



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies

**Georgetown University**  
**Master of Arts in Liberal Studies**

Spring 2020 LSHV 513 -01

**Environmental Ethics and Climate Justice**

Instructor: John Shook, PhD

Contact: [jrs384@georgetown.edu](mailto:jrs384@georgetown.edu), text to 703-801-3645

Semester: January 8 – May 9, 2020

Class Meetings: Mondays 6:30pm – 9:00pm in the Intercultural Center building, Room TBA

Office Hours: Tue 4pm – 6pm in ICC common area first floor, or by appointment

### **Course Description**

Environmental ethics explores human-nature relationships to question the ecological impact and long-term sustainability of human activities on the planet. Historical, philosophical, sociological, theological, political, and scientific aspects of environmentalism are discussed. Topics include the Anthropocene epoch and human alterations to ecology and climate; environmental matters from economic perspectives; pollution regulation; conservation and wilderness restoration; fair access to scarce natural resources; poor nations suffering from climate disasters; international treaties aiming at climate justice; environmental activism and green movements; animal rights; and genetically modified organisms.

### **Multidisciplinary Objectives**

This course broadly concerns the public capacity for understanding science and technology, and the development of science-based political and policy agendas. Scientific and academic disciplines offer their understandings about dimensions to human life and aspects of the natural world. Many disciplines are consulted in this course, from ecology, earth science, and environmental studies to political science, economics, and international relations. Reflective evaluations from philosophical stances are contributed by religious ethics, normative ethics, political theory, and legal theory. Relationships among disciplines in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities will require adjudication: their assessments may become discordant, or their recommendations might point in divergent directions. As animal and human lives – and even whole ecosystems and nations – are more and more endangered by environmental instability, which theoretical models and pragmatic agendas deserve more credence? How can needed advances made by disciplinary areas facilitate greater cross-cultural and international consensus upon remedies to our global problems?

While exploring these matters, students will achieve individualized learning objectives, taking advantage of opportunities to:

- acquire facility with relevant scientific theories and technological innovations shaping current and future planetary trends;
- assemble multi-disciplinary perspectives in order to compare and judge proposals for addressing environmental problems and climate concerns;

- explore how controversies over technological and economic “progress” are always multi-dimensional and many-layered, rather than just a matter of “beneficial” or “harmful”;
- examine a variety of political and policy issues involved with proposals for alleviating environmental deterioration;
- join their own voices to ongoing debates about environmental and climate controversies by composing well-researched assessments for academic consideration.

### **Required Texts**

Sandler. 2018. *Environmental Ethics: Theory in Practice*. Oxford, 9780199340729.

Roser and Seidel. 2016. *Climate Justice: An Introduction*. Routledge, 9781138845275.

Mann and Wainwright. 2018. *Climate Leviathan: A Political Theory of Our Planetary Future*. Verso, 9781786634450.

Scheid. 2016. *The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics*. Oxford, 9780199359431.

Additional Readings: Handouts provided during the semester.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Class Participation. Regular participation in class discussion, and a 15-minute classroom presentation of the term paper (see below). 200 points possible. 20% of total grade.
2. Issue Brief. 1000 words, fully referenced. On a topic chosen from the issues raised during the first 3 weeks of the course. This Brief will outline the significance of a chosen technoscientific advancement emerging during 1980-2025, by either (a) lending support to optimism about humanity’s ability to slow climate change and reduce environmental harm, or (b) lending support to pessimism about humanity’s ability to avoid dramatic environmental destruction. Your Issue Brief must only have an optimistic, or a pessimistic, perspective. Stay close to the facts, but be as persuasive as possible to contemporary readers. 100 points possible. 10% of total grade.
3. Short Paper. 3000 words, fully referenced. On a topic of students’ choice, selected from the course’s topics during the first 7 weeks. At least three disciplinary perspectives, one each from the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities, will be applied to the topic. You will first compose a one-page prospectus outlining your paper’s plan, to be approved by the instructor. 300 points possible. 30% of total grade.
4. Term Paper. 5000 words minimum, fully referenced. On any topic covered in this class, except for the topic chosen for the Short Paper. A term paper addresses a selected environment/climate problem requiring ethical, political, and legal analyses. A successful paper will synthesize relevant information gained throughout the course (lectures and readings), information from chosen secondary literature from several disciplines, and the student’s academic background and interests. 400 points possible. 40% of total grade.

Citation Style: The APA Style (APA Publication Manual 6th Edition) is used widely in SCS courses. Consult <http://pitt.libguides.com/citationhelp/APA>

## **Final Grade**

ASSIGNMENT	PERCENT OF TOTAL GRADE	POSSIBLE POINTS
Class Participation	20%	200
Issue Brief – 1,000 words	10%	100
Short Paper – 3,000 words	30%	300
Term Paper – 5,000 words	40%	400
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

Total Points	Grade	Quality Points
920-1000	A	4.00
900-919	A-	3.67
881-899	B+	3.33
800-880	B	3.00
781-799	B-	2.67
761-780	C+	2.33
700-760	C	2.00
690-699	C-	1.67
680-689	D+	1.33
660-679	D	1.00
Less than 660	F	0.00

## Course Policies

**Students' Religious Observances:** The following is university policy: Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

**Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu). Individuals with disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Some accommodations might include note takers, books on tape, extended time on assignments, and interpreter services among others. Students are responsible for communicating their needs to the Academic Resource Center before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. The University is not responsible for making special accommodations for students who have not declared their disabilities and have not requested an accommodation in a timely manner. Also, the University need not modify course or degree requirements considered to be an essential requirement of the program of instruction. For the most current and up-to-date policy information, please refer to the Georgetown University Academic Resource Center website. Students are highly encouraged to discuss the documentation and accommodation process with an Academic Resource Center administrator.

**Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity:** During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings. The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

**Georgetown Honor System:** All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking. Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge: *In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

**Plagiarism:** In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail. If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student may receive a grade of F for the course.

**Turnitin.com:** Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers can be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

**Sexual Misconduct:** Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”) prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational programs, which includes sexual harassment or any acts of sexual misconduct. Title IX requires the University, upon becoming aware of any incident of sexual harassment and misconduct to respond appropriately to protect and maintain the safety of the University community, including students, faculty, and staff. Georgetown University prohibits sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking. Discrimination based on sex, including sexual misconduct and discrimination based on pregnancy or parenting status, subverts the University's mission and threatens permanent damage to the educational experience, careers, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Please know that as a faculty member I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. However, University policy also requires me to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct. Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include:

**Jen Schweer, MA, LPC**

Associate Director of Health Education Services for  
Sexual Assault Response and Prevention

[\(202\) 687-0323](tel:(202)687-0323)

[jls242@georgetown.edu](mailto:jls242@georgetown.edu)

**Erica Shirley**

Trauma Specialist

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

[\(202\) 687-6985](tel:(202)687-6985)

[els54@georgetown.edu](mailto:els54@georgetown.edu)

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at:

<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help>.

**Pregnancy Adjustments and Accommodations:** Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant and parenting students. Students may request adjustments based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication. Specific adjustments will be handled on a case by case basis and will depend on medical need and academic requirements. Students seeking a pregnancy adjustment or accommodation should follow the process laid out at: <https://titleix.georgetown.edu/student-pregnancy>.

## Class Schedule

This tentative schedule is subject to change as necessary.

Week	Topic	Readings, Events
Week 1. Jan 13	<u>Environmental Ethics</u> What is environmental ethics; three bases for environmental ethics; methods of environmental ethics. The “Anthropocene”.	<i>EE</i> : Chaps. 1, 2, 17
Week 2. [no class 20 <sup>th</sup> ] Jan 27	<u>Nature and Naturalness</u> What is nature, and what counts as natural? The normativity of nature; natural value; intrinsic value.	<i>EE</i> : Chaps. 3, 4
Week 3. Feb 3	<u>Moral Considerability</u> Anthropocentrism. Sustainability and resource management. Future generations of humans. The future of plants and animals.	<i>EE</i> : Chaps. 5, 6, 7
Week 4. Feb 10	<u>Normative Theories of Ethics</u> Environmentalism grounded in utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics.	<i>EE</i> : Chaps. 8, 9, 10  Issue Brief due
Week 5. [on Tuesday] Feb 18	<u>Holistic Environmental Ethics</u> Ecocentrism and the Land Ethic. Deep ecology. The value of species, ecosystems, and biodiversity	<i>EE</i> : Chaps. 11, 12, 13
Week 6. Feb 24	<u>Ecofeminism and Environmental Pragmatism</u> The Aristotelian worldview. The Ptolemaic system of astronomy. The mathematical application of epicycles.	<i>EE</i> : Chap. 14 Prospectus due for short paper
Week 7. Mar 2	<u>Environmental Justice</u> Social justice, legal justice, and injustice. Consumption and cost-benefit analysis.	<i>EE</i> : Chap. 15 <i>CJ</i> : Chaps. 1–4
Week 8. Mar 16	<u>Intergenerational Climate Justice</u> Poverty, starvation, and “the lifeboat ethic”. Our moral responsibility for the global future.	<i>EE</i> : Chap. 16 <i>CJ</i> : Chaps. 5–8
Week 9. Mar 23	<u>Global Justice</u> Duties to future humans. The precautionary principle. Inequality and fairness. Paying for environmental costs.	<i>CJ</i> : Chaps. 10–21  Short Paper due
Week 10. Mar 30	<u>The Cosmic Common Good</u> Interreligious ecological ethics. Earth solidarity and earth rights. Catholic earth ethics.	<i>CCG</i> : Chaps. 1–6
Week 11. Apr 6	<u>Comparative Theology and Ecological Ethics</u> Non-western religions and environmentalism. Hinduism. Buddhism. American Indian traditions.	<i>CCG</i> : Chaps. 7–9
Week 12. Apr 13	<u>Climate Leviathan: Planetary Politics</u> The ability of nation states and commonwealths to adapt to ecological crises.	<i>CL</i> : Chaps. 1–4
Week 13. Apr 20	<u>International Politics of Climate</u> Green capitalism. Planetary sovereignty and global citizenship. After climate treaties, what must be done?	<i>CL</i> : Chaps. 5–8
Week 14. Apr 27	Student presentations	Student presentations
Week 15. May 1-7	complete Term Paper	May 7: Term Paper Due