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.

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

**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**  
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**

In Keller:


**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**


In Keller:

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


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


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]


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.

Sess. 8 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:
“Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory,” by Carolyn Merchant, 291-300

Readings
Nov. 1 Consumerism, Sustainability, Forms of Market Economy, & Earth Ethics.
Sess. 9

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.


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


Nov. 15. Non-Anthropocentric Ethics I
Sess. 11 Human vs. biocentric ethics; intrinsic value of living things; A non-human centered ethical theory.

Readings

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

Dec. 6. Critique of Respect for Nature:
Sess. 13. Rethinking biocentrism as a basis for environmental ethics. Cultural Theory of Environmental Ethics

Readings
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
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.)……………… 40pts Dec. 12 5PM (paper copy)

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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