

Philosophy 346: Environmental Ethics
Fall 2004

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Required Texts

Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Ethics 2nd. ed. by Joseph DesJardins
The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book, 3rd ed. Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce, eds. (Wadsworth Press: 2003) (EPPB in schedule)
Environmental Ethics Robert Elliot, ed. (Oxford University Press: 1995)
Additional Readings on Blackboard

Course Description

Traditional ethical theory has focused on the morality of human action directed towards other living humans. The impact of humans on other humans via the environment has not been addressed until recently, partly because of an assumption of a nature so plentiful and abundant that humans could not harm other humans through the environment. The problem of how humans are to act towards non-humans (or to future humans) has been either ignored or left for later development of a theory that is often never accomplished. Recent concern over human impact on the environment has led to a surge of interest in the development of ethical positions that encompass more than direct human-human interaction. The work being done in this area often challenges the traditional ethical theories and calls for a reexamination of basic issues such as what are rights and what are morally significant beings. This course will overview the recent development of environmental ethical theory, highlighting the tensions between various approaches. The challenge these approaches pose to traditional theory, the tensions between different approaches, and what the various approaches call on us to do, will be discussed.

After the introduction, the course is divided into two basic parts: the first dealing with anthropocentric or human-based theory and the second dealing with non-anthropocentric theory. In the first part, we will assume that humans are the only morally relevant beings. Even with this assumption, human impact on other humans through environmental harm raises difficult moral questions, such as the value of a statistical life, the value of beauty, and our duties to future generations of humans. In the second part, we will open up the possibility that other entities may have moral standing. There are several general proposals for which entities have moral standing, including individual animals, species, and ecosystems. The problems with these proposals will be discussed, as will the challenge they pose to more traditional ethical concepts.

Course Schedule

- R Aug. 19 Philosophical Argumentation
- T Aug. 24 Introduction to Ethical Theory
 DesJardins Chap. 2
 Optional: EEPB pp. 1-42
- R Aug. 26 Kant
 “Transition from Common Sense Knowledge of Morals
 to the Philosophical”
- T Aug. 30 Rawls and Justice
 Pt. 3/4/11/24: “Main Idea of the Theory of Justice/
 Original Position and Justification/Two Principles”
- R Sep. 2 Utilitarianism
 Chapter 2/4: “What Utilitarianism Is/Of What Sort of Proof the
 Principle of Utility Is Susceptible”
 “Issues for Utilitarians”
- T Sep. 7 Economics and the Environment
 DesJardins Chap. 3
 “The Ethical Basis of the Economic View of the Environment”
 “At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, or Why Political Questions
 are not all Economic” (EEPB pp. 318-335)
- R Sep. 9 Cost-Benefit Analysis
 “Cost-Benefit Analysis: An Ethical Critique”
 “Cost-Benefit Analysis Defended” (EEPB pp. 341-350)
 “Reply to Steven Kelman”
 Optional:
 “Chap. 2: Strategic and Ethical Issues in the Valuation of Life”
- T Sep. 14 Future Generations
 DesJardins Chap. 4
 “Obligations to Future Generations,” “The Futurity Problem”
 Optional: “The Nuclear Train to the Future” (EEPB, pp. 436-437)
- R Sep. 16 Discounting
 “Appendix F: The Social Discount Rate”
 “Discounting Across Generations: Necessary, Not Suspect”
- T Sep. 21 Sustainability
 “Discounting vs. Maximum Sustainable Yield”
 (Elliot, pp.21-28)

- “Sustainability: An Economist’s Perspective”
(EEPB, pp. 438-443)
- R Sep. 23 Private Property and the Commons
“The Creation of Property,” “Property Rights in Natural Resources,” “The Tragedy of the Commons,” “The Tragedy of Enclosure” (EEPB, pp. 364-378)
- T Sep. 28 Environmental Justice
“Just Garbage”
Optional: DesJardins pp. 228-231, “Environmental Racism” (EEPB pp. 550-555)
- R Sep. 30 MIDTERM EXAM
- T Oct. 5 Valuing Beauty I
“The Aesthetics of Wildlife Preservation”
“Aesthetics and the Value of Nature”
- R Oct. 7 Valuing Beauty II
“Faking Nature” (Elliot, pp.76-88)
- T Oct. 12 Man and Nature
“Attitudes to Nature” (Elliot, pp.129-141)
“Duties Concerning Islands” (Elliot, pp.89-103)
- R Oct. 14 FALL BREAK
- T Oct. 19 Wilderness
“The Trouble with Wilderness; or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”
- R Oct. 21 Animal Capacities (Inside the Animal Mind)
- T Oct. 26 Animal Rights I
DesJardins Chap. 6
“Rights, Justice, and Duties to Provide Assistance: A Critique of Regan’s Theory of Rights”
Optional: “Animal Liberation,”
“The Case for Animal Rights” (EEPB pp. 135-149)
- R Oct. 28 Animal Rights II
“Interspecific Justice” (EEPB pp. 150-163)
“An Animal’s Place”
- T Nov. 2 Species Rights

“Duties to Endangered Species” (Elliot, pp. 60-75)

- R Nov. 4 The Land Ethic
 “The Land Ethic,” “The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic” (EEPB pp. 215-237)
 Optional: DesJardins Chap. 9
- T Nov. 9 Deep Ecology
 “Deep Ecology,” “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World” (EEPB pp. 263-273)
 Optional: “Value in Nature and Meaning in Life”
 (Elliot, pp. 142-154), DesJardins Chap. 10
- R Nov. 11 Ecological Theory and Deep Ecology
 “The Ecology of Order and Chaos”
 “Ecological Theory and Value in Nature” (Elliot, pp. 188-214)
- T Nov. 16 Respect for Nature
 “The Ethics of Respect for Nature” (EEPB pp. 201-215)
 Optional: DesJardins Chap. 7
- R Nov. 18 Reading Day
- T Nov. 23 Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism
 “Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism”
 (Elliot, pp. 226-247)
- R Nov. 25 THANKSGIVING BREAK
- T Nov. 30 REVIEW

Course Requirements and Policies

Final Grades will be computed as follows:

Four Papers: 40%

In Class Participation and Response Postings: 15%

Midterm Exam: 15%

Final Exam: 30%

Over the course of the term, each student is required to write four (4) papers responding to a primary source article read for class. Primary sources are those essays that are posted on blackboard by me for the course, essays in Elliot’s edited collection, and essays in *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book*. Primary sources do not include Joseph Des Jardin’s *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Philosophy*, nor any optional

readings. Details on how to write one of these essays are provided below. Two essays must be written by each student prior to fall break, and no more than one essay may be written in any one week by a given student. Be sure to begin writing the essays before the midterm exam!

Each essay a student writes must be posted on blackboard 36 hours prior to the class scheduled to discuss the essay. In other words, you must do the reading for that class and write a draft of the response well prior to the class you wish to write on. Papers not posted 36 hours prior to the class will not receive any credit. Papers should then be revised after other students respond to the paper online and after class discussions. Final papers can be turned in for final grading within three days after the class meeting.

Each student has the option of doing one additional paper over the course of the term, in which case I will take the top four grades in calculating the final grade.

Over the course of the semester, it is expected that each student will respond to some of the other papers online or in class (at least 4-5 times). Thus, you are required to read and consider the arguments of other members of the class. This will be a major part of your participation grade.

Class attendance is mandatory. Students may miss no more than two classes before their participation grade suffers. Students are expected to complete required readings prior to class. This will allow for more fruitful class discussions throughout the term, and will help you understand class material more readily. Some of the readings are challenging, but do not give up. Try to figure out what you find confusing so that you can ask questions about the reading in class. Both the quality and quantity of class participation will be evaluated.

Midterm and final exams will consist of short answer questions based on the readings and class lectures/discussions. The midterm will be given in class on September 30. The final will be given during the final exam period.

All assignments will be graded on the following scale:

A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D	1.0
F	0.0

At the end of the term, the point value of your final grade will be translated into the UT scale in the following way:

A	3.7-4.0
B+	3.3-3.6
B	2.7-3.2
C+	2.3-2.6
C	1.7-2.2
D	0.7-1.6
F	0.0-0.6

Grades are non-negotiable. The only grades I will reconsider are those on exams with arithmetic errors. Note that points are rounding up or down to the nearest first decimal in the standard way, i.e. 3.649 is a 3.6, and a 3.650 is a 3.7. The only legitimate question that can be asked about a paper grade is how you can do better on the next paper. Please do come and see me for such assistance.

Students who have a disability that requires accommodation(s) should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services (974-6087) to discuss their specific needs. Only letters from that Office will be considered in making such accommodations.

Academic dishonesty, in all its forms, will not be tolerated. Of particular importance for this class is the issue of plagiarism. Note that the academic policy for the University of Tennessee states that plagiarism includes “[c]opying without proper documentation (quotation AND a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source.” (Hilltopics, p.11) If you use someone else’s words to express a thought, it must be cited AND be in quotes, or it is plagiarism. Any paper with plagiarism will be an automatic F. To avoid this problem, take care when taking notes to never copy from a text without putting the words in quotes and citing the source in your notes. See pp.11-12 of Hilltopics 2004-2005 for a more complete discussion of academic dishonesty.

No cell phones can be on or visible during class time. Be sure they are SHUT OFF and put away at the start of each class. No hats or sunglasses may be worn, except for medical or religious purposes. No disruptive eating in class.

How to Write a Good Paper

Paper Preparation:

Read the primary source on which you wish to write carefully. If you wish, you can consider more than one reading for your paper, but it is not required.

Take notes on the reading to determine 1) what the main points are that the author is trying to make, 2) how the author argues for those points, and 3) which assumptions are relied upon by the author.

Now, ask yourself whether you agree with the author's main points. Which ones do you agree with, if any? Which do you disagree with, if any?

-- *If you agree with the author*, why do you agree with the author? What is the author saying that strikes you as important and correct? What happens if you hold to the author's ideas in new situations (e.g. those not discussed in the reading)?

In addition, when you find yourself in agreement with an author, are there any minor flaws that you are willing to put up with in order to salvage the author's views? What are they? Why do you think the flaws are minor? Can they be fixed? If not, why is it important to put up with some minor flaws in order to maintain the author's views?

-- *If you disagree with the author*, why do you disagree with the author? Are there unreasonable assumptions that are central to the author's argument? What happens if you change those assumptions? How does the argument change? Focus on the most significant sources of disagreement to develop your ideas.

In addition, can you propose an alternative approach to that of the author? How does that alternative solve some of the problems you have raised with the work of that author?

Paper Writing:

Once you have reflected on the reading, determine what you want to say in the paper. The paper must present your argument, not just a summary of the author's argument. Use the questions above to determine what you want to say about the reading. In the paper, make the case that your view of the reading is the best one.

In the paper, state upfront that you are going to do—this first paragraph is often best written last. Then articulate the author's argument, before launching into your critical examination of the argument. Be sure to make a clear and coherent point about the reading in your paper and support your view well.

One of the most important considerations in writing the paper is to make sure you are not misrepresenting the author's views in your paper. To criticize the author(s) for views they do not hold is a serious error. Make sure you accurately represent views with which you both agree and disagree.

You can change your mind about your argument after receiving peer comments on your draft and hearing class discussion on the reading. This is not a problem, but shows rather that you are thinking the issues through carefully.

The paper should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced, or about 1000 words in length. Post your paper on blackboard for discussion at least 36 hours prior to class. After class, use posted responses from fellow students and class discussion to revise your paper. Feel free to cite your fellow students or class discussion if you find them helpful. Print the final version in serif font (e.g. Times, Times New Roman) and with pages numbered and turn in no more than three days after the class period.

Paper Grades

Papers will be graded on the following 4.0 scale:

A: The paper has a clear and articulate argument. The argument is well-supported with logically relevant and persuasive reasons. The paper follows a clear organizational structure. Material cited (either in agreement or disagreement with the paper's argument) is accurately presented. There are almost no spelling or grammatical errors.

A-: The paper has a clear and articulate argument, at most a couple of spelling and grammatical errors, and good reasons to support the argument. The paper's points could be more clearly presented at a few places in the paper. The organization is solid.

B+: The paper has a clear and articulate argument, perhaps with a few spelling and grammatical errors. The reasoning is partially incomplete at a few points, and better reasons could have been given in support of the argument, OR the organization of the paper could have been better.

B: The paper presents a clear and articulate argument but the reasoning is a bit incomplete AND the paper could be better organized. There are only a few spelling or grammatical errors.

B-: The paper presents an argument, but it is not as clearly articulated as it needs to be. Because of this, the organization is a bit fuzzy, and the argument is not persuasive. There are multiple grammatical and spelling errors, but none that make the paper hard to understand.

C+: The paper presents an argument, but does so in a confused or unpersuasive manner. It misrepresents the arguments of others, and thus undermines its own effectiveness. It may also have multiple grammatical and spelling errors, some of which make it difficult to understand the paper.

C: The paper does not present an argument. It is merely the recitation of opinion without supporting arguments or a review of someone else's work, however accurate.

C-: The paper merely reviews someone's work or presents an opinion, and it has spelling and grammatical errors that make portions of the writing opaque. If presenting a review, it is not very accurate.

D: The paper is rife with grammatical and spelling errors making it difficult to understand. The paper misrepresents the arguments of others and makes no arguments itself.

F: The paper plagiarizes.