



ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS¹

Prof. Nicolas Delon

Fall 2019, Tues & Thurs, 10:30-11:50am, ACE 237

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Office hours:

- book a slot here: ndelon.youcanbook.me/
- or email to make appointment
- open door, Thurs. 1-3pm, ACE 303

I also often have lunch at Metz and Four Winds—come and chat!

Course description

This is an introduction to the ethics of our relations to the environment. It is philosophical but draws from a 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.

¹ This syllabus is subject to change. Please refer to the latest version in Canvas. Photo credit: Mishka Henner.

Course objectives: 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 background* in philosophy or environmental studies is required, 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.

Readings

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

Course evaluation

Assessment 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 the qualitative scale below and with the grading shorthand available in Canvas.

- Excellent
- Strongly satisfactory
- Satisfactory
- Marginally satisfactory
- Marginally unsatisfactory (an UNSAT but it was close)
- Unsatisfactory

Please refer to the course schedule for deadlines. You are expected to complete assignments unless they are marked as optional. Most of the assignments should be submitted to Canvas. Don't wait until the last minute to submit in case you face technical issues, and always save and back up your drafts. Don't write in Canvas first; draft, save, and back up on your own device and ideally cloud-based storage, then copy to Canvas.

All the materials assigned in the course schedule must be read before class. You must be prepared to participate in class discussions and bring notes with you. *Read my recommendations in Annex 1.*

For reading and writing purposes, Jim Pryor (NYU) offers valuable guidance on his website. Please use them.

- Philosophical terms and methods (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html>)
- Reading philosophy (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>)
- Writing a philosophy paper (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>)

Assignments

Tests (30%): **3 short quizzes** (multiple-choice questions) (5% each; SAT \geq 66% avg) and **1 take-home midterm exam** (essay questions) (15%). Tests cover all materials up until test day.

Paper (25%): An essay (1,000-2,000 words) due between the exam and the final group project. On a topic of your choice after consulting with me. Each essay must include at least: a thesis, a roadmap, sections, arguments for the thesis and at least one objection to it (and a reply). Midway checkpoints: **preliminary outline** and/or **draft of the introduction**, peer-reviewed anonymously by a classmate. The assessment will take into account all stages of the writing process.

Collaborative project (25%): Groups of 3-5 students will work from Weeks 8-14 on an aspect of environmental ethics not covered in class and present their work together at the end of term (brief oral **presentation / poster**) (15%) and each students will submit a short **individual reflection** on their contribution (10%). Creative, innovative, multimedia-based, field-based projects also welcome.

Weekly commentaries (10%): All readings are mandatory. For all readings, students will post 2-4 questions in Canvas the day before class.

Attendance and participation (10%):

Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than three classes without permission will normally result in an UNSAT and any unjustified absence will affect your evaluation. Missing classes mechanically affects your participation, and therefore your evaluation. That said, there may always be good reasons to miss a class, in which case your performance will not be negatively affected. I will not circulate an attendance sheet but I will keep track of absences. Don't mistake the time it takes me to remember names for the (little) time it takes me to remember faces. Please email the teaching team before missing class whenever possible (if not ASAP after class). You are solely responsible for catching up with missed materials and pertinent information. Ask your classmates for notes.

Active participation (online and in class). Come prepared with the readings and notes. I will assess your efforts to engage with arguments, verify assertions, research facts, unpack implicit assumptions, critically examine your positions, and work with the class with mutual respect, concern and dedication. It's understandable that some of you are shyer than others, and less willing to speak their mind in class. I generally don't call on students, although I may and I will kindly ask the most talkative to enable the less talkative to partake. There is no such thing as a silly question (unless it's answered in the syllabus), a view that is not worth sharing simply because it's not popular, or an authorized point of view that students should take. Please feel welcome to express yourself as long as you do so respectfully, in good faith, and following course policies and etiquette.

Class policies

Laptops. No, thank you. I'll say a few words about this in class, but unless you have a relevant accommodation for note taking, or I have asked you to bring it to class for an activity, please refrain from using your laptop in class (if recording class meetings can help, that's fine). **Cellphones** must be kept on silent mode in your bag, unless again, otherwise indicated. That said, you will be expected to have access to a computer for the completion of assignments and some group activities (use the library's computers or their loaner laptops if needed). Check your college email regularly for announcements.

Deadlines. They are not 'soft' or optional. They literally mean that you must submit your work by then lest you earn an UNSAT. Out of fairness to other students and out of concern for my schedule, plan ahead and advise early if you anticipate that you will be unable to complete an assignment in time. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances **and** if requested with a minimum of a 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 email confirmation or it appears as submitted in Canvas. Technical issues will not be accepted as excuses (again, plan ahead).

Time, food, and attire etiquette. Please be in class on time. I will start class promptly and may turn away students who casually come to class significantly late without prior notice. My own attire is relatively casual, and I'm open to all sorts of styles, but please be mindful of others and building rules: wear shoes and attire that you would wear if you were to take the bus, walk in public, go to the DMV or to your day job, etc. This leaves *plenty* of room for eccentricity, but this rules out pajamas, bathrobes and, obviously, lack of clothes. You may drink in class, but please only consume food if you really can't wait until lunch and did not have breakfast. Even then, be mindful of others. If you're late and carrying breakfast and coffee, you probably could have been on time. Don't leave class early unless previously authorized. Take bathroom breaks between classes if you can, otherwise be quiet and respectful.

Campus Policies and Resources

Student Accessibility

In order to ensure an inclusive classroom environment, any encountered or foreseen barriers should be discussed with me immediately. Adjustments or solutions may be agreed upon that do not compromise the objectives of the course.

If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, you are also welcome to initiate this conversation with the office of Student Disability Services (SDS). SDS works with students with disabilities and faculty members to identify reasonable accommodations. Please visit their website for additional information: <https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/>. You may also contact Student Disability in-person (HCL3), via phone at 941-487-4496 OR via email at disabilityservices@ncf.edu. If you have already been approved for accommodations through SDS, please meet with me as soon as possible.

Title IX

New College of Florida is committed to equal access to education pursuant to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. The law protects all individuals on our campus from gender-based discrimination or exclusion or instances of sexual misconduct. All full-time faculty, full-time staff, and resident advisors are Responsible Employees required to report any known instances of sexual misconduct or gender discrimination to the Title IX Coordinator. Please contact our Title IX coordinator (titleix@ncf.edu) or see the website (<https://www.ncf.edu/campus-life/title-ix/>) for more information.

Equity, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity

New College's commitment to academic excellence can only be realized in a learning environment that is inclusive, characterized by openness to diverse perspectives, and marked by mutual respect. Anything short of this aspiration is inconsistent with our commitment. Equal access, and the opportunity to participate fully in all of our programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, political ideology, national origin, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, is essential to that commitment and will be the standard to which we expect all members of our learning community to adhere.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining a vibrant, healthy, and engaging learning environment for which we all must take responsibility. The New College faculty considers academic dishonesty to be a serious violation of community standards. Students are expected to refrain from acts of academic dishonesty, which may include:

1. cheating and/or plagiarism (such as: presenting the intellectual work of others as one's own; failing to cite sources; improper paraphrasing via failing to use own words even if a citation is given; partial, incomplete, or inaccurate citation of work of others);
2. unauthorized multiple submissions (submission of the same work for different academic activities, without the approval of the instructor);
3. false citation (false citation of a source or knowingly attributing work to a source from which the referenced material was not obtained);
4. falsifying data (fabricating or altering data to deliberately mislead; for example, changing data to get better experiment results is academically fraudulent);
5. falsifying information, signatures, or initials on official and academic forms.

If you are in doubt about what practices are permissible in an examination, you should consult me prior to sitting for the exam. If you lack understanding of how, in a paper or other presentation, to distinguish your thoughts from those of others, the faculty can refer you to standard guidelines and discuss specific questions.

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.

Schedule

UNIT 1: BACKGROUND		
Week 1 8/27 - 29	Introductions. Welcome to class! Environmental ethics: what, how, why.	OPT: Jamieson, ch. 2
	Environmental issues and ethical concern	Jamieson, ch. 1; Lynn White Jr., The historical roots of our ecological crisis; Carson, from <i>Silent Spring</i>
Week 2 9/3 - 5	The place of humans in nature Part 1: Anthropocentrism and nature	Aristotle, <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?
Week 3 9/10 - 9/12 Classes cancelled	The place of humans in nature Part 2: The value of nature and wilderness <i>Self-directed activities</i>	Jamieson, sec. 6.3-6.4; Mill, <i>On Nature</i> ; Emerson, from <i>Nature</i> ; Thoreau, <i>Walking</i> ; Muir, <i>Hetch Hetchy Valley</i> OPT: Elliott, <i>Faking nature</i>
Week 4 9/17 - 19 No class THUR	Moral theory: the nature of value; right, good, and other concepts Quiz 1 <i>Self-directed activity</i>	Jamieson, sec. 3.5 & p. 68-75; McShane, Why environmental ethics shouldn't give up on intrinsic value
UNIT 2: THE LANDSCAPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS		
Week 5 9/24 - 26	Challenging anthropocentrism - Ecocentrism	Jamieson, sec. 6.1; Leopold, from <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> OPT: Naess, The basics of deep ecology; Callicott, excerpts
Week 6 10/1 - 3 Extra time	TUES: - Ecocentrism cont'd - Biocentrism THURS: - Biocentrism cont'd - The moral status of animals	Jamieson, sec. 6.2; Taylor, Biocentric egalitarianism; Stone, Should trees have standing?; Woolf, The Death of the Moth OPT: Schweitzer, Reverence for life; Dillard, The force... Singer, All animals are equal; Regan, from <i>The Case...</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
UNIT 3: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES		
Week 7 10/8 - 10 Extra time	TUES: - The moral status of animals cont'd QUIZ 2	
Fall break 10/14-18 / <u>EXAM DUE 10/13</u>		

Week 8 10/22 - 24	Species, biodiversity, conservation	Rolston, Biodiversity; Sober, Philosophical problems for environmentalism; Jamieson, sec. 6.5; OPT: Russow, Why Do Species Matter?; Bekoff, Who lives, who dies; Hourdequin, The ethics of ecosystem management
	Anthropocentric preservation <i>Tragedy of the commons simulation</i>	Hardin, Tragedy of the commons; Norton, Environmental ethics and weak anthropocentrism; Williams, Must a concern for the environment be centered on human beings?
Week 9 10/29 - 31	Climate change 1: science and values	Oreskes & Conway, <i>The Collapse of Western Civilization</i> ; Anderson, Democracy, public policy ... OPT: IPCC, 2014: Summary
	Climate change 2: justice <i>Role debate (science, values, policy)</i> <i>First draft of paper due</i>	Gardiner, A perfect moral storm; Shue, Global Environment and International Inequality Recommended: Agarwal and Narain
Week 10 11/5 - 11/7	Food, animals, and the environment QUIZ 3	Gruen, Eating animals; Jacquet et al on bivalves OPT: Singer & Mason, <i>The Ethics of What We Eat</i>
Week 11 11/12 - 14	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?
	<i>Group progress</i>	
Week 12 11/19 - 21	Environmental and social issues: nations, culture, race, gender, religion Part 1: Justice and diversity PAPER DUE Friday	Jamieson, sec. 7.2; Foster & Cole, Environmental racism; Guha, Radical American environmentalism and wilderness preservation; Dowie, Conservation refugees
Week 13 11/26	Environmental and social issues: : nations, culture, race, gender, religion Part 2: Ecofeminism	Merchant, from <i>The Death of Nature</i> ; Warren, Feminism and ecology; Kheel, The liberation of nature
11/28 Thanksgiving		
Week 14 12/3 - 5	Living and dying in the Anthropocene Group presentations	Jamieson, Life in the Anthropocene; Scranton, Learning how to die in the Anthropocene
	Possible make-up class for Group presentations	