

Environmental Ethics 2019

Course Organiser: Dr Joshua Rowan Thorpe

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Office: [TBC]

Office hour: 2pm on Thursday

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Course aims and objectives

In this course we will focus on some of the central theoretical and practical ethical questions arising out of the distinctive relation human beings have to the natural environment. In particular, 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 issue of climate change. James Garvey's *The Ethics of Climate Change* (2008) is useful background reading for the course.

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 ethical aspects of our relationship to the natural environment. Students will improve their ability to think critically about and defend philosophical positions, and will improve their critical reading and discussion skills. Students will also develop as participants in the wider social discussion of important political and ethical issues.

Teaching

Teaching on this course takes the form of a two hour seminar every Thursday 11am – 1pm, in 3.10 (the Peter Ladefoged Room), DSB . With the exception of the first seminar (in which I will give a brief introduction to the course and we will watch and discuss parts of Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Sequel*) each seminar will have the following structure:

The first hour will begin with a 15-20 minute student presentation of the reading for the week. This will form the basis of a structured discussion of that material for the rest of the hour, for which I will provide a handout. I would like everyone who feels that they are able to do one presentation over the term (ideally in pairs, although this will depend on the number of people taking the class). Topics will be assigned on a first come first served basis, so if there is a topic that you would particularly like to cover please get in touch with me soon. However, if you have difficulties with doing class presentations due to anxiety or any other issues please get in touch with me and we will make alternative arrangements.

In the second hour we will split into small groups to tackle the class exercises. In these exercises each group will first analyse an argument from the reading for the week into a series of numbered premises and a conclusion. Then, each group will isolate the premise that they find least plausible

and explain why. If time permits, I would like groups to compare their answers. Note that these exercises take the same form as the two in-class assessments together worth 40% of the grade for the course (see below in 'Assessment'), so the exercises that we do each week are essentially practice for this assessment.

Assessment and feedback

40% of the mark for the course will be given for two equally weighted in-class assessments, and 60% for a take home test.

The first in-class assessment will be released in class on the 24th of October, and the second will be released on the 14th of November. For the two in-class assessments, we will split into small groups in the second hour of the class. Each group will analyse two arguments from reading for the course into a series of numbered premises and a conclusion, and then discuss which premise is weakest and why. You will then have one week to take home your notes on this to produce a polished version of the arguments, along with an explanation of which premise you think is weakest. This must be submitted for marking before the next class. Note: although you will discuss the exercises in small groups, you will be marked individually.

The take home exam will be released on Monday 2nd of December, and is due Thursday 5th of December at 12pm. The exam will consist of a list of essay titles on material covered in the course, and you will be asked to write an essay of up to 2,000 words on ONE of these questions. Please consult the PPLS Undergraduate Student Handbook for further information about general regulations and advice around coursework and assessments.

Please do feel free to come and talk to me about any aspect of the course during my office hour, which is every Thursday at 2pm [office TBC].

Syllabus

Required material is marked by a solid bullet point, like this: •. Additional material is marked by an outlined bullet point, like this: o.

Week 1: Introduction to Environmental Ethics and Climate Change

In this seminar I'll introduce the course, and then we will watch Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*. There will then be a discussion of the major themes of this film. There is also reading for this seminar, as follows:

- Stephen Gardiner (2004) 'Ethics and Global Climate Change' *Ethics* 114: 555–600.
 - o 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

- Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (2015), 'The Prisoner's Dilemma' Wireless Philosophy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGyZX0VoRpl>
- 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/>
- James Garvey (2008) *The Ethics of Climate Change*, ch. 3.
 - o Guy Fletcher (ed.) (2016) *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*, selections from chs. 9, 11, & 12.

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

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).

- Elizabeth Anderson, 'Cost-Benefit Analysis, Safety, and Environmental Quality' in her (1995) *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Harvard University Press).

- o Anderson, (1995) 'The Ethical Limitations of the Market' also recommended.

- o Broome (2012) 'The Future vs. the Present' (ch. 8) 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>

- o 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)

- o Baird Callicot (1989) "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic" in his *In Defense of the Land Ethic*

Week 6: Parfit's "Non-identity Problem" and "The Repugnant Conclusion"

- Derek Parfit, (1984) *Reasons and Persons*, (Oxford University Press), chs. 16-17

- o Gregory Kavka, (1982) 'The Paradox of Future Individuals?' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*.

- o 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>

- o 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: current or future people in need?

- Garrett Hardin (1974) 'Living on a Lifeboat', *BioScience*, 24: 561-568.

- Stephen M. Gardiner (2001) 'The Real Tragedy of the Commons', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30: 387-416.
- 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

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.
 - o 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
 - o Michael Allen Fox, (2000) 'Vegetarianism and Planetary Health', *Ethics and the Environment* 5: 163-174

Week 11: Catch-up/exam advice