

PHIL-124-11 SUMMER 2021 (First Session)

Ethics and the Environment

Sandy Koullas

Instructor Information:

Dr Sandy Koullas

sk1940@georgetown.edu

Zoom ID: 727 195 9037

Office hours: TBD (on Zoom.)

Course Description:

This course provides an orientation to applying ethical theory to environmental problems. We begin with an introduction to ethical theory in general, and then bring this background with us as we explore the challenges of environmental ethics. First, we consider the impact of environmental issues on the rights and interests of human beings. Next, we consider the rights and interests of non-human beings, including individual animals, species, and ecosystems. Thinking about ecosystems leads naturally into looking at the topics as “a bigger picture,” and so the next major topic is holism in environmental ethics. We end the course by focusing on some specific and especially pressing practical challenges, with the aim of identifying steps to take in addressing them, at the individual level, and at the level of corporations and government. Students will give group presentations on these topics during the final week of classes.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, you should have:

- An understanding of several different normative ethical theories, and the differences between them
- An understanding of several ethical problems in environmental ethics
- An understanding of how the normative ethical theories can be applied to the ethical problems
- The ability to criticize philosophical arguments, questioning assumptions and inferences
- The ability to construct and present a strong philosophical argument using evidence and logical inference

Assessment:

Your grade will be determined by the following components:

- Syllabus quiz – 5%
- 1 open-everything ‘exam’ – 25%
- 1 group presentation – 20%

- Attendance and contribution to class discussions – 20%
- Final paper – 30%

Participation will be graded as follows:

Attendance = 1 point per meeting. (Policy for missed classes to be announced.)

Speaking in class = 1 point per meeting. (Contributing to the Zoom chat counts, even if you send your contribution privately to me for me to read out loud anonymously.)

Participation on the Discussion Board:

- Maximum of 7 points per week
 - 1 point for beginning a new conversation, with up to an additional 2 bonus points if at least two classmates respond.
 - 1 point per comment on an existing conversation
- Note that there are a variety of ways you can participate in discussions, including asking questions, testing out arguments, recommending reading materials, and more.
 - Discussion boards close each week at 11:59 pm on Sunday, and a new one opens for the next week. You can address topics from earlier weeks, but discussion boards close so that I can easily tally points per week.

Maximum possible participation points: 60.

- There are more than 60 opportunities or occasions for points, but once you reach 60, you get 100% for the participation component of your grade, and any further participation is for your own enrichment and enjoyment.
- Note that there are not *very* many more than 60 opportunities for points, so you need to participate often and consistently throughout the course.

Readings

The required text for this course is *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application* 7th edition, edited by Louis Pojman, Paul Pojman, and Katie McShane (Cengage Learning, 2017.)

ISBN-13: 978-1285197241 ISBN-10: 1285197240

I will occasionally make other readings available on Canvas.

Class Meetings, Communication, and Asynchronous Lectures

The default assumption should be that we will meet synchronously on Zoom during the scheduled meeting times for the class. I will announce when there will be an asynchronous lecture instead.

Zoom Meetings:

When we meet on Zoom for our class meetings, I will expect that we behave as if we were in an academic seminar room together. This means that you should:

- Be mindful of your appearance, posture, etc. Having your camera on is not required, but is strongly encouraged. In my experience, it makes a tangible difference to the ‘atmosphere’ of a remote class.
- Pay full attention to what is happening in class. Don’t let your phone distract you, for example, and don’t read/watch unrelated material while in class.
- Be courteous and respectful of everyone in the room. Listen to what others are saying; do not interrupt or speak over other people; and address one another directly and respectfully.

Asynchronous Lectures:

- When we meet on Zoom, I will assume that you have watched any previously uploaded asynchronous content. Our Zoom meetings are an opportunity for you to ask questions, share your thoughts, and practice making arguments in support of or against the views we discuss.

Electronic Communication

I will often communicate with you individually or as a group via email, and through Canvas. As part of your participation in the class, I will ask that you check your Georgetown email and the course’s Canvas site at least once a day. Likewise, I will check my email for questions from you every weekday. Except on weekends, I will always reply to emails within 24 hours, and often much more quickly than that. Two things about email:

1. *Email is not a substitute for a meeting.* If you have a quick question, email me. But if it is more complicated, or requires a conversation, come to my office hours or make an appointment to see me at some other time.
2. *Email etiquette is important to professors.* Please write your emails like letters, and not like texts. E.g. “Dear Dr Koullas, I want to let you know that I will be missing class tomorrow” is appropriate; “hey i was sick today did u say anything important lol” is not.

Reading Schedule:*

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading
1	6/7	Introductions	- None
	6/8	Orientation to Environmental Ethics - Ethics in General	- Syllabus - Paul Pojman, “Introduction,” <i>EE</i> 1-3. - Katie McShane, “What is Ethics?” <i>EE</i> 3-11.
	6/9	- Environmental Ethics	- <i>EE</i> Chapter 1 (essays by Palmer, Hill, and Shue.) 14- 47.
	6/10	Human Rights and Interests - Future Generations	- Richard B. Howarth, “Intergenerational Justice,” <i>EE</i> 70-80.

* This schedule and the readings on it are subject to change. Please pay attention to in-class and online announcements about which readings are required and which are recommended.

2	6/14	- Environmental Justice and Racism	- Robert D. Bullard, "Overcoming Racism in Environmental Decision Making," <i>EE</i> 315-331. - Femi Taiwò, "How a Green New Deal Could Exploit Developing Countries"
	6/15	Exam: Ethical Concepts & Theories	- No new reading
	6/16	Human R & I's Cont'd - Environmental Justice: Ecofeminism.	- Karen J. Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism," <i>EE</i> 389-405.
	6/17	- Environmental Justice: Global Inequality	- Guha (<i>EE</i>) - Mies (<i>EE</i>)
3	6/21	Non-Human Rights and Interests - Animal Rights	- Singer (<i>EE</i>) - Regan (<i>EE</i>)
	6/22	- Animal Rights cont'd	- Warren (<i>EE</i>) - Jamieson (<i>EE</i>)
	6/23	- Biocentrism	- Schweitzer (<i>EE</i>) - Kawall (<i>EE</i>)
	6/24		- Attfield (<i>EE</i>) - Johnson (<i>EE</i>) - Stone (<i>EE</i>)
4	6/28	A Bigger Picture - Nature and Naturalness	- Mill (<i>EE</i>) - Vogel (<i>EE</i>)
	6/29	- Holism	- Devall and Sessions (<i>EE</i>) - Leopold (<i>EE</i>)
	6/30		- Behrens, (Article) - Hall "Caring to Be Green"
	7/1		- Cahen (<i>EE</i>)
5	7/5	What Shall We Do? - Pollution - <i>Group Presentation</i>	- TBD
	7/6	- Population and Consumption - <i>Group Presentation</i>	- TBD
	7/7	- Food Production - <i>Group Presentation</i>	- TBD
	7/8	- Climate Change - <i>Group Presentation</i>	- TBD
	7/11	Final Paper Due 11:59 PM	