

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Instructor: Tanner Hammond, PhD
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Office Hours: By Appointment
Course Dates: MTR, 1:30-4

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How should human beings relate to the natural world? Do we have moral obligations toward nonhuman animals and other parts of nature? And what do we owe future generations with respect to the environment? This course takes a philosophical and interdisciplinary approach to these questions, and includes a survey of some of the major figures (e.g. Kant, Mill, Singer, Nozick, Thomson, Foot) and theories (e.g. relativism, consequentialism, deontology) of the philosophical tradition. Students learn to identify the philosophical implications of contemporary environmental issues, analyze and assess competing arguments, and engage the conversation with rigorous argumentation of their own. Topics include: animal rights; conservation; economic approaches to the environment; environmental justice; climate change; technology and the environment; and environmental activism. Through discussion of these issues, students learn the fundamentals of argumentative writing and composition, including topic development, argumentation, outlining and organizational techniques, drafting strategies, and sentence-level clarity and concision.

COURSE TEXTS

- (1) **Articles and Selected Readings on Course Website under Distributed Readings**
- (2) *Environmental Ethics: The Big Questions*, Keller, David R. (ed.) Wiley-Blackwell, 2010
- (3) *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 3rd Edition, Russ Shafer-Landau, Oxford University Press., 2014

GRADING AND EVALUATION

Participation* and In-Class Writing Challenges:	10%
*Students who are following the course asynchronously will be assessed for participation on their in-class writing challenges, which they will upload to the course website within 24 hours of posting.	
Paper Exercise 1: Devil's Advocate:	30%
Paper Exercise 2: Philosophy in the Wild:	Ungraded
Stages of Academic Writing Assignment Series (Final Portfolio):	20%
(i) Public Intellectual Assignment	
(ii) Peer Meeting	
(iii) Conference Presentation	
Final Paper: The Philosophical Essay	40%

Important Course Policies and Additional Support

Late and Missed Assignments: Unless you make arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each class day they are late. If you submit a homework exercise or draft late, I cannot promise to read it in time for my comments to be useful to you. If you do not turn in drafts, you are still responsible for turning in final versions of your papers when they are due. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

Participation and Attendance: Since this course is a seminar, your regular attendance and participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates' learning. Under ordinary circumstances, missing more than one week of class will lower your final grade at my discretion. If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., varsity athletics, religious observances), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester.

Academic Integrity: In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in Boston University's Academic Conduct Code. All WR students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns: This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. While class rosters are provided to instructors with students' legal names, please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name than that listed in the StudentLink. You are also invited to tell me early in the semester which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Office of Disability Services: I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, BU provides many support services that are available to all students.

Disability Services is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Disability Services.

ANATOMY OF A MEETING: THE THREE CHALLENGES

Every meeting will center on three writing challenges, based on three philosophical problems posed by the professor. The challenges are designed to help you learn argumentative reasoning and writing skills, as well as to give you an avenue to practice communicating your ideas in both oral and written form. You will have ~15 minutes to draft your response to the challenge. Before you start sweating beads: These are ungraded. This is not a quiz or a 'gotcha' trap, but an opportunity to express your ideas within a community of others. Thus these are something you should look forward to doing, and should not be a source of stress or anxiety. That being said, you should put care and rigor into your responses, as the rest of the class will be reading them carefully. They will also serve as one basis for assessing course participation. At the end of each class, your responses to these challenges will be submitted to a discussion section on the course website, so that we may all benefit from each other's writing.

How to Prepare for Each Meeting: In order to complete the challenges to the very best of your ability, you will need to have already completed the reading assigned for that day.

ANATOMY OF A MEETING

OPENING THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

ASSIGNMENT INTO TEAMS

CHALLENGE ONE

PROFESSOR'S OVERVIEW OF THE BASIC CONCEPTS

FIRST IN-CLASS WRITING CHALLENGE (~15 min)

ORAL DISCUSSION OF FIRST CHALLENGE (~15 min)

CHALLENGE TWO

PROFESSOR'S OVERVIEW OF THE BASIC CONCEPTS

SECOND IN-CLASS WRITING CHALLENGE (~15 min)

ORAL DISCUSSION OF SECOND CHALLENGE (~15 min)

CHALLENGE THREE

PROFESSOR'S OVERVIEW OF THE BASIC CONCEPTS

THIRD IN-CLASS WRITING CHALLENGE (~15 min)

ORAL DISCUSSION OF THIRD CHALLENGE (~15 min)

REVIEW AND SUBMISSION OF ONE WRITING CHALLENGE TO COURSE WEBSITE

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: Schedule of Topics and Readings

FIRST DAY Introduction to Course Format; Anatomy of Meetings

Module One: Ethics Boot Camp

Before we can make headway into environmental ethics, we need to first acquire some fundamental concepts in ethical philosophy. In this module, we will learn the basics of philosophical and argumentative writing and reasoning through an intensive crash course in ethical theory.

WEEK ONE

- M:** **NO CLASS! Complete these readings for your own benefit. We will discuss them Tuesday**
What is Morality, Anyway? Objectivism, Relativism, and Skepticism
James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (course website)
Plato, *Euthyphro* (course website)
Fundamentals of Ethics, Chapters 19 & 5
(Turabian, 5.1-5.7, 6.1-6.3)
- T:** **The Pursuit of Happiness: Hedonistic Utilitarianism and its Discontents**
Fundamentals of Ethics, Chapter 9
Robert Nozick, "Experience Machine" (course website)
(Turabian, 6.3-6.6)
- TH:** **Utilitarianism and 'Lifeboat Ethics'**
Peter Singer, "The Singer Solution to World Poverty" (course website)
Jan Narveson, "Feeding the Hungry" (course website)
G. Hardin "Lifeboat Ethics"
Fundamentals of Ethics, Chapter 10
(Turabian, 13.1-13.4)

WEEK TWO

- M:** **Kant and Deontological Ethics**
Fundamentals of Ethics, Chapters 11 & 12
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* Chapter I (course website)
ASSIGN FIRST PAPER (Devil's Advocate)
- T:** **Who Deserves Respect?**
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Chapter II (course website)
Environmental Ethics, Indirect Duties to Nonhumans: Immanuel Kant
- TH:** **Animal Ethics: Kantians v. Utilitarians**
Environmental Ethics, Kantians & Utilitarians & the Moral Status of Nonhuman Life
Environmental Ethics, All Animals are Equal: Peter Singer
Environmental Ethics, The Case for Animal Rights: Tom Reagan

Module Two: Basic Problems of Environmental Ethics

In Module I, we focused on engaging the *reasoning* of argument sources with respect to a narrowly circumscribed debate in ethical theory. In order to broaden our argumentative skill set, we will now turn to practice identifying and incorporating exhibit sources as *evidence* in order to apply theoretical frameworks to applied environmental issues. In Module II, you will conduct open-ended research to develop and shape a research question that will drive a hypothetical research project. While you may end up changing topics, the skills developed here will form the basis for your final research paper.

WEEK THREE

M: **Beyond Anthropocentrism?**

Environmental Ethics, The End of Anthropocentrism? Mary Midgley
Environmental Ethics, Is the Crown of Creation a Dunce Cap?: Chip Ward
Environmental Ethics, The Ethics of Respect for Nature, Paul W. Taylor

T: **Is the Natural World Valuable In Itself?**

Environmental Ethics, The Varieties of Intrinsic Value: John O'Neill
Environmental Ethics, Value in Nature and the Nature of Value: Holmes Rolston
Environmental Ethics, The Land Ethic: Aldo Leopold from A Sand County Almanac.

TH: **Do We Owe Things to Trees? The Challenge of Deep Ecology**

Environmental Ethics, The Heart of Deep Ecology: Tom McLaughlin
Environmental Ethics, The Deep Ecology Movement: Arne Naess
ASSIGN PAPER TWO (Philosophy in the Wild)

WEEK FOUR

M: **Obligations to the Future? Sustainability and Nonexistent Persons**

Environmental Ethics, Environmental Justice and Intergenerational Debt, Clark Wolf
Environmental Ethics, The Ignorance Argument: Bryan Norton
ASSIGN FINAL PAPER

T: **The Ethics of the End of the World? Ecological Collapse and Public Policy**

Environmental Ethics, The Ends of the World as We Know Them: Jared Diamond
Environmental Ethics, A Declaration of Sustainability: Paul Hawken
PAPER TWO DUE (Philosophy in the Wild)

TH: **Lifeboat Ethics and Population Control**

Environmental Ethic, The Tragedy of the Commons: Garrett Hardin
Environmental Ethic, The Immorality of Being Softhearted: Garrett Hardin

Module Three: THE ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

Successful academic writing doesn't happen in a vacuum, but involves communicative encounters with other rational inquirers at critical stages in the process. To this end, Module III will focus on a series of interactive assignments designed to assist you along the way in composing your final paper. The culmination of these assignments will be a simulated academic conference, complete with moderating tasks and outside visitors. Recent studies suggest that thinking about problems in relation to persons outside of one's immediate circle increases creativity and improves the quality and originality of student work. In this unit, you will share what you have learned in this course with a broader academic and social community. Students will give capstone presentations of their paper topics followed by a Q&A session in which they have the opportunity to field questions and respond to peer feedback. We will invite students from previous semesters to participate in the conferences

Readings for these meetings will be determined by student interests in coordination with Prof. Hammond. Each Student will assign one reading from their planned bibliography to the rest of the class. In-Class Writing Challenges will be based on the assigned reading.

WEEK FIVE STUDENT CHOICE

M: Student Presenters will assign one reading from their bibliography

T: Student Presenters will assign one reading from their bibliography

TH: Student Presenters will assign one reading from their bibliography

WEEK SIX STUDENT CHOICE

M: Student Presenters will assign one reading from their bibliography

T: Student Presenters will assign one reading from their bibliography