



ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS¹

Prof. Nicolas Delon - ndelon@ncf.edu
Fall 2018, Tues & Thurs, 10:30-11:50am, ACE 218
Office hours Thursdays, 1-3pm, or by appointment, ACE 303

Course description

This is an introduction to the ethics of our relations to the environment. It is philosophical but draws from a wide range of methods and disciplines. We will discuss fundamental questions pertaining to the value(s) of nature; how different ethical frameworks can address environmental issues; what kinds of things are morally considerable (humans, animals, plants, ecosystems, planet) and what our duties regarding/to them consist in; and the value of species and biodiversity. We will also examine issues relating to global justice; climate change; animal rights; agriculture and food ethics; values across cultures; and intersections between environmental values and social justice.

Goals: to provide students with 1) the intellectual tools to make, grasp and evaluate ethical arguments across a domains and practical contexts and to foster their critical reflection on environmental issues; 2) a solid and comprehensive theoretical and empirical background on these issues; and 3) an overview of both classical and recent readings. *No prerequisites* in philosophy or environmental studies, but students must be willing to confront with a variety of views, concepts, arguments, and controversies. Rigor, clarity, and critical self-reflection will be key. Class will alternate between short lectures, discussion, and group activities. It is intended to be interactive while providing comprehensive content. Active participation is required, allowing for careful analysis and respectful appreciation of others' views.

Course requirements and evaluation

Evaluation criteria: a balance of structure and coherence, understanding of references and course-related materials, critical skills and originality, and rigor and clarity. Tests are graded on a numerical basis. Papers and presentations are graded on a qualitative (SAT) scale. You must earn a satisfactory evaluation on at least 4/5 of the following rubrics (details TBA).

- **Tests** (30%): **3 short quizzes** (multiple-choice and short answer questions) (5% each) and **1 take-home midterm exam** (essay questions) (15%). Tests cover all materials up until test day. Satisfactory $\geq 70\%$ avg on tests.
- **Paper** (20%): A **term paper** (2,500-4,000 words). You can choose your own topic but you must have it approved first, or you can choose from suggested prompts. A **preliminary outline** will be due on (TBC). All students will peer-review two anonymous classmates' outlines. *Recommended:* Jim Pryor's guides to philosophical terms and methods, reading philosophy, and writing a philosophy paper, available at www.jimpryor.net/teaching/

¹ This syllabus is subject to change. Please refer to the latest version on Canvas and check your emails regularly. Photo credit: Mishka Henner.

- **Collaborative project** (20%): on a specific issue of public concern — students will give a group oral presentation at the end of term (10%) and submit an individual paper (1,500-2,000 words, plus references) presenting their own contribution to the project (10%). Creative, innovative, multimedia-based, field-based projects are welcome.
- **Discussion** (10%): Readings are mandatory for all. You will lead ONE discussion in the semester (I will circulate a sign up sheet): this consists in posting a 1-page summary/commentary with questions online (at least 24 hours before class) and initiating the discussion in class. ALL students are expected to post responses to the readings and to the discussion leader online (until 8pm) the day before class.
- **Attendance and participation** (10%):
 - Missing more than one class without permission will negatively impact your evaluation. Email me **before missing class**, and consult with me promptly to make up for missed assignments. You are solely responsible for catching up with missed materials and information. Ask your classmates for notes and pertinent information.
 - **Active participation** (online and in class). I will assess your demonstrated capacity to engage with arguments, verify assertions, research facts, unpack implicit assumptions, and critically examine your positions. Come prepared with copies of the weekly readings and textbook, personal notes and questions. I generally don't call on students but I may kindly ask the most talkative to enable the less talkative to participate. Shy students need not be, but if you truly are, do not hesitate to compensate for it in the online forum.

Policies

- **Laptop** use is strongly discouraged and tolerated for note taking and readings only. Please disable your internet connection during class time. **Cell phones** must be silenced and left in your bag.
- **Academic integrity**: New College of Florida values academic honesty and integrity, as you should. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are easily detectable, will not be tolerated, and may result in failure for the class and other sanctions. Please refer to NCF's standards of academic conduct.
- **Lateness/Extensions**: Out of fairness to other students, I can only grant extensions in exceptional circumstances AND if requested with a minimum week's notice. As a rule, do not count on extensions as they will only be granted on a case-by-case basis. Do not assume I have received your assignment until you receive confirmation or unless you posted it online.
- **Accommodations**: New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. Students are welcome to privately discuss any concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. I encourage students with accommodations to meet with me as soon as possible and to contact the office of Student Disability Services (SDS) in order to request official accommodation(s): SDS in-person (HCL3), at 941-487-4496 OR disabilityservices@ncf.edu. Additional information at <https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/> SDS will establish the need for specific accommodations and communicate them to the instructor.
- **Religious observance**: No student shall be compelled to attend class or sit for an examination at a day or time when s/he would normally be engaged in a religious observance or on a day or time prohibited by his or her religious belief. Students are expected to notify their instructors if they intend to be absent for a class or announced examination, in accordance with this policy, prior to the scheduled meeting.

Readings

Aside from the textbook, readings can be found as PDFs or linked to on Canvas. The required textbook for this class is **Jamieson, Dale, *Ethics and the Environment* (Cambridge, 2008)**. A copy of the book is on reserve at JBC library. Copies are for sale at the bookstore. A helpful resource: S. Gardiner & A. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics* (Oxford, 2017). Do not hesitate to seek guidance before looking for further reading.

Schedule

UNIT 1: BACKGROUND		
8/28	Introduction: Welcome to class! Ethical reasoning. Environmental ethics: what, how, why. Outline of the course.	OPT: Jamieson, ch. 2
8/30	Environmental issues and ethical concern	Jamieson, ch. 1; Lynn White Jr., The historical roots of our ecological crisis; Carson, from <i>Silent Spring</i>
9/4	The place of humans in nature Part 1: Anthropocentrism and nature	Aristotle, from <i>Politics</i> ; Descartes, <i>Discourse</i> , pt. 6; Merchant, Dominion over nature; Darwin, selections; Routley, Is there a need for a new, an environmental ethic?
9/6		
9/11	The place of humans in nature Part 2: The value of nature and wilderness	Jamieson, sec. 6.3-6.4; Mill, <i>On Nature</i> ; Emerson, from <i>Nature</i> ; Thoreau, Walking; Muir, Hetch Hetchy Valley OPT: Elliott, Faking nature
9/13		
9/18	Moral theory: the nature of value; right, good, and other concepts	Jamieson, sec. 3.5 & p. 68-75; McShane, Why environmental ethics shouldn't give up on intrinsic value OPT: Weston, Beyond intrinsic value
9/20	Quiz 1 / Group presentations starters	
UNIT 2: THE LANDSCAPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS		
9/25	Challenging anthropocentrism Part 1: Ecocentrism: land ethic and deep ecology	Jamieson, sec. 6.1; Leopold, from <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> OPT: Naess, The basics of deep ecology; Callicott, excerpts
9/27	Challenging anthropocentrism Part 2: Biocentrism: the inherent value of life	Jamieson, sec. 6.2; Taylor, Biocentric egalitarianism; Stone, Should trees have standing? OPT: Varner, <i>In Nature's Interests?</i> , ch. 3; Schweitzer, Reverence for life; Woolf, The Death of the Moth
10/2	Challenging anthropocentrism Part 3: Speciesism, the moral status of animals, and the relation between animal and environmental ethics	Singer, All animals are equal; Regan, from <i>The Case for Animal Rights</i> ; Gruen, The moral status of animals; Goodpaster, On being morally considerable; Callicott, Animal liberation: A triangular affair OPT: Sagoff, Animal liberation and environmental ethics; Jamieson, Animal liberation is an environmental ethic; Nussbaum, Beyond 'compassion and humanity'; Anderson, Animal rights and the values of nonhuman life
10/4		
10/9	Quiz 2 / Group presentations progress report 1	
10/11	Species, biodiversity, conservation	Rolston, Biodiversity; Sober, Philosophical problems for environmentalism; Jamieson, sec. 6.5; Bekoff, Who lives, who dies, and why OPT: Russow, Why Do Species Matter?; Hourdequin, The ethics of ecosystem management

10/16-18	Fall break	
UNIT 3: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES		
10/23	<i>Class meets outdoors / field trip (TBD)</i> <i>What's wrong with killing Cecil the lion?</i>	
10/25	Anthropocentric preservation, sustainability, population growth <i>Tragedy of the commons simulation (pollution; fishing)</i>	Hardin, Tragedy of the commons; Norton, Environmental ethics and weak anthropocentrism; Williams, Must a concern for the environment be centered on human beings? OPT: Parfit, Energy Policy
10/30	Climate change 1: carbon, science and values	Oreskes & Conway, from <i>The Collapse of Western Civilization</i> ; Anderson, Democracy, public policy, and lay assessments of scientific testimony OPT: IPCC, 2014: Summary for Policymakers
11/6	Climate change 2: emissions and justice <i>Debating roles (science, values and policy)</i> Quiz 3	From Gardiner & Weisbach, <i>Debating Climate Ethics</i> ; Caney, Just emissions; Shue, Global Environment and International Inequality; Jamieson, Climate change, responsibility, and justice OPT: Agarwal and Narain, Global warming in an unequal world
11/8	Food, animals, and the environment	Gruen, Eating animals; Foer, from <i>Eating Animals</i> ; Singer & Mason, from <i>The Ethics of What We Eat</i> ; Jacquet, Sebo, & Elder, Bivalves are better OPT: Jacquet, Silent Water
11/13	Nature and technology <i>Predicting, writing, creating the future</i>	McWilliams, from <i>Just Food</i> ; Thompson, Genetically modified foods: ethical issues; Gardiner, Is Arming the Future with Geo-engineering Really the Lesser Evil? OPT: Jamieson, Energy, ethics, and the transformation of nature
11/15	Exam due by midnight / Group presentations progress report 2	
11/20	Environmental and social issues: nations, culture, race, gender, religion Part 1: Justice and diversity Group presentations	Jamieson, sec. 7.2; Foster & Cole, Environmental racism; Guha, Radical American environmentalism and wilderness preservation: A Third World critique OPT: Gottlieb, Religion and the environment; Dowie, Conservation refugees
11/22	Thanksgiving	
11/27	Environmental and social issues: : nations, culture, race, gender, religion Part 2: Ecofeminism Group presentations	Merchant, from <i>The Death of Nature</i> ; Warren, Feminism and ecology OPT: Shiva, Women and the gendered politics of food
11/29	Living and dying in the Anthropocene Group presentations	Jamieson, Life in the Anthropocene; Scranton, Learning how to die in the Anthropocene
12/4	Group presentations / Term paper due Friday by midnight	