



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
School of Philosophy, Psychology  
& Language Sciences

## Environmental Ethics 2017

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PHIL10147

Course Organiser: Dr Matthew Chrisman ([matthew.chrisman@ed.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.chrisman@ed.ac.uk))  
Dugald Stewart Building room 5.11  
Office Hour: Wednesday 11am-12pm, & by appointment

Course Secretary: Miss Samantha Bell ([sam.bell@ed.ac.uk](mailto:sam.bell@ed.ac.uk))

### Aims and Objectives

In this course we will grapple with some of the central theoretical and practical ethical questions arising out of the distinctive relation human beings have to the natural environment. More specifically, we will focus on the ethical implications of climate change. In the first part of the course, we will consider several theoretical topics in ethical theory of direct relevance to the ethics of climate change. In the second part of the course, we will explore several practical topics raised by the ethics of climate change. If you want a good background book to read ahead of taking the course, I recommend James Garvey's *The Ethics of Climate Change* (2008).

### Class Meetings, Semester 2

This course will normally meet for an hour large seminar all together on Wednesdays, and then meet in smaller groups for more detailed discussions later. However, in the first week of the class, we will meet all together for 1h50m to screen and discuss a film. Here are the details:

- Film Screening and Discussion  
Week 1, Wednesday, 10am-11:50am, 2.05 Ogilvie, Geography Building  
[If you have a timetable clash at 11, come along for the first half and I'll explain how you can watch the rest of the film on your own]
- Seminars:  
Weeks 2-11, Wednesday, 10am-10.50am, Dugald Stewart Building room 1.20
- Tutorials
  - Honours 1: Thursday, 15:10-16:00 in G.203 Teaching Room 2 – Doorway 3, Medical School
  - Honours 2: Thursday, 16:10-17:00 in 01M.473 Teaching Room 13 – Doorway 3, Medical School
  - MSc tutorial: TBA

## Intended Learning Outcomes

By taking this course, students will increase their understanding of some foundational issues in ethical theory. They will also gain familiarity with some of the specific ethical concepts crucial for thinking clearly about our relation to the natural environment. Students will improve their ability to defend a philosophically controversial position. They will also improve their critical reading and discussion skills, developing as a learner and participant in the wider social discussion of important political and ethical issues.

## Note on Reading/Viewing Material

For each week, there are materials that you should have engaged with *in advance of the Wednesday seminar*. These are always things to read and sometimes also videos or multimedia to have a look at. The point of the seminars is not for me to tell you what is said in these materials but for us to discuss questions, both interpretative and philosophical, arising from your prior engagement with this material. The required materials are listed below, under each week, as a dark bullet point. I have also listed supplementary readings that can deepen or broaden your education on a particular topic; these might also be relevant for writing an essay on the topic. These are listed below, under each week, as a light bullet point.

## Assessments and Opportunities for Feedback

In this course, there will hopefully be many opportunities to learn different kinds things and in diverse ways. I'll endeavour to give you rolling feedback on how you are doing with respect to the learning outcomes.

To this end, for undergraduates, the course will be assessed by 10% class participation, 30% in class assignments, and 60% take-home exam. For MSc students, the course will be assessed by 10% tutorial presentations, 30% in-class assignments, and 60% a final essay.

For undergraduates, class participation will be assessed by your attendance at the Wednesday seminar and your participation in the later tutorial, according to the participation feedback form (posted on Learn), which I will fill out each week. To calculate your final participation mark, the lowest week's mark will be dropped. This is to account for the possibility of absence for whatever reason. If you are going to miss more than one week's seminar/tutorial, please speak to me in advance, as the course might not be for you.

For both undergraduates and MSc students, the in-class assignments will be exercises intended to improve your writing/discussion skills and prepare you for the final exam. The first one, will be completed in week 7 of the course, the second one in week 9 of the course; in both cases, you will need to do some writing in advance of the

Wednesday seminar in order to have something to do the assignment on. (More details will be posted on Learn.)

The final will cover concepts from the entire course and involve an essay where you can draw on your previous work on the in-class assignments. Released online Monday 10th April 2017 from 9am; Return Thursday 13th April 2017, by 12pm, via Learn/TurnItIn.

Please consult the PLS Undergraduate Student Handbook for further information about general regulations and advice around coursework and assessments.

## Course Topics

### **Week 1: Introduction to Environmental Ethics and Climate Change**

Film Screening and Discussion: *Six Degrees Could Change the World*

- Stephen Gardiner (2004) 'Ethics and Global Climate Change' *Ethics* 114: 555–600.
  - James Garvey (2008) *The Ethics of Climate Change*, ch. 1.

### **Week 2: What is value, and how should it be distributed? Prisoners' Dilemmas, and the Tragedy of the Commons, Types of Responsibility**

- Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (2015), 'The Prisoner's Dilemma' *Wireless Philosophy*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGyZX0VoRpI>
- Matthew Chrisman (2016) 'Tragedy of the Commons' University of Edinburgh Teaching Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15PVi7Y569g>
- Roger Crisp, 'Well-Being' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, secs. 1 & 4, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/well-being/>
  - Guy Fletcher (ed.) (2016) *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*, selections from chs. 9, 11, & 12.
- James Garvey (2008) *The Ethics of Climate Change*, ch. 3.

### **Week 3: What are rights? Where do they come from? Who has them?**

- James Nickel (2014) 'Human Rights,' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/rights-human/>.
- Mary Robinson 'Why Climate Change is a Threat to Human Rights' TED Talk: [https://www.ted.com/talks/mary\\_robinson\\_why\\_climate\\_change\\_is\\_a\\_threat\\_to\\_human\\_rights](https://www.ted.com/talks/mary_robinson_why_climate_change_is_a_threat_to_human_rights)

### **Week 4: Cost-Benefit Analysis, Uncertainty vs. Risk, Expected Value Theory, Externalities, Discount Rates**

- John Broome 'Goodness' (ch. 6) and 'Uncertainty' (ch. 7) from his (2012) *Climate Matters* (Norton).
  - Broome (2012) 'The Future vs. the Present' (ch. 8) also recommended

- Elizabeth Anderson, 'Cost-Benefit Analysis, Safety, and Environmental Quality' in her (1995) *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Harvard University Press).
  - Anderson, (1995) 'The Ethical Limitations of the Market' also recommended.

**Week 5: Is there a viable and distinctive Land Ethic?**

- Aldo Leopold, (1948) 'The Land Ethic', from *A Sand County Almanac*.
- Matthew Chrisman, (2016) 'Leopold's Land Ethic,' University of Edinburgh Teaching Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFECiNIKzoU>
  - Clare Palmer (2011) "Does nature matter? The place of the nonhuman in the ethics of climate change," in Dennis Arnold, ed. *The Ethics of Global Climate Change* (Cambridge University Press)
  - Baird Callicot (1989) "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic" in his *In Defense of the Land Ethic*

*Spring Vacation – no class, no readings*

**Week 6: Moral Status of Distant People and Animals, Parfit's "Non-identity Problem" and "The Repugnant Conclusion"**

- Derek Parfit, (1984) *Reasons and Persons*, (Oxford University Press), chs. 16-17
  - Gregory Kavka, (1982) 'The Paradox of Future Individuals?' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*.
  - M. A. Roberts, 'The Nonidentity Problem,' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

**Week 7: What is the ethically fair distribution of rights to pollute?**

- Singer, 'One Atmosphere' from his *One World* (Yale University Press, 2004)
- Carbon Map Infographic: <http://www.carbonmap.org/?lang=eng>
- Estimate your carbon footprint: <http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>
  - Alice Kaswan (2011) "Reconciling justice and efficiency: integrating environmental justice into domestic cap-and-trade programs for controlling greenhouse gases," in Dennis Arnold, ed. *The Ethics of Global Climate Change* (Cambridge University Press)

**Week 8: Who is more deserving distant needy or future generations?**

- Garrett Hardin (1974) 'Living on a Lifeboat', *BioScience*, 24: 561-568.
- Population Clock: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>
- Hans Rosling, 'Global population growth, box by box TED Talk: [http://www.ted.com/talks/hans\\_rosling\\_on\\_global\\_population\\_growth](http://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_on_global_population_growth)
  - Stephen M. Gardiner (2001) 'The Real Tragedy of the Commons', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30: 387-416.

**Week 9: Are destructive and/or violent protests against climate change morally permissible, required?**

- Alan Carter (1998) 'In defence of radical disobedience', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 15 (1): 29–47.
  - Matthew Humphrey, 'Democratic Legitimacy, Public Justification and Environmental Direct Action' *Political Studies* 54, 2006.

**Week 10: Should we be vegetarians?**

- Lori Gruen (2011) 'Eating Animals' in her *Ethics and Animals: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press).
- J. Baird Callicott, (1980). 'Animal liberation: A triangular affair.' *Environmental Ethics* 2 (4): 311-338.
- Food Carbon Footprint Calculator:  
[http://www.foodcarbon.co.uk/login\\_2.php](http://www.foodcarbon.co.uk/login_2.php)
  - Michael Allen Fox, (2000) 'Vegetarianism and Planetary Health', *Ethics and the Environment* 5: 163-174

**Week 11: Catch-up and Concluding Discussion**