

# *Environmental Ethics*

Spring 2016

M Th 2:35-4:00 Davis Seminar Room

Gray Cox

Office hours Tuesday 1-4, Wed 9-11 and other times  
by appointment or coincidence ;), 801-5712 or 460-1163

This course explores central philosophical questions and positions in Environmental Ethics and examines their applications in important and distinctive case studies. Emerging issues concerning artificial as well as natural organisms and environments will also be dealt with.

The goals are: 1.) to develop students' abilities to critically understand, explain and analyze the principal questions at issue and views taken on them as well as 2.) their abilities to develop thoughtful, creative, responsible, wise responses to the challenges posed by real life cases.

Readings will include a range of classic and contemporary essays as well as case studies. We will also read two recent books: Paul B. Thompson's, *THE AGRARIAN VISION: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS* and Steven Vogel's, *THINKING LIKE A MALL*. These represent two, quite different, contemporary directions in thinking about ethical issues concerning how humans relate to nature.

Class format will include open discussion, mini-lectures, student presentations, role plays and other exercises. There will be an optional picnic somewhere in Acadia after class on Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, weather permitting. Also, there will be optional lab/discussion sessions as needed or desired.

Evaluation will be based on demonstration of the student's progress on the two course goals through short homework assignments and participation in discussion, leading a seminar discussion as a member of a pair team, presenting a case study as a member of a small group, a short paper, two short problem sets, and a term project.

Homework assignments will include short exercises that help explore a reading or issue and prepare for class discussion. Since they will be designed to be used in class it is important to complete them when they are assigned. As part of this, teams of 3 will each prepare and lead a seminar session for forty minutes on one of the sets of assigned readings. Each team can do this in whatever way they choose. Creativity is encouraged but the key thing is to do something that helps take the class deeper into the texts of the readings and the issues raised by them.

This could involve: 1. Framing some key questions and strategies for pursuing them; 2. Providing a short mock debate representing different positions that come up in the readings; 3. Developing a short reflective exercise that gets students to apply the readings to their own experiences; 4. Outlining one or more key arguments in the text and inviting critical analysis of its assumptions and its logic; 5. Presenting some supplementary material from critics or other points of view that challenge or complement the ideas and analysis presented in the reading; 6. Providing a short role play to get people to explore the points of view involved; 7.

Presenting a short case study that helps highlight the issues raised by the reading . . . et cetera. The key thing is that as a team you should have read and reread the assignment thoroughly and have some way of helping the rest of us all enter into it and engage with it actively, in depth.

The short paper (3-4 pages) will involve critical analysis of key texts in the course. These will be discussed in one on one meetings and can be rewritten for resubmission if a revision would be useful.

The problem sets provide opportunities to review, critically compare, synthesize and summarize succinctly ideas from the diverse readings in the course. We will develop the questions for these as a class during the course of the term. The answers should be succinct and systematic -- typed, double spaced and they should normally be in the range of 4 pages in length.

For the presentations of case studies, in teams of three, students will do in depth presentations that are of interest to them. These should focus on a real life case or problem in environmental ethics. Examples might include: dealing with the management of predator populations in a national park; settling questions of sovereignty and land use management on a river contested by a tribal group and a state; sorting out what kinds of rights, if any, natural organisms should be granted in a court system in the US or elsewhere; negotiating a solution to a resource allocation issue that involves multiple parties and/or species (e. g. ocean fisheries or the carbon sink in the sky); regulating and guiding the development of some particular transformative technology that may alter the genetic characteristics of species or introduce new species or alter the structure of ecosystems or landscapes in fundamental ways.

The in-class presentation should provide some substantive background reading for the class discussion, a short (2-3 page) summary of the case and issues it involves, and a ten minute in-class presentation that reviews these and frames the discussion of them for a 30 minute class discussion of the case.

The final paper should be an 8 to 10 page paper on some case or issue in environmental ethics that is written for an authentic audience. This means that it should take the form of a report or advocacy piece that is addressed to a real world audience of people who are involved in the case. It should aim to provide them with a solution to the problems involved, a reformulation of the issues, or some other kind of analysis that will advance the quality of their ethical reasoning and decision making in the case. It would be very appropriate to do this final paper on the same topic that your case study team did an in-class presentation on.

For students who take this course for a letter grade, the weighting of work will be a mix of class participation and homework -- including the work in team leading a seminar session (20%), short paper (15%), problem sets (25 %) , case study presentation in a team (15%) and final paper (25%).

There are no prerequisites but the course presupposes a readiness to engage in critical readings of diverse, challenging philosophical texts and to undertake critical analysis of complex cases that involve multiple points of view and multiple disciplinary approaches. HS, M.

## ***Schedule***

(NOTE: This is subject to revision depending on student interests and questions that emerge during the term as focal concerns.)

### **3/28 Introductions, syllabus review, sharing questions**

**A bit of context: Mini-lecture on the History of Western Ethics**

Recommended ;-): Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton's GETTING TO YES

### **3/31 Utilitarianism and Animal Liberation**

David Schmidtz and Elizabeth Willott, "The Last Man and the Search for Objective Value"

Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal"

Mark Sagoff, "Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce"

Ian John Whyte, "The Elephant Management Dilemma"

Recommended: Holmes Rolston, II, "Values in and Duties to the Natural World"

**First Written Homework Assignment:** Pick two passages in the reading – one that you think provides a strong argument that has considerable merit and one that provides a weak or unacceptable argument. In a few sentences for each, write explanations as to why you think the one is a strong argument and the other is not.

### **4/4 Deep Ecology**

Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic"

Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary"

Arne Naess,, "Self-realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World"

Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique"

Recommended : Elliott Sober, "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism"

**NOTE:** Schedule check-in meetings with Gray for case study teams

### **4/7 Moral and Legal Standing**

René Descartes, "Animals are Machines"

James Skidmore, "Duties to Animals: The Failure of Kant's Moral Theory"

William H. Murdy, "Anthropocentrism: A Modern Version"

Christopher D. Stone, "Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects?"

Recommended:

Gary Varner, "Biocentric Individualism"

David Schmidtz, "Are All Species Equal?"

Gray Cox, "Schweitzer on Reverence for Life"

Seminar team:

**NOTE: Optional Picnic after class somewhere in Acadia – 4:00-6:00**

#### **4/11 Ecofeminism**

Kristen Hessler and Elizabeth Willott, “Feminism and Ecofeminism”

Karen J. Warren, “The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism”

Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen, “Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health”

Recommended: Gita Sen, “Women, Poverty and Population: Issues for the Concerned Environmentalist”

V. Rukmini Rao, “Women Farmers of India’s Deccan Plateau: Ecofeminists Challenge World Elites”

Henia Belalia, “Intersectionality isn’t just a win-win; it’s the only way out”, from WAGING NONVIOLENCE, MAY 27, 2014 at:

<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/intersectionality-isnt-just-win-win-way/>

Adam Ramsay, “My environmentalism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit”, from OPEN DEMOCRACY UK, March 25, 2014

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/adam-ramsay/my-environmentalism-will-be-intersectional-or-it-will-be-bullshit>

Seminar team: Elise and Emma LaVercombe

#### **4/14 The Commons**

Garret Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons”

George Monbiot, “The Tragedy of Enclosure”

Michael Soulé, “The New Conservation”, Conservation Biology, Volume 27, No. 5, 895–897, 2013 Society for Conservation Biology,

[http://www.michaelsoule.com/frontpage\\_files/76/76\\_frontpage\\_file1.pdf](http://www.michaelsoule.com/frontpage_files/76/76_frontpage_file1.pdf)

Peter Kareiva, Michelle Marvier and Robert Lalasz, “Conservation in the Anthropocene”, Breakthrough Institute

<http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/issue-2/conservation-in-the-anthropocene#>

David Schmitz and Elizabeth Willott, “Reinventing the Commons: An African Case Study”

Recommended: Terry L. Anderson and Donald R. Leal, “Free Market Environmentalism Today”

Gray Cox, “The New Entrepreneurial Ethics”

Seminar team:

**NOTE: Short Paper Due**

#### **4/18 Agroecological Ethics**

Paul Thompson, THE AGRARIAN VISION: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (AV) Introduction and ch. 1&2

College of the Atlantic ERFB website

Recommended: Ronald Sandler, “Environmental Virtue Ethics”

4/21 AV, ch. 3 & 5 (ch. 4 recommended)  
Recommended: Paul Schwennesen, "On the Ethics of Ranching"  
David Abram, "A More Than Human World"  
Selection from Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning  
Technology"  
Seminar team: Adam and Emma Creveling

4/25 **Case Studies**

1. Case Study:
2. Case Study:

**NOTE: Problem Set Due**

4/28 AV, ch. 6 & 7 (ch. 8 recommended)  
Recommended: selection from Alasdair MacIntyre, from AFTER VIRTUE  
Selection from Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash, from  
GRASSROOTS POSTMODERNISM: REMAKING THE SOIL OF CULTURES  
Seminar team: Karen and Peter

5/2 AV, ch. 9 (ch. 10 & 11 recommended)  
3. Case Study:

5/5 AV, ch. 12 and Conclusion  
Recommended for today – and will be used in homework for later sessions:  
Lynn T. White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis"  
Lawrence Troster, "Created in the Image of God: Humanity and  
Divinity in an Age of Environmentalism"  
Holmes Rolston III, "Environmental Ethics: Some Challenges for  
Christians"  
Mawil Y. Izzi Deen, "Islamic environmental Ethics, Law and Society"  
Winona LaDuke, "Voices from White Earth"  
Thich Nhat Hanh, "The Sun My Heart",  
David Loy, from THE GREAT AWAKENING  
Also recommended: Juergen Habermas, "New Social Movements" and  
Pichardo critique  
Seminar team: Hanna

5/9 **Queer Ecologies**

Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, "Introduction: A Genealogy of  
Queer Ecologies"

4. Case Study:

5/12 **Urban Ecological Ethics**

Stephen Vogel, THINKING LIKE A MALL (TLM), pp. 1-64

5/16 TLM pp. 65-128  
5. Case Study:

5/19 TLM pp. 129-198  
Albert Borgmann, CYBERSPACE, COSMOLOGY, AND THE MEANING  
OF LIFE -- <http://ubiquity.acm.org/article.cfm?id=1232403>  
Seminar team: Anna

5/23 TLM pp. 199-238  
Gray Cox, "Gandi's Dialogical Truthforce: Applying Satyagraha Models of  
Practical Rational Inquiry to Ecological Change, Warfare and the Technological  
Singularity"  
Seminar team:

**5/26 TBD**  
**NOTE: Final Paper Due**

**5/30 Activism and the Law**  
Selection from Fritjof Capra and Ugo Mattei, THE ECOLOGY OF LAW: TOWARD A  
LEGAL SYSTEM IN TUNE WITH NATURE AND COMMUNITY, chapters 1, 9 and 10  
Recommended: Dave Foreman, "Strategic Monkeywrenching"  
Kristin Shrader-Frèchette, "An Apologia for Activism: Global Responsibility,  
Ethical Advocacy, and Environmental Problems"  
Seminar team: Josh

6/2 Closing  
**Final Problem Set Due**