



Introduction to Environmental Ethics

The Northwest Center for Sustainable Resources (NCSR) is an Advanced Technological Education project funded by the National Science Foundation. *Introduction to Environmental Ethics* was developed at Shasta College, Redding, CA. Materials were prepared by William Harger, Lead Program Developer for NCSR.

Technology education programs in which this course is incorporated are described fully in the Center's report entitled, "Visions for Natural Resource Education and Ecosystem Science for the 21st Century." Copies are available free of charge.

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Course materials will also be posted on our website:

www.ncsr.org

Please feel free to comment or provide input.

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COURSE OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Environmental Ethics examines human and human/non-human relationships from an extra-cultural perspective. Utilizing this perspective, we attempt to analyze ethical judgments and moral behavior encouraged by the values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes of “western mainstream” culture. We will explore any value Nature may have in and of itself, beyond human preferences, and this will lead us to the consideration of the rights of plants, animals, land, and humans in a new context.

Many students of environmental ethics note that they have made some of these considerations before, on their own, but have never been able to find a place of study in which to collect or express their ideas in a meaningful way. Those of you who have suppressed these notions will feel at home in environmental ethics. We will explore a matrix of religious, scientific, economic, philosophical, sociological, and political knowledge as we probe the more “fuzzy realms” of aesthetics, purpose, process, love, reality, intensity and life.

Some may be offended by the subject matter because it will shake the foundations of the beliefs they hold dear and have selected to pursue in their lives. *Do not despair!* You are not required to assimilate them if you do not wish to. You are only required to consider these alternatives to our accepted ways of being and ways of thinking as an adult learning exercise. You will, however, be tested on your ability to understand these ideas regardless of how abstract or radical they may appear.

Contrary to the opinion of some, environmental ethics is not designed as academic matter in some sort of an attempt to “arm environmental activists in preparation for a last showdown with ‘American Dreamers.’” Optimally, ethics seeks equity; they are moral philosophy put to action as guidance for the proper act in certain situations of conflict. An understanding of how ethics presently serve only humanity, due to realities championed by western cultural beliefs, can inspire us to compose a philosophical system sensitive to the needs of future people and guide us to adjust our current anthropocentric and more “lobbied” form of modern consciousness.

Thus, an important objective of this course is to develop original and sustaining philosophical guidelines which will enhance a healthy global enterprise through the election of more gentle cultural options by the global community. We will then propose appropriate themes that might be adopted by an extensive future educational network to accomplish that task.

TEXTS

Armstrong and Botzler, 1998. *Environmental Ethics: Divergence And Convergence*. Second Edition. McGraw-Hill Inc., San Francisco, California.

Joseph R. Des Jardins, 2001. *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction To Environmental Philosophy*. Third Edition. Wadsworth Publishing Co., San Francisco, California.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the influence of cultural values on the relationship of humans with each other and with plants, animals and the land. An important objective is to develop original and sustaining attitudes and guidelines that enhance a healthy globe for all posterity. Sources of western society's historical and current attitudes toward nature as well as alternative cultural perspectives will be explored in order to broaden a student's range of philosophical choices of how to think and how to be with regards to nature. The exploration of places humans share with all beings and things, in an integrated sense, will lead to a greater understanding of individual moral responsibilities for ethical actions toward the environment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to do the following:

1. Understand the concepts of basic and non-basic rights, morals, and deontological and teleological ethical perspectives.
2. Understand the influence of differing cultural value systems on relationships of humans with each other and with plants, animals and the land.
3. Objectively analyze environmental problems and compare and contrast different "world views" with prevailing "western views" of the environment.
4. Develop informed, objective perspectives and judgments regarding environmental issues.
5. Articulate responsibilities humans may have regarding global posterity.
6. Distinguish and apply the concepts of economic, instrumental, intrinsic, and inherent values as applied to ethical judgments regarding the environment.
7. Comprehend the connections and interrelatedness among all beings, human and non-human, life, and the globe upon which all dwell.
8. Distinguish between and apply concepts of anthropocentrism, sentientism, biocentrism, and holism toward the solution of environmental issues.
9. Understand the differences between objective and subjective realities and the magnitude and nature of impact each may have in the resolution of environmental quandaries.
10. Develop original and sustaining attitudes and guidelines which will enhance a healthy personal future and a healthy global enterprise.
11. Read and comprehend academic and professional literature on the subjects of environmental ethics and philosophy.
12. Understand and discuss how the "western mind" came to think and to be with regards to nature and the environment.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Attendance (-5 pts/abs)	50 pts.
“Pop” quizzes on reading selections	50 pts.
Homework	50 pts.
Announced quizzes	50 pts.
Artful letter project	50 pts.
Group ethic project	50 pts.
Midterm examination	100 pts
Final examination	100 pts.
Total possible	500 pts.

Grade scale: A = 450, B = 400, C = 350, D = 300, F = below 300

TYPICAL ASSIGNMENT

1. Students will be required to participate in project and discussion groups for the purpose of exploring possibilities for the solutions to ethical dilemmas of today’s world.
 - A. *Artful Letter Group Project.* One group project will have students collaborating on the contents of individual letters to be written to influential persons in the interest of informed, objective, unbiased, and enlightened views towards resolution of an ethical dilemma.
 - B. *Umbrella Ethics Group Project.* Another group project will compose and name a set of ethical guidelines or coherent set of beliefs, attitudes, concerns and commitments that can be taught to students of all ages and will generate ethical treatment of surrounding things and beings, both human and non-human.
2. Written homework assignments and essays will be shared with the class for the purpose of building a sense of community, encouraging creative individuality, and for generating an atmosphere of intellectual inquisitiveness. All assignments are aimed towards the articulation of a rationally defensive ethical theory which may ultimately enhance a healthy global enterprise.

TOPICS LIST

Building a Foundation	Recent Developments	Synthesis	Synergy
<i>The Writings of:</i> Pythagoras, Descartes, Copernicus, Bruno, Galileo, Aristotle, Kant, Aquinas	↓	↓	↓
Genesis and Christianity	Changing Attitudes	Post-Anthropocentrism	Socializers
Anthropocentrism	Native-American Perspectives	The New Way of Thinking and Being	Duties of a Society
Paradigms	Green Politics	Respect for Nature	Looking Glass Nature, New Kind of Person
Manifest and Latent Functions and Dysfunctions	Deep Ecology	“Rights” of Nature?	Altruism
Wisdom, Knowledge and Intuition	World Population	Aldo Leopold & The Land Ethic	Huston Smith & Things Superior to Us
Frontier Mentality	Global Economy	Biocentric Ethics	Stumbling Blocks
Skin-Encapsulated Ego	The Global Brain	Gaia Hypothesis	Building Blocks
Ethical Forms	Feminist Perspectives	Schweitzer & Reverence For Life Ethic	Ethical Elements
Teleology: Aristotle	Minority Perspectives	Huston Smith	Process Theory
Deontology: Kant	Systems Theory and Ecological Model	Travis Hirschi & Bonding Theory	An Umbrella Ethic
Utilitarianism: Bentham	Social Ecology	The Global Brain	
Primary Ethical Teachings	Pitirim Sorokin	Non-Conscious Ideologies	
	Economics, Capitalism and “Eco”-Nomics	Extending Bentham, Aristotle, and Descartes	
	Animal Rights and Animal Liberation	Animal Thinking	
	Wilderness and Natural Resources	Taylor’s Bio-Centric Ethic	
	Biocentrism	Sustainable Communities	
	Lawrence Kohlberg & Stage Theory: Moral Development	Cultural Pluralism	
	Genetic Engineering		
	Creative Problem Solving		
	Eco-Psychology		

NOTE: *Subjects outlined above are supported by current literature where available and appropriate.*

READING/LECTURE SCHEDULE

NOTE: Reading assignments must be completed prior to class. Short “pop” quizzes will be given at random times at the beginning of class to encourage preparedness, and scores will be factored into final grades.

WEEK	SUGGESTED READING/RESEARCH
Part One: Building A Foundation Week 1	Introduction: What is an ethic? Armstrong/Botzler text (A/B) #41: Stephen Jay Gould: <i>The Golden Rule: A Proper Scale for Our Environmental Crisis</i>
Week 2	A/B: Introduction and Ch 1: pages 1, 2, and 3 A/B #3: E.O. Wilson: <i>Little Things That Run The World.</i>
Week 3	A/B #34: Immanuel Kant: <i>Duties to Animals</i> A/B # 36: W.H. Murdy: <i>Anthropocentrism: A Modern Version.</i>
Week 4	A/B #28: Booth and Jacobs: <i>Ties That Bind: Native American Beliefs.</i> A/B #27: Scott Momaday: <i>A First American’s View.</i>
Week 5	A/B #11: John Muir: <i>A Near View of the High Sierra.</i>
Part Two: Recent Developments Week 6	A/B #8: Holmes Rolston: <i>Values in and Duties to The Natural World.</i> A/B #53: Charlene Spretnak: <i>States of Grace.</i>
Week 7	A/B #40: Peter Singer: <i>Equality For Animals?</i>
Week 8	A/B# 15: Gary Nabhan: <i>The Far Outside.</i> A/B #41: Paul Taylor: <i>Respect for Nature.</i>
Week 9	A/B #39: Tom Regan: <i>The Case For Animal Rights.</i> Mid-Term Examination
Part Three: Synthesis Week 10	A/B #45: Aldo Leopold: <i>The Land Ethic.</i>
Week 11	Critical appraisals of <i>The Land Ethic</i>
Week 12	Metaphysics and <i>The Land Ethic</i>
Week 13	A/B #21: St. Francis of Assisi: <i>Canticle of Brother Sun & Sister Moon.</i> Albert Schweitzer: <i>The Ethics of Reverence For Life.</i>
Part Four: Synergy Week 14	The Gaia Hypothesis
Weeks 15-17	Group work on development of umbrella ethic
Week 17	Group umbrella ethic project due
Week 18	Final Examination

NOTES FOR INSTRUCTORS

The following materials include outlines, lecture notes, and resources for instructors to serve as a foundation for a beginning *Environmental Ethics* course. “Sessions” may take more than one week or less, depending upon the amount of discussion generated about specific issues. This discussion is encouraged. Examples are given of the content of “pop” quizzes and subject areas that may be covered. Throughout the course students are encouraged to research the writings of individuals in the broad areas we are discussing. Individual research by students is encouraged.

NOTE: *The purpose of “pops” is to see if an article was read, not memorized.*

Introductory instructions for the students:

Make-up quizzes and exams are not offered and late homework is not accepted after the first day of lateness. *Do not do homework in class!* I expect you to give it some thought and to reflect that process on your paper. This course requires much reading and serious attention to lecture. Things will make more sense if you keep up to date on your reading and homework assignments. I will be able to tell in class if you are in a fog and it is at least somewhat likely I will call upon you for your thoughts. I do not do this to embarrass you. I do it because it is a lot of fun and stimulates interesting conversation. Assignments or quizzes you fail to accomplish will be factored in as “0” when I average your grades at the end of the semester.

Absenteeism is a great burden and is not well tolerated (except when absolutely necessary!). Please arrange to get copies of class notes or handouts from classmates. Team up with someone during the first week and establish a sense of responsibility for one another. Expect to bring yourself up to date. I do not carry handouts around with me, nor am I apt to remember what they were after the fact. It is fair to say that absenteeism will have the greatest impact on your grade because it will influence your quizzes and exams directly. *Take good notes!*

Objectivity is a course goal. Unbiased, open minded, constructive, rational attitudes are a classroom requirement. Try to leave any strong biases, agendas and emotional baggage at the door. If you are easily insulted or happen to be thin-skinned, this subject matter can be murder. Much of environmental ethics is in conflict with favored beliefs, regardless of your philosophical or political orientation. Go ahead and ask questions but don’t ask them all; leave some for others. And remember, *timing is everything!*



American-Indian Perspectives

A special section is included, developed by the Center’s tribal partners. Also, available free of charge from the Center, is a publication titled, “*American-Indian Perspectives: Nature, Natural Resources and Natural Resources Education.*”

REFERENCES

The following may be useful in student research projects:

Buchholz, R. 1998. *Principles of Environmental Management: The Greening of Business*. Prentice Hall Publishers. ISBN 13-684895-8

Chadwick. 1997. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*. Academic Press Publishers. ISBN 0-12227065-7
Freedman B. 1994. *Environmental Ecology*. Academic Press Publishers. ISBN 0-12266542-2

Frodeman, R. 2000. *Earth Matter: The Earth Sciences, Philosophy and the Claims of Community*. Prentice Hall Publishers. ISBN 0-13-011996-2

Pickett, T.A. and C.G. Jones. 1994. *Ecological Understanding*. Academic Press Publishers. ISBN 0-12554720-X.

Sterba, James. 2000. *Earth Ethics: Introductory Readings on Animal Rights*. Prentice Hall Publishers. ISBN 0-13-014827-X

Zimmerman, M.; Callicott, J.; Clark, J.; Sessions, G.; and K. Warren. 2001. *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*. Prentice Hall Publishers. ISBN 0-13-028913-2