

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS
UEP 286 PHIL 195-01 Fall 2017

Department of Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning

Wednesday 1:30-4PM
Office: 617-627-3394

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The course investigates the rights and responsibilities of persons toward nature and all of its biological inhabitants. It acquaints students with leading ethical theories (Utilitarianism; Naturalism, Ethical Relativism, Deontology, Intuitionism; Ecofeminism, Virtue Ethics, Species Egalitarianism) and explores their relevance to the resolution of environmental conflicts between: economic development and preservation of natural resources; inexpensive food versus factory farms; consumerism versus toxic waste reduction; climate change policy versus environmental justice. Topics include: anthropocentric vs. biocentric theories for natural resource protection; precautionary principle; tragedy of the commons, ethics of cost-benefit analysis; equity and risk management; status of “rights” of non-human species and future generations; ethical considerations of sustainable development & energy use; genetically modified crops; transgenic animals; deep ecology; the culture-nature split; ecofeminism and other green social movements; economic and non-economic value of wilderness and sacred lands; ecological economics. The moral voices of writers like Leopold, Mill, Locke, McPhee, Taylor, Ehrlich, Hardin, Callicott, Singer, Commoner, Passmore, and Rollston will be discussed. Students will be encouraged to develop a coherent ethical framework for addressing environmental conflicts that is consistent with their moral and cultural values.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Studies the role of ethical reasoning in framing environmental problems
- Explores the interactions between science, ethics/values, and policy.
- Engages students in an ethical analysis of policy issues.
- Acquaints students with different ethical theories (consequentialist vs non-consequentialist; naturalism, ethical relativism, intuitionism; ecofeminism; biocentrism,) applied to environmental problems.
- Discusses the use of ethical principles and theories guiding environmental decision making (non-anthropocentrism; precautionary principle; utilitarianism; deep ecology) in discussions of natural resource protection, agriculture, climate change, rights of non-human species.

The course will be run in a quasi-discussion format with active participation from students. Students will be encouraged to clarify and sharpen their ethical perspectives on environment problems and to critically assess other perspectives

Readings:

Books: (available at the book store); articles on Trunk.

David R. Keller, ed. *Environmental Ethics* Wiley & Blackwell, 2010

John McPhee. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux

Paul W. Taylor. *Respect for Nature*. Princeton Univ. Press

Donald A. Brown. *Climate Change Ethics*. Routledge 2013.

Sept 6. Introduction: Ethics and Environmental Problems

Sess 1

The role of ethics in popular discourse and policy: 6 dimensions of policy
Distinguishing ethical from non-ethical (policy/scientific debates).
Students' experience with moral arguments.
Seminal questions in environmental ethics.

Sept 13. Ethical Theory in Practice

Sess 2

Different roles of ethics in society.
First principles: naturalism (including natural law ethics); utilitarianism;
deontological ethics; virtue ethics; intrinsic vs. instrumental value;
The dilemmas of ethical reasoning: the rhetorical power of moral
discourse. Moral realism; ethical naturalism; subjectivism; emotism.

Readings

In Keller:

“What is Environmental Ethics,” pp. 1-23

“Is there a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?” pp. 98-103.

John McPhee. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Part 1, A Mountain, pp. 1-75

James Garvey, Ch. 2. “Right and Wrong,” pp.33-55.

Sept 20. Sacred Lands vs. Natural Resources: Conservation, Preservation Development

Sess 3

How we value natural resources; land ethic; dams, river diversions;
mining, fracking; managing forests. Competing values in conflict:
preservation vs. development. Distinction between the built and natural
environment; why humans are considered outside of nature.

Readings

John McPhee. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Part 2, An Island. Part 3 A River, pp 79-245.

Aldo Leopold. “The Land Ethic.” In: *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 237-279. [T]

In Keller:

“The Amoral Status of Nature,” by John Stuart Mill, 73-77.

“Nature as Economic Resource,” by John Locke, 77-81.

“Attitudes Toward Nature,” by John Passmore, 103-109.

Kirk Johnson. Bill opening up wilderness areas to bikes also opens debate. *NYTimes* Aug. 19, 2016.

Doug Scott, Keep bikes off our wilderness trails. *NYTimes* Op Ed Sept. 5, 2016.

Sept 27. Anthropocentrism vs Biocentrism

Sess. 4 Concept of “anthropocentrism” and its importance in environmental ethics. Different forms of anthropocentrism. Can humans escape an anthropocentric viewpoint?

Readings

W.H. Murdy, “Anthropocentrism: A Modern Version, *Science* 187:1168-1172 (March 28, 1975). 28 [T]

Ronald E. Purser, Changkil Park, Alfonso Montuor “Limits to Anthropocentrism: Toward an Ecocentric Organization Paradigm? *The Academy of Management Review* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Oct., 1995), pp. 1053-1089 [T]

Tim Hayward. Ch. 3. Anthropocentrism: A misunderstood problem. In: *Political Theory and Ecological Values*, pp. 42-57. St.Martin’s Press, 1998. [T]

In Keller:

“In Defense of Anthropocentrism,” by Beckerman and Pasek, 83-88

“The Varieties of Intrinsic Value,” by John O’Neil, 120-129.

“Value in Nature and the Nature of Value,” by Holmes Rollston III, 130-137.

“The End of Anthropocentrism? by Mary Midgley, 137-142.

Oct 4 Ecological Ethics: Sustainable Agriculture & Transgenic Food Crops

Sess 5 Historical background of genetically altered crops; biopollution; GMOs vs chemical pesticides; labeling; GMOs and world hunger. Are GM crops sustainable? Post-mechanistic agricultural ethic.

Readings

In Keller,

Wes Jackson, “Nature as the Measure for a Sustainable Agriculture,” 476-490.

Keller & Brummer, “Putting Food Production in Context: Toward a Postmechanistic Agricultural Ethic,” 481-490

Sheldon Krimsky. Ethical issues involving the production, planting, and distribution of genetically modified crops. In: *Engineering the Farm*, B. Bailey and M. Lappé, eds. Pp. 11-26. Island Press, 2002. [T]

Sheldon Krimsky and Roger Wrubel. The cultural and symbolic dimensions of agricultural biotechnology. In: *Agricultural Biotechnology and the Environment*. University of Illinois Press, pp. 212-231. [T]*

Peter Rosset. Taking seriously the claim that genetic engineering could end hunger: a critical analysis. In: *Engineering the Farm*, 81-93. [T]

Paull B. Thompson. Why food biotechnology needs an opt out. In: *Engineering the Farm*, 27-43. [T]

Maarten J. Chrispeels. Biotechnology and the Poor. *Plant Physiology* 124:3-6 (September 2000). [T]*

Oct 11. Climate Change Ethics: Scientific Uncertainty & Ethical Principles
Sess. 6 Global responsibility for reducing Greenhouse gases; moral basis of the Kyoto Protocol; US position; allocating CO₂ emission between North and South; Personal and state responsibilities to combat climate change.

Readings

Donald A. Brown, *Climate Change Ethics* Chaps. 1-4.

Oct 18 Climate Change Ethics: Responsibility of Nations, Organizations & People
Sess.. 7 Which ethical theory is most applicable to the problems of climate change and sea water rise? Tragedy of the Commons; Utilitarianism; The Free Rider; Mutually Assured Destruction for Inaction.

Donald A. Brown, *Climate Change Ethics* Chaps 7-11.

Oct. 25. Environmental Theories: Deep Ecology, Social Ecology,
Sess. 8 **Ecofeminism**

Biospheric egalitarianism: social, political, economic and ecological; importance of “scale” as an independent variable in environmental sustainability; transpersonal ecology: caring for people and the biosphere;

Ecofeminism: domination of women connected to domination of nature;
nature-culture dualism.

Readings

In Keller:

“The Shallow and the Deep Ecology Movement,” by Arne Naess, 230-234

“The Heart of Deep Ecology,” by Andrew McLaughlin, 235-239

“The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects,” 240-245

“What is Social Ecology,” by Murray Bookchin, 268-275.

“The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism,” by Karen J. Warren, , 281-291.

“Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory,” by Carolyn Merchant, 291-300

Readings

Nov. 1
Sess. 9

Consumerism, Sustainability, Forms of Market Economy, & Earth Ethics.

Obligation to consume less; redefining quality of life; responsibility to future generations; North-South wealth disparity; the phenomenon of “affluenza,” the treadmill of production; theories of consumption.

Readings

Paul G. Harris. *Global Ethics and Climate Change* Ch.6. Affluence, Consumption and Atmospheric Pollution, 123-157.

Lester W. Milbrath. Redefining the good life in a sustainable society. *Environmental Values* 2:261-269 (1993). [T]

Mark Sagoff. Do we consumer too much? *Atlantic Monthly* June 1997, pp. 80-96. [B]

Paul Ehrlich et al. No middle way on the environment. *Atlantic Monthly* December 1997, pp. 98-104. [T]

K.S. Shrader-Frechette. “Voluntary Simplicity and the Duty to Limit Consumption.” In: *Environmental Ethics* by Shrader-Frechette. Boxwood Press, 1981, pp. 169-193. [T]*

Allan Schnaiberg. “The Expansion of Consumption” in *The Environment: From Surplus to Scarcity* [T]

Nov. 8: Rights and Considerations of Animals

Sess. 10 Animals as sentient beings; utilitarian vs deontological foundations for animal protection; animals in research; moral basis of vegetarianism. Is the humane exploitation of animals an oxymoron?

Readings

Louis P. Pojman. Ch. 7. Animal rights: sentience as significant. In: *Global Environmental Ethics*, pp. 106-135. [T]

J. R. Des Jardins. Ch. 6. Responsibilities to the natural world: the case for animals. In: *Environmental Ethics*, pp. 112-126. [T]

Peter Singer. All animals are equal. In: *Animal Liberation*. The New York Review, 1976, pp. 1-27. [T]

Eric Katz. Defending the use of animals by business: Animal liberation and environmental ethics. In *Nature as Subject* Rowman & Littlefield, 1997, pp. 79-80. [T]

Nov. 15. Non-Anthropocentric Ethics I

Sess. 11 Human vs. biocentric ethics; intrinsic value of living things; A non-human centered ethical theory.

Readings

Paul Taylor. *Respect for Nature*, pp. 1-99.

Nov. 22: No Class

Nov. 29 Non-Anthropocentric Ethics II

Sess. 12. Taylor's theory of biocentric ethics; resolving conflicts between humans and non-human living things; basic and non-basic rights/needs of species.

Readings

Paul Taylor. *Respect for Nature*, pp. 100-218.

Dec. 6. Critique of *Respect for Nature*:

Sess. 13. Rethinking biocentrism as a basis for environmental ethics. Cultural Theory of Environmental Ethics

Readings

Paul Taylor. *Respect for Nature*, pp. 219-313.

Don E. Marietta, Jr. In *For People and the Planet*. Temple Univ. Press, 1994, Anthropocentrism and Environmental Ethics.pp. 69-80; The status of values in nature, pp. 119-139; Contextual environmental ethics, pp. 141-153. [T]

Assignments

Class participation (includes attendance & preparedness)...	10pts	
Essay 1 (3-5 pages).....	20pts	Due Oct 4
Class presentation & analysis on designated readings.....	10 pts	TBD for each person
Topic for semester paper reviewed by instructor: 1-2 pages.....		Oct. 12
Draft Paper for peer review.....	10 pts	Nov. 16
Peer Review (2-3 pages)	10pts	Nov. 30
Semester Final Paper (at least 12 pages + ref.....)	<u>40pts</u>	Dec. 12 5PM (paper copy)
	100pts	

The semester paper is written in three stages.

1. Submit a 1-2 page problem statement, which defines your subject of investigation on Oct. 12.
2. Submit a draft of the paper which will be reviewed by me and one of your colleagues; the review is 2-3 pages (you will be given guidelines). Nov. 16
3. Submit your review of your colleagues paper on Nov. 30th.
4. Use my comments and your colleagues review to revise your paper. Final paper due Dec. 12 at 5PM.

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