

PHIL 148 PHILOSOPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Fall 2005, MWF 2-2.50. Peter. 103.

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Office Hours: 3-4pm Wed

Course Description. We will study and critique various philosophical arguments about our ethical obligations to (or regarding) the environment. The overarching question we will address is: How far do these obligations extend? In other words, who or what deserves moral consideration? More specifically, we will ask: Do we have a duty to our descendants to leave the environment in a reasonable state for them? Do animals and/or plants deserve moral consideration, or only humans? Do all living things deserve *equal* moral consideration? Do our ethical obligations extend to any *non*-living things, such as rivers, lakes and mountains? These questions will lead us to consider general moral theories such as *utilitarianism*, which attempt to provide a universal framework for answering such questions. The aim of this class is not simply to passively learn the philosophical views of others, but to actively criticize and respond to them.

Required Texts: VanDeVeer & Pierce, The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book: Philosophy, Ecology, Economics (Wadsworth, 3rd edition). "EE". Available in Price Center Bookstore

An additional fifteen required readings are available online through the library reserves. These are indicated with an asterisk in the syllabus below. I suggest printing out all of these readings as soon as you can.

Note: Some philosophy papers are dense and difficult to understand. You will almost certainly have to read each of these papers more than once.

Coursework and Grading

Class attendance is mandatory. Students must complete the assigned readings before the day for which they are assigned in the syllabus below. I will provide a set of short questions to accompany each reading. We will discuss these questions in class and students will be evaluated on their contribution (10% of grade). The rest of the student's grade is based on a midterm exam (30%), a final exam (30%) and a 3-4 page paper (12pt, double spaced), due on the final day of class.

Syllabus

I. INTRODUCTION

Friday September 23rd

Overview

Monday September 26th

1. Singer (1973) *Animal Liberation* (EE p.135-142)
2. Regan (1985) *The Case for Animal Rights* (EE p.143-149)

II. PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT AND ETHICAL THEORY

Wednesday September 28th

1. Moral Argument and Ethical Theory (EE p.1-15)
2. *Jay F. Rosenberg "The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners" 3rd Edition, Prentice Hall. p.1-19.

3. *James Rachels: “*Some Basic Points about Arguments*”

Friday September 23rd

1. Influential Ethical Ideas and Theories (EE p.15-42)
2. *Callender: “*Different Moral Theories*”

Ethics And Economics

Monday October 3rd

1. Preview (EE 311-318)
2. Sagoff (1981) *At the Shrine of Our Lady Fatima, or Why Political Questions are Not All Economic* (EE p.327-335)

III. OUR ATTITUDE TO THE ENVIRONMENT: RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Wednesday October 5th

1. Preview (EE p.43-52)
2. Lynn White, Jr. (1967) *The Historic Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*. (EE p.52-58)

Friday October 7th

1. *Lewis W. Moncrief (1970) *The Cultural Basis of Our Environmental Crisis*.

IV. OBLIGATIONS TO OTHER HUMANS

The Distant Needy

Monday October 10th

1. Preview (EE p.389-397)
2. Hardin (1974) *Lifeboat Ethics* (EE p.402-408)

Wednesday October 10th

1. *Murdoch and Oaten (1975) *Population and Food: A Critique of Lifeboat Ethics*.

Friday October 14th

1. *Singer (2000) *Introduction* in “*Writings on an Ethical Life*”.
2. *Singer (1971) *Famine, Affluence and Morality*.
3. *Singer (1999) *The Singer Solution to World Poverty*

Future Generations

Monday October 17th

1. Preview (EE p.419-427)
2. Partridge (2001) *Future Generations* (EE p.428-436)

Wednesday October 19th

1. Solow (1991) *Sustainability: An Economist’s Perspective* (EE p.438-443)

Friday October 21st

1. *Parfit (1983) *Energy Policy and the Further Future: The Identity Problem*.

V. BEYOND ANTHROPOCENTRISM

Animals

Monday October 24th

1. Preview (EE p.114-122)
2. Singer (1973) *Animal Liberation* (EE p.135-142)

Wednesday October 26th

1. *Singer (2003) *Animal Liberation at 30*
2. *Singer/Posner (2001) Debate

Friday October 28th

1. Regan (1985) *The Case for Animal Rights* (EE p.143-149)

Monday October 31st

1. *Cohen (1986) *The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research*

Wednesday November 2nd

1. *Warren (1987) *A Critique of Regan's Animal Rights Theory*

Friday November 4th

1. *Regan (2002) *Empty Cages*

Monday November 7th Mini-review for midterm

Wednesday November 9th Midterm

Friday November 11th No class: Veterans' Day

Biocentric Ethics

Monday November 14th

1. Preview (EE p.174-183)
2. Goodpaster (1978) *On Being Morally Considerable* (EE p.183-189)

Wednesday November 16th

1. Taylor (1981) *The Ethics of Respect for Nature* (EE p.201-215)

Ecocentric Ethics

Friday November 18th

1. Leopold (1949) *The Land Ethic* (EE p.215-224)

Monday November 21st

1. Callicott (1987) *The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic* (EE p.224-238)

Wednesday November 23rd

1. *Singer (1991) *Environmental Values* in "Writings on an Ethical Life".

Friday November 25th No class: Thanksgiving.

VI. CASE STUDY: BIODIVERSITY

Monday November 28th

1. Preview (EE p.451-458)
2. E. O. Wilson (1992) *The Diversity of Life* (EE p.459-465)
3. Gould (1992) *What is a Species?* (EE p.465-469)

Wednesday November 30th

1. Russow (1981) *Why Do Species Matter?* (EE p.469-476)
2. Rolston (1991) *Why Species Matter* (EE p.476-484)

Friday December 2nd

Review

Paper Due