INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS L30 235F Fall 2008

Basic Information

Instructor: Clare Palmer.
Teaching Assistant: Carrie Vodehnal.
Office Hours: Clare Palmer: Thursday 2.30-3.30, and other times by appointment
Carrie Vodehnal: Tuesday, 11.30-1.30.
E-mails: Clare Palmer: epalmer@artscl.wustl.edu
Carrie Vodehnal: cavodehn@artscl.wustl.edu
Class times: 10.00-11.30, Tuesday/Thursday in McDonnell 361
Edited by Louis Pojman and Paul Pojman. (Thompson-Gale 2008).
Most of the readings are from this book (some others will be on Telesis).
Readings on Telesis: Some of the course readings I’ve made available on Telesis. Go to the
course Telesis page, and click on “Topics” The relevant readings, with
dates, are stored there.

Weekly Schedule for the Course

Week 1
August 28th: Introduction to the course. No reading required.

Part One: Approaches to Environmental Ethics

Week 2:
Sept. 2nd: Articulating Values Exercise
Sept. 4th: Some Key Ideas, and a Very Short Introduction to Ethical Theories!
A very short reading too: p.4-7 of Pojman & Pojman.

Week 3: 9/11th September
Sept. 9th: Anthropocentrism and Stewardship
Readings: “Perspectives”; (10-11)
Lynn White Jr. (14-21)
Sept. 11th: Future Generations
Readings: “Introduction” (346-7) Heilbroner (347-350) and Julian Simon “Can
the supply of natural resources really be infinite? Yes!” on Telesis.

Week 4: 16/18th September
Sept. 16th: Extending the Circle 1: What are Animals Like?
Sept. 18th: Animal Ethics: Key Theories
Readings: Singer (73-82) Regan (82-89)

Week 5: 23/25 September
Sept. 23rd: Animal Ethics: Zoos and Experimentation
Readings: Carl Cohen - on Telesis and at
http://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/phll200Spr07/cohen.pdf
Jamieson (97-103)
I will be away on Thursday 25th September, and will set a case study test to be tackled in class.

- 30th Sept: Extending the Circle 2: All living things
- 2nd Oct: All living things cont.
  Readings: Kenneth Goodpaster: (154-163) and Paul Taylor (139-154).
  Note: The readings are a bit long and difficult, but do your best!

Week 7: 7/9th Oct.
- 7th Oct: A Different Way of Extending the Circle: The Land Ethic
- 9th Oct: The Land Ethic and Beyond to the Gaia Hypothesis
  “The Land Ethic” (163-172) and James Lovelock “Reflections on Gaia”
  available on Telesis (the second reading is not ideal, but the only short, relevant Lovelock piece I know).

Week 8 14/16th October
- 14th Oct: Catch up and review class
- 16th Oct: Mid-semester class test

Part II: Practical Issues in Environmental Ethics

Week 9: 21/23 Oct
- 21st Oct: Hunting.
- 23rd Oct: DVD: Varmints!

Week 10: 28/30 Oct
- 28th Oct: Species Extinction
- 30th Oct: Species Extinction Continued

Week 11: 4/6 Nov.
- 4th Nov: Environmental Restoration
- 6th Nov: Environmental Restoration Cont.
  Readings: Elliott: (290-297) and Frodeman “A Sense of the Whole” on Telesis.

Week 12: 11/13 Nov.
- 11th Nov: Ethics and Climate Change
  Readings: Section 11: Pew Center (568-569) and Stephen Gardiner “Ethics and Global Climate Change” (573-597)
- 13th Nov: Workshop: Ethics and Biofuels/ Ethics and Carbon Offsetting
  Readings: You should look out for news stories and information on biofuels and carbon offsetting for this workshop

Week 13: 18/20th Nov.
- 18th Nov: Wilderness
- 20th Nov: Wilderness 2
Readings: for Thursday: Michael Nelson (200-207) and Guha (521-528)

Week 14: 25 Nov (27th Nov = Thanksgiving!)
25th Nov.: Environmental Beliefs, Practices - and Civil Disobedience.
Readings: Martin (742-754) Foreman (756-759).

Week 15: 2/4 Dec
2nd Dec.: Catch up and Review Class
4th Dec.: Final Class Test

THERE IS NO LATER EXAMINATION FOR THIS CLASS: THIS CLASS TEST ENDS CLASS ASSESSMENT.

2. Format of classes
There will be a mixture of discussion and lecturing on both Tuesdays and Thursdays. Generally we'll discuss readings on Thursdays, but there are a couple of weeks where it's important to have the reading done for Tuesday, so check the syllabus above. I will expect you to have done the readings each week, and I'll have 4 Quickie Random Reading tests in the course of the semester (worth 10% of the final grade for the course). These tests should be straightforward if you've done the reading and have shown up for class!

3. Assessment
The course has a number of forms of assessment:

1. 4 Quickie Random Reading tests, to encourage you to attend class and do the reading (10%)
2. One case study test in September to take an initial reading of how things are going (10%)
3. A hand-in critical review of one of the readings (10%)
4. A mid semester test with (a) gobbets (b) a case study and (c) an essay (20%)
5. A longer essay (30%)
6. A final class test with (a) gobbets (b) a case study and (c) an essay (20%)

This should test a number of different skills: recall, clear summarizing, researching, understanding texts, analyzing, criticizing and developing arguments; relating theory to practice.

In general:
Length of coursework: Keep to the assigned length. Work that is more than 1 page over length, unless permission has been obtained, will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (e.g. a B+ will become a B).
Late work: Late work means extra time, and gives an advantage over other students. Therefore work will be penalized by 1/3 of a grade for every 2 days or part of two days it is late.(So, up to 2 days late an A will become A-; 2-4 days, B+ and 4-6 days, B). If you need an extension for medical or other personal reasons, please contact Clare or Carrie before the deadline.
Taking the course on a Pass/Fail basis: You need to get an average of C+ overall to Pass.

Grading: Good grades are gained by papers that display a combination of the following:

a. A demonstration that you understand material you've read, that you have given it a charitable hearing, and that you can accurately summarize key points from it.
b. Where relevant, a concise and accurate account of empirical material (This, though, should only constitute a small proportion of your paper).
c. The skills of reconstructing, analyzing and critically evaluating authors' arguments; and (where relevant) reformulating them more successfully.
d. An ability to argue persuasively for your own view, which involves: marshalling relevant empirical information, explaining how it is relevant and supports your case, providing grounds for any claims that are made, considering counter-arguments to your own argument and showing why the counter-arguments do not succeed; making sure that your conclusions follow from premises.
e. Clear and concise writing, so that the reader can see immediately what you are trying to say; an introduction that sets up the essay, signposts so that the reader knows where the essay is going, & paragraphs that follow on from one another, so that the essay has a sense of flow and structure.

To Avoid! Unsubstantiated claims; discussions of feelings/opinions where these are not backed up by evidence or argument; inaccurate or carpingly uncharitable reporting of other positions; generalizations (such as “People think that”); discussions that have no reference to the work of those who have already written in the field.

And Note: You do not have to agree with any position that you think the instructors may be taking to get a good grade. Your work is judged on the basis of the strength of the arguments you present, not the position you adopt.

Referencing: You should reference all sources used, including web sites and materials from the text book, in your paper, and to provide a bibliography. The bibliography does not count towards your page total.

Assignments:

1. Quickie Random Reading Tests (10%)
   There will be four of these randomly scattered through the semester. Each will have 10 questions, either with answers of a sentence or less, or they will be multiple choice questions. We’ll collect these in and hand them back in the next class.

2. September Case Study Test (10%) - 26th September
   It’s always useful to take the temperature of a class early on. For this test, I’ll provide a case study relevant to the animal material we will have been looking at. You will be asked a series of questions about the case study, which will draw on your understanding of the material we’ve covered, and give you an opportunity to develop some of your own arguments in an applied context.

3. Critical Review (10%) - 9th October
   Critically review one of these articles set as a reading: Lynn White Jr., Julian Simon, Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Kenneth Goodpaster, Paul Taylor, Aldo Leopold. I’ll provide more details about this critical review nearer the date. But some basic guidance – you should:
   • Pick out central arguments and summarize them clearly;
   • Point out difficulties, problems and weaknesses in these arguments;
   • Consider possible criticisms of the arguments;
   • Evaluate the strength of these criticisms;
   • Offer revisions of the arguments in the article, if you think you can, that in your view would strengthen it;
• Offer comment on the overall success of the article's arguments, and whether it makes a significant contribution to thinking about environmental ethics.

A critical review is not just a summary of the article you have read. If you write just a summary, however accurate, you will not get above B-. The aim of this assessment is for you to think critically about what is being argued, not only to present the argument, important though this is. This critical review should be 4 double-spaced sides long. Reviews are always concise: keep to the page length.

4. Mid-term class test (20%) – 17th October
This 1.5 hour class test will contain gobbets, a case study and an essay. More information will be provided nearer the time.

5. Environmental Ethics Essay (30%) – 25th November
This longer essay should discuss one of the problems we will be considering in the second half of the semester: hunting, species extinction, environmental restoration, wilderness and climate change (including carbon offsetting and biofuels). You should identify either a clear question (for example: “Is carbon offsetting an ethical way for individuals or businesses to counteract their GHG emissions?”) or choose a case study about one of these problems (e.g. a case where an introduced non-native species is driving a native species to extinction, or a disputed restoration case) where you can explore the ethical issues involved. Whether you go for the question or the case study, you must provide ethical arguments that lead to a particular recommendation (either in policy terms, or for what individuals should do). You should use a minimum of 4 academic sources, though these need not all be set readings for the course. Newspaper clippings, popular journalism etc should be in addition to the academic sources. This essay should be 6 double spaced sides long. More details nearer the time.

6. Final Class Test (20%) – 4th December
This 1.5 hour class test will contain gobbets, a case study, and an essay question. Although the final class test will be oriented around the issues we’ve looked at in the second part of the semester, you will need to know material from the whole course, not just the second half of the semester, in order to answer the questions well.

4. The Participation Grade
A small participation grade will be awarded to students who contribute (a) regularly and (b) helpfully to class discussion. This grade will take the form of a one third additional grade on the second essay. No student should be disadvantaged by this grade (since nothing is lost by not getting it) but it rewards students who have done the reading and help to keep the class discussions alive. There is a long tradition of verbal debate in Philosophy, and we want to encourage you to contribute to it!

5. Dissatisfaction with Grades
Occasionally a student is unhappy with a grade. If this is you, please do not knock on my door, brandishing your paper or test, expecting an instant judgment; thinking about grades is a process that takes time and reflection! Write a brief account explaining why you think the grade is unfair. Submit this account, with the contested piece of work, to Mindy Danner in the Philosophy office for the attention of Clare Palmer. Either Carrie or I, or both of us (depending on who marked it) will re-read the piece of work concerned and will provide feedback and a view on the grade. If you are still unhappy, I will give the contested paper to another colleague in Philosophy to evaluate. If you wish to do this, you must agree to abide by the decision of the colleague: grades
can go down as well as up by taking this route. Note: we will not enter into discussions about the award of the participation grade.

FURTHER READING AND USEFUL RESOURCES

Websites: General
Lawrence Hinman’s Ethics Updates: http://ethics.sandiego.edu/ This site is good for ethics in general, but has special sections, including videos etc, on animal and environmental ethics.
Two on-line encyclopedias of philosophy:
Stanford http://plato.stanford.edu/ (This is an excellent resource and has a pretty good entry on environmental ethics in it, but entries are quite high-level)
IEP http://www.utm.edu/research/iep
The Philosopher's Index is a useful resource to search for topics/authors in journal articles and edited book collections. It can only be accessed from university computers, and only supports four users at a time: http://library.wustl.edu/databases/about/phil.html

Websites: On environmental ethics
The Center for Environmental Philosophy website at University of North Texas is the gatekeeper to a number of useful resources, including the International Society of Environmental Ethics online bibliography. See http://www.cep.unt.edu. The ISEE Bibliography can also be found directly on http://www.cep.unt.edu/bib/

The Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (FSEEE) has been an important organization in the US; this site could provide useful case studies: http://www.fsee.org/

Possibly the leading figure in environmental ethics, Holmes Rolston, has put much of his work online. His website is at http://lamar.colostate.edu/~rolston/

The journal Ethics and the Environment is online here: http://www.phil.uga.edu/eande/ You should have access to this journal on university computers.

Useful further reading in environmental ethics
This is inevitably a very brief bibliography: please contact me if you want to look at any particular area in more detail. The journal Environmental Ethics is the leading journal in the field. It is only available in paper copy. The library has a full run of it. Many of the articles have been reproduced elsewhere, and there’s a complete index online at http://www.cep.unt.edu/index17.html This journal should be your first port of call on any particular subject in which you’re interested.

General:
Light, A and Rolston H (2001) Environmental Ethics (Oxford: Blackwell). A slightly higher-level reader, with an excellent overview essay (I'm kidding!) and sections on environmental pragmatism, restoration etc not covered in some other collections.

Animals
Bernstein, Mark On Moral Considerability (Oxford: OUP)
Singer, Peter (1976: 1883 ed.) Animal Liberation (London: Thorsons)
Journal special editions: The Monist 70 1987; Philosophy 53 1978

Biocentric and Ecocentric Approaches
J. Baird Callicott, "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic" (in our textbook)
Leopold, Aldo A Sand County Almanac (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
Rolston, Holmes (1979) "Can We and Ought We to Follow Nature?," Environmental Ethics 1: 7-30
Rolston, Holmes. (1988). Environmental Ethics: Duties To and Values In the Natural World. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press). This is Holmes Rolston’s major systematic work in environmental ethics. He examines a range of questions in environmental ethics, developing his own view on the nature of environmental value throughout.

The Triangular Affair
Hunting

Bekoff and Jamieson 'Sport hunting as instinct – another evolutionary just-so story’ Environmental Ethics 1991 vol. 13 no.4 pp. 375-378
Gunn , Alistair "Environmental Ethics and Trophy Hunting Ethics and the Environment 6 68-95
King, R. J. H. ‘Environmental ethics and the case for hunting’ Environmental Ethics 1991 vol. 13 no.1 pp.59-85

Environmental Restoration

Light, Andrew and Eric S. Higgs.(1996) "The politics of ecological restoration". Environmental Ethics 18 /3 p 227-247. Andrew Light’s webpage has a number of further articles on restoration.

Biodiversity and Species Extinction

Climate Change


There's a website on The Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change at Penn State University's Rock Ethics Institute, with some interesting information and links: http://rockethics.psu.edu/climate/

Wilderness and the Urban


Light, Andrew "The Urban Blind Spot in Environmental Ethics" Environmental Politics 10 (2001): 7-35


Environment and Activism

