



SYLLABUS: Philosophy 334, Environmental Ethics

**Iowa State University, Fall Semester 2006
Tues-Thurs 2:10-3:25, Ross Hall Rm. 25**

Note: I will make occasional changes in the syllabus, so you should check the online version for updates. When I make changes, I will announce them in class.

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"Oh, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, that I am meek and gentle with these butchers."
-Wm. Shakespeare

[STUDY SHEET FOR MIDTERM EXAM:](#)

[NOTES ON THE PAPER ASSIGNMENT, DUE 30 NOVEMBER AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS](#)

(NOTE: I WILL ACCEPT PAPERS AS LATE AS DECEMBER 5 WITH NO PENALTY.)

[STUDY SHEET FOR THE FINAL EXAM](#)

Required Texts:

- 1) Pojman, L. 2005. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.
- 2) Sagoff, M. 2004. *Price, Principle, and the Environment*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Objectives: Human activities are changing the global environment to a remarkable extent, and global environmental change is now taking place more quickly than could have been expected. We see this in the loss of biodiversity, the steady conversion of wildlands into cultivated land, the increase in greenhouse gasses, and the steadily retreat of glacial and polar ice. It has never been more important for us to understand the process of environmental change, its impact on human interests and human society, and the values that may be gained or lost through the process of radical environmental change. Environmental ethics is a field that should help us to count the value of environmental

systems and the cost of environmental destruction. It should provide tools and principles that will help us to make appropriate choices about our own lives, as well as a framework for understanding environmental law and public policy. In this course, students will gain an initial acquaintance with central readings, issues, writers, and problems of environmental ethics.

This course will begin with a brief introduction to central issues in ethics and normative political theory. Then we will consider central philosophical texts and movements that have been touchstones of environmental philosophy and environmental thought. Students should expect to gain an understanding of a range of important philosophical problems and theories. More importantly, students should come to a better understanding of their own values, and should begin to develop their own philosophical views.

Assessment and Requirements:

Attendance and Participation (includes reading synopses) (10%)

First Writing Assignment: (3-4 pages; 1400 words or so) (10%)

Midterm Exam: (25%)

Paper assignment 7-10 pages; 2500 - 3000 words) (25%)

Final Exam: (30%)

Note: Requirements are not essentially different for graduate students. But graduate students will of course be responsible for graduate level work and will be held to that standard in class and written work. Typical graduate papers are 20 pages long, but length should not be the primary concern: If your paper is good, it won't hurt that it's short, and if it's not good it won't help to make it longer!

Reading Synopses: On each day at the beginning of class, students should turn in a brief but thoughtful synopsis of the assigned reading. This might be only a short typed paragraph, but should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the reading in question. These will be returned after the end of the semester.

Format for Written Work: Papers must be neatly typed (printed). Late papers will be marked down one grade for each day that they are late. We will conform to all university policies regarding grades and incompletes. Papers must be well organized, and must include citations to appropriate related material including class readings. It must include a bibliography at the end, with proper bibliographic citations for all works mentioned.

More complete instructions regarding papers will be given later in the semester. Students who would like an additional grade may write in addition a 6-9 page paper in consultation with the instructor. This additional paper will be worked in as 20% of your total grade, with other grades weighted as indicated above.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS:**Week 1: Traditional Ethics and Political Philosophy**

22 Aug "Ethics" from the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://iep.utm.edu/e/ethics.htm>

24 Aug John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 1. <http://www.utilitarianism.com/ol/one.html>

LECTURE: ATTENDANCE REQUIRED. Mark Rigstad, Oakland University.
"A Philosophy of Environmental Education" 7:00 PM Oak Room, Memorial Union

Week 2: Justice and Public Policy

29 Aug John Rawls, from *A Theory of Justice*. <http://public.iastate.edu/%7Ejwewolf/Papers/Rawls.pdf>

31 Aug Rawls, Continued. **"OBJECT PAPER" DUE.**

Week 3: Intergenerational Justice and Global Environmental Change

5 Sept Aldo Leopold, *The Land Ethic*. EE pp. 139-149

7 Sept Hettinger & Throop, "Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-Emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness." EE pp. 149-161

Week 4: From a Land Ethic to Deep Ecology

12 Sept Naess, Readings on deep ecology. EE. 188-192

14 Sept Bookchin, Social Ecology. EE. 212-223, Ramachandra Guha, EE. pp. 312-320.

Week 5: Social Ecology, Cosmopolitan Environmentalism, and Environmental Pragmatism

19 Sept Taylor, "Biocentric Egalitarianism." EE. pp. 117-131.

21 Sept [Kelly Parker: Environmental Pragmatism](#)

Week 6: Economics of Sustainability and Development

26 Sept Rees, "Sustainable Development: Economic Myths and Global Realities." EE. 546-552

28 Sept Wolf, ["Intergenerational Justice"](#)

LECTURE: WILLIAM REES,
"Environmental Footprint Analysis" 8:00 PM Memorial Union

Week 7:

3 Oct, Locke on Property rights and appropriation, [Second Treatise of Government, Ch. V.](#)

5 Oct, [Wolf, Property Rights, Lockean Provisos, and the Interests of Future Generations.](#)

LECTURE: WILLIAM CRONON.
"Space, Time, and Storytelling: The Making of an American Place." 8:00 Sun Room, Memorial

Union.

Week 8:

Oct 10 Review for Midterm

12 Oct **Midterm Exam:** This in-class Short answer exam will include four short essay (paragraph) questions, each worth 25 points. Exam questions will be taken from a larger list of questions to be distributed in advance.

Week 9:

Oct 17 No Synopsis Due Today Reading: Elliot: "Faking Nature" EE 266-274. (To be discussed on Thurs)

19 Oct Light, ["Faking Nature Revisited."](#) (Weblink)

Week 10:

24 Oct Sagoff, Ch 1, Zuckerman's Dilemma

26 Oct Sagoff, Sagoff, Ch. 2, "At the Monument of General Meade." Ch. 3. "Should Preferences Count?"

Week 11:

31 Oct Sagoff, Ch. 4. "Value in Use and in Exchange"

2 Nov Sagoff, Ch. 5. "The Philosophical Common Sense of Pollution."

Week 12:

7 Nov Sagoff, Ch. 6. "On the Value of Wild Ecosystems."

9 Nov Sagoff, Ch. 7. "Carrying Capacity and Ecological Economics."

Week 13:

14 Nov Sagoff, Ch. 8. "Cows are Better than Condos."

16 Nov Ch. 9. "The View from Quincy Library."

NOVEMBER 20-24 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14:

28 Nov **TWO OPTIONS:**

You may read: Schmitz, "On the Value and Limits of Cost-Benefit Analysis." EE. pp. 560-568.

Or you may instead read Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," EE pp. 364-372.

30 Nov Wolf, "Population and the Environment," EE. pp. 402-410.

FINAL EXAM QUESTIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE WEB

Week 15:

5 Dec No Further Reading Assignments

7 Dec REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM.

FINAL EXAM DATE: MONDAY DECEMBER 11, 12:00 Noon.