

Philosophy 380
Instructor: Chris Diehm

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Fall 2020-Online

It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.

—Aldo Leopold



None of us lives to the fullest who does not study the natural order, and more than that, none is wise who does not ultimately make peace with it.

—Holmes Rolston, III

Environmental philosophers address a wide variety of distinctly philosophical questions dealing with humans and our relationship to the natural world. Is there any reason for us to cultivate a different sort of relationship to nature, or to attempt to treat non-human beings, the Earth, any differently than we currently do? If such an “environmental ethic” is desirable, what form should it take? What sorts of principles could guide us in making the practical decisions that we must make, and that inevitably impact the natural world? What is the value of “nature”? Is it simply a means to human ends, or might it have value apart from the uses humans may have for it? Of course, responding to these questions requires an awareness of various empirical facts, but it should be clear that simply knowing those facts will not always settle such matters. In this class, then, we will examine the writing of people who have worked through these problems in an effort to prepare ourselves to do the same.

Objectives

In this course you will learn to identify and distinguish a wide variety of positions that people take on the subject of environmental ethics, including several variants of anthropocentrism, Judeo-Christian “stewardship” ethics, animal welfare views, holistic or “ecosystem” ethics, and deep ecology. You will also become familiar with and develop an understanding of the most important philosophical and practical disagreements between the various proponents of these viewpoints, and of some of the social, political, and economic dimensions of environmental issues. Along the way, you will learn to define many of the key concepts that philosophers use to address the unique questions raised by environmental ethics, as well as many key concepts associated with environmentalism in general. Specific goals related to this course’s GEP designations include:

- Learning to recognize several key areas of interaction between society and the environment.
- Identifying various individual, social, cultural, and ecological factors that influence environmental sustainability.
- Evaluating various scientific claims that inform environmental debates.
- Identifying and analyzing how beliefs and values shape our relationships with the natural world.
- Reading closely, thinking critically, and writing effectively about perennial questions of justice and morality.
- Investigating and thoughtfully responding to a variety of values that in some cases will be significantly different than your own.

My over-riding hope is that you leave the course more ecologically literate and considerate than you may have been when you entered it, and that the work you will do will help prepare you to make more informed and careful decisions in your dealings with the natural world, whether those dealings be as someone working directly with wildlife and natural resources, as an environmental educator, a member of the general work-force, or plain member and citizen of your community.

Structure

This course is structured such that it will take place 100% online. All lectures will be available through Canvas, all assignments will be completed there, and all graded work (papers, exams, etc.) will be submitted there.

All lectures, and some of the graded work, will be available on a WEEKLY rotation. This means that recordings of lectures and some related assignments will become available on the regularly scheduled days of the class (M, T, or Th), and remain available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY. After that point, you will lose access to both the lectures and the related assignments, and the next week's cycle will begin. You will not be able to re-gain access to these materials after their windows close on Sunday nights. This structure does not apply to the two scheduled exams (see "Tests" description below).

One class each week will have a "synchronous option." In most cases, this will be our Thursday class. Shortly before the regularly scheduled class period, I will email an invitation to join the class live, and you will have an option to log in to it. It is NOT REQUIRED to participate in the synchronous class, and all material related to the synchronous classes will be available through Canvas, so there is no penalty or loss of grade for not joining the live sessions.

Finally, as everyone is aware, in the online format it is absolutely crucial that you check your email regularly for updates and information regarding the class. I will do my best to keep messages clear and succinct, but some information will need to be communicated this way, so you need to keep up with your inboxes.

Requirements

Lecture and Reading Quizzes

For all classes containing new content (even those with the synchronous option), I will post videos of lectures on the days indicated in the reading list. At the same times, assignments will become available containing two multiple-choice questions about the lectures, and sometimes also an additional assignment with a question about the reading. ALL OF THIS WILL BE FOUND IN THE "ASSIGNMENTS" AREA OF CANVAS, WITH LECTURE VIDEOS EMBEDDED IN THE QUIZ MODULES.

So, for example, when you gain access to a lecture video on Monday, you will simultaneously gain access to quiz questions related to that video. Then, on Tuesday, when you gain access to the next lecture video, you'll also gain access to a new set of quiz questions. On Thursdays, the same will happen again. For each day's class there will be at least two questions about the lecture, and in some cases you will find an additional assignment (a one-question quiz) related to the reading for that day. So, in the course of a typical week, you will have 6 LECTURE QUESTIONS, and 1 READING QUESTION. This will result in a total of 80 questions for the semester.

The lecture videos, as well as the lecture and reading questions, will be available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY. After that point, you will lose access both to the lectures and to the related assignments, and the next week's cycle will begin. You will not be able to re-gain access to these materials. The point of this is to provide you with some flexibility as to how and when you engage with the course materials, while also making sure that you engage with the class on at least a weekly basis. You must log into the course each week to complete these assignments, and they cannot be made-up after Sundays at midnight.

Each question is worth .5% of your grade so that, cumulatively, these Lecture and Reading Quizzes are worth 40% of your grade.

Papers

Two papers are due during the course of the semester. These should be 2 pages long (approximately 600 words typed and double-spaced, with standard fonts and margins) and they will be based on topics I distribute in advance. Due dates will vary depending on the paper-writing group to which you are assigned (check Canvas for the list of Paper Writing Groups, and due dates are provided in the reading list). Each paper is worth 15% of your grade, making papers worth a total of 30%.

Paper topics will be posted electronically on Canvas on Thursdays on week before they are due. The topics will pertain to course material covered, and will require you to *reflect on* and *react to* topics we've covered (that is, not simply to repeat information or summarize the views of others). Paper writing guidelines are provided in Canvas, and include a PDF file and a power-point that explain how to format and write a good philosophy paper. It is *very strongly recommended* that you consult these resources as part of your paper writing process.

Grades for papers will be based on three criteria:

- (1) *Meeting the terms of the Assignment*—indicated by an “M” in my comments, includes addressing the topic questions, proper formatting and length, and submitted on time.
- (2) *Writing*—indicated by a “W” in my comments, includes writing that is clear, organized, and free from grammatical or spelling mistakes.
- (3) *Content*—indicated by a “C” in my comments, includes content that is reflective, creative, and shows an accurate understanding of the course material.

In the online format it is difficult to give detailed feedback on writing. To the extent that I can, I'll try to give comments indicating how you're doing in each of these three areas (M, W, and C), and use the following comment codes to give feedback in the body of your papers:

Circled items indicate spelling or technical errors.

Parentheses around items will have one or more of the letters below next to them to indicate...

- A = awkward grammar or phrasing
- V = vague or imprecise meaning
- U = unclear meaning
- I = incorrect or mistaken statement of an idea

In the absence of more detailed commentary, however, you should use the descriptions below as feedback on papers. They will receive one of the following grades, indicating how you are doing in your writing:

15 (100%, excellent) = excellent in all aspects

13.5 (90%)

12.8 (85%, above average) = good in all or most aspects; or excellent in some but weak in others

12 (80%)

11.3 (75%, good) = average in all or most aspects; or good in some but weak in others

10.5 (70%)

9.8 (65%, poor) = weak in all or most aspects; or very poor in some while good in others

9 (60%)

7.5 (50%, failing) = very poor in all or most aspects; or weak in some and failing in others

3.8 (25%, failing) = paper fails to meet minimum standards in all 3 areas

0 = no submission

* Note that I may, in some instances, give grades that fall in between the numbers in the above scale (e.g. 13, or 11, etc.). This will be a relatively rare exception, however, and not the general rule.

Finally, all paper assignments are required to be submitted in Canvas, and will go through an “originality check” performed by “Turnitin.com.”

Tests

There will be two tests, the second of which is your final exam. These tests are SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE AT THE SPECIFIC DATES AND TIMES INDICATED IN THE READING LIST—they are NOT ON A WEEKLY ROTATION. If you are unable to access Canvas at these times, YOU MUST MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO TAKE TESTS OUTSIDE THE DESIGNATED CLASS PERIODS.

Each test will cover the material presented in the preceding section of the course. Much of the material builds off of what preceded it, so older material may appear in the second exam in the form of comparative questions, etc. The format of the tests will be multiple choice. Be aware that you will be asked to

do more than repeat information in exams: answers will require the application of ideas and the use of critical thinking skills. Each test is worth 15% of the final grade, making this requirement worth a total of 30%.

Attendance

You should engage the class materials regularly. Failure to engage will almost certainly result in missed assignments and in missing information that is important for papers and exams. You will need to TAKE NOTES ON LECTURE VIDEOS, CONSULT YOUR NOTES FOR PAPERS, and STUDY YOUR NOTES FOR TESTS. I do not re-post lecture videos for paper-writing or exam study. Most of the material covered in class will not be available from the readings, and this is an upper-division philosophy class with readings that can be complex/confusing. Lectures are places for me to try to clarify, explain, and expand upon readings, so paying attention to the lectures is key.

Academic Integrity Policy

I adhere to a strict policy on academic integrity. All questions you have regarding academic integrity should be resolved before you turn course materials in to me. Information can be found in UWSP Chapter 14, available at: "<http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf>". The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. In addition, all infractions will be reported to the university.

Grading

Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

93-100 = A	90-92.9 = A-	87-89.9 = B+	83-86.9 = B
80-82.9 = B-	77-79.9 = C+	73-76.9 = C	70-72.9 = C-
67-69.9 = D+	60-66.9 = D	below 60 = F	

TWO NOTES ABOUT GRADES:

1. I'm happy to discuss any questions about the grades you receive, but grades are not "negotiable" in the sense that you can simply request to have a higher grade, or request to do extra work, just to receive a grade you would prefer. If you want to get higher grades, you should put in the additional effort *before* submitting your work, such that your grade is the highest possible the first time you receive it.
2. I do not "round" grades up or down for any assignments, or for your final course grade. If you finish the semester with, for example, an 89.9, your grade will be recorded as a "B+". I do this because there is no justification for changing a grade simply because it provides a preferable outcome. While I understand that people often like to have grades rounded up, I regard that as being just as arbitrary as rounding them down, and therefore, to avoid all of that, I let your numerical grade stand as the final determinant of your letter grade.

Class Conduct

When you are engaged with the class in any way, my expectation is that you will conduct yourself appropriately. This includes being attentive, removing distractions from online classes/meetings, and being respectful of your classmates.

Required Texts

Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application, Pojman, ed. (text rental)
Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World, Holmes Rolston, III (text rental)
A Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold (purchase)

Reserve Reading

Many readings are on e-reserve, accessible through Canvas. These are marked as "(reserve)" on the reading list. It is your responsibility to get assignments on time and know when they're being read.

General Education Program

This course satisfies both the Humanities and Environmental Responsibility components of the university's general education (GEP) requirements.

Accommodations Information

Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Religious beliefs will be accommodated according to UWS 22.03 provided that you have notified me of any possible conflicts with the class.

E-mail Notice

When you send me e-mail prior to class meetings, I typically save the message without initially replying to it. I review my e-mails after classes, and reply to them at that point, so that I can inform you of anything unusual that may have gone on in class, share ppt.s (which are often being developed or adjusted just prior to class meetings), etc. This way you receive the most accurate information I can provide, even though you may not receive an immediate reply to your message.

Personal Information

Office—Collins Classroom Center (CCC) #416

Office Hours—held virtually on Tuesdays, 2-4, and Wednesdays, 10-12. Other days and times by appointment.

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