all forms of academic dishonesty, among them copying another student's paper, unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism (N.B. this includes buying/downloading material online and representing it as your own). If you have any questions about these matters, please ask.

Weekly overview of the course:

First Part

Week 1

April 2: Introduction

Dale Jamieson, "The Environment as an Ethical Question." (25 pp.)

I. ETHICAL THEORIES & ANIMAL ETHICS

April 4: Utilitarianism & Animals Ethics

James Rachels, "The Utilitarian Approach and the Debate Over Utilitarianism." (26 pp.)

Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal." (10 pp.)

Week 2

April 9: Deontology & Animal Ethics

James Rachels, "Are there Absolute Moral Rules?" (9 pp.)

Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights." (8 pp.)

Carl Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research." (5 pp.)

Optional

Christine Korsgaard, "Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror." (6 pp.)

Questions for the first short paper distributed

April 11: Virtue Ethics and Animals

Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics and the Treatment of Animals." (28 pp.)

II. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS & ECONOMICS

Week 3

April 16: Economics & Environmental Ethics

Mark Sagoff, "At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima *or* Why Political Questions are not All Economic." (16 pp.)

David Schmidtz, "A Place for Cost-Benefit Analysis." (23 pp.)

Please hand in a hard copy of your first paper in class

April 18: Tragedy of the Commons & Population Growth

Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons." (6 pp.)

Garrett Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics." (8 pp.)

Amartya Sen, "Population: Delusion and Reality." (18 pp.)

II. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS & VALUE

Week 4

April 23: Anthropocentrism v non-anthropocentrism

Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic." (8 pp.)

Bryan G Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism." (18 pp.)

Optional

Aldo Leopold, "Preface" and "Thinking Like a Mountain." (10 pp.)

April 25: Conservation & Preservation

The Discover Half-Earth website: <https://www.half-earthproject.org/discover-half-earth/>
(Please browse the website for approximately 10 mins.)

Christopher Stone, "Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects." (11 pp.)

Optional

Ian John Whyte, "The Elephant Management Dilemma." (14 pp.)

Week 5

April 30: Environmental Aesthetics & Environmental Ethics

Allen Carlson, "Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics and the Requirements of Environmentalism." (26 pp.)

Holmes Rolston, III, "From Beauty to Duty: Aesthetics of Nature and Environmental Ethics." (14 pp.)

May 2: Ecofeminism

Victoria Davion, "Ecofeminism." (9 pp.)

Alyssa Battistoni, "Bringing in the Work of Nature: From Natural Capital to Hybrid Labor." (24 pp.)

III. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Week 6

May 07: Environmental Justice

Kristen Shrader-Frechette, "Environmental Justice." (15 pp.)

Robert D Bullard, "Environmental Justice in the 21st Century: Race Still Matters." (17 pp.)

Optional

Michael Shnayerson, "The Rape of Appalachia." (3 pp.)

Questions for the second short paper distributed

May 09: Environmental Activism

J Baird Callicott, "Environmental Philosophy is Environmental Activism." (17 pp.)

Jason Mark, "Environmental Leaders Stage Civil Disobedience Protest at White House." (pp. 2)

YouTube Video, "Released From Prison, Climate Activist Tim DeChristopher on Civil Disobedience and Building Movements Link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgXeHk6G9ks>

(13 minutes)

Optional

There are lots of excellent documentaries on environmental activism. I recommend the following: Fierce Green Fire; Disobedience; How I learned to stop worrying and love all the things that climate can't change; Awake: A dream from Standing Rock; The East; Night moves; If a Tree Falls.

Week 7

May 14: Indigenous Perspectives

Fabienne Bayet, "Overturning the Doctrine: Indigenous People and Wilderness." (8 pp.)

Winona LaDuke, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Environmental Futures." (21 pp.)

Tom B K Goldtooth, "Stolen Resources." (2 pp.)

Second Half

IV. AGRICULTURAL ETHICS

May 16: Factory Farming & Invitro Meat

Food inc. Documentary 1h 34 mins

Stellan Welin et al., "In Vitro Meat: What are the Moral Issues?" (12 pp.)

Optional

Lori Gruen, "Eating Animals." (15 pp.)

Please hand in a hard copy of your second paper in class

Week 8

May 21: Local Food & GM Foods

Matthew Adams, "The Aesthetic Value of Local Food." (15 pp.)

Gary Comstock, "Ethics and genetically modified foods." (17 pp.)

V. THE ETHICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

May 23: Climate Change: An Introduction

Stephen Gardiner, "Ethics and Global Climate Change." (46 pp. but only excerpts of approximately 25 pp. will be assigned.)

Optional but highly recommended

Before the Flood (film)

An Inconvenient Truth (film)

Week 9

May 28: Future Generations

Steve Vanderheiden, "Climate Change and Intergenerational Justice." (32 pp.)

David Wallace-Wells, "The Uninhabitable Earth." (4 pp.)

Optional

Brian Barry, "Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice." (17 pp.)

Derek Parfit, "Energy Policy and the Further Future." (15 pp.)

Please hand in a hard copy of the title and very brief plan (less than 1 page) for your third paper in class

May 30: Global Justice & Climate Change

Robin Eekersley, "The Common but differentiated responsibilities of states to assist and receive 'climate refugees.'" (19 pp.)

Optional

Peter Singer, "One Atmosphere." (20 pp.)

Simon Caney, "Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change." (28 pp.)

*Sarah Berger Gonzalez will give a mini-presentation about her work in class today.

Week 10

June 04: Individual Responsibilities

Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "It's Not *My* Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations." (13 pp.)

Please submit your third paper via email by midnight on June 10