

# **Philosophy 250: Environmental Ethics**

Instructor: Aaron Rabinowitz

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## **1. Course Location and Meeting Times:**

1.730.250.01 Tuesday/Thursday 2:50-4:10 in MI-100

Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesdays 1:30-2:30pm in Miller 212

Online Office Hours: By Appointment

## **2. Course Description:**

Environmental ethics is the study of ethical relationships between humans and other entities, primarily the environment and non-human organisms. It also includes the study of theories of value and how they apply to our moral relationships. In this course, we will assess the strengths and weakness of a variety of normative ethical theories and theories of value, including theories like holism and deep ecology that have had a substantial impact on environmental ethics. Ethics benefits strongly from an applied component, so a substantial portion of the course will focus on applying the theories we discuss to key debates in environmental ethics, including sustainability, animal rights, environmental justice, climate change, and rapid technological advancement.

## **3. Course Materials and Assignments:**

*Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application* by Pojman, Pojman and McShane 7th Edition

All readings with page numbers listed are from this book.

## **4. Class Schedule:**

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
1/21	First Meeting	Introduction and What is Ethics pg. 1  Read Syllabus	
1/23	Is Climate Change Real?	The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We're Not Wrong? by Oreskes pg. 608	
1/28	Intro to Ethics	Contested Frameworks in Environmental Ethics by Palmer pg. 14	
1/30	Applying Utilitarianism	A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation by Singer pg. 96	
2/4	Applied Deontology	A Critique of Regan's Animal Rights Theory by Warren pg. 114	
2/6	Applying Virtue Theory	Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments by Hill pg. 26	
2/11	Applying Social Justice Theories	Global Environmental and International Inequality by Shue pg. 37	

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
2/13	The Tragedy of the Commons	<p>The Tragedy of the Commons by Hardin pg. 728</p> <p>Revisiting the Commons by Ostrom et al. pg. 739</p>	
2/18	Human Centric Ethics	<p>Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth by Kant pg. 85</p> <p>The Green Kant: Kant's Treatment of Animals by Wilson pg. 87</p>	<b>FIRST PAPER DUE AT 11:59PM</b>
2/20	Individualist Biocentrism	Reverence for Life by Schweitzer pg. 169	
2/25	Deep Ecology	Ecosophy T: Deep Versus Shallow Ecology by Naess pg. 222	
2/27	Land Ethics	The conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic by Callicott pg. 248	
3/3	Eco-Interests	Eco-Interests by Johnson pg. 261	
3/5	Against Eco-Interest	Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems by Cahen pg. 276	<b>MIDTERM DUE 3/1 AT 11:59PM</b>

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
3/10	Saving Species	Why do Species Matter? by Russow pg. 286	
3/12	Natural Objects	Should Trees have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects by Stone pg. 294	
	<b>Spring Break 3/14-3/22</b>		
3/24	Critiquing Deep Ecology	Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique by Guha pg. 307	
3/26	Racism in Environmental Ethics	Just Garbage: The Problem of Environmental Racism by Wenz pg. 332	
3/31	Third World Environmental Ethics	Deceiving the Third World: The Myth of Catching-Up Development by Mies pg. 341	
4/2	Against Zoos	Against Zoos by Jamieson pg. 121	
4/7	Ecofeminism	The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism by Warren pg. 389	

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
4/9	Advertisement	An Ecological Critique of Global Advertising by Durning pg. 485	<b>SECOND PAPER DUE AT 11:59PM</b>
4/14	For GMOs	Can Frankenfood Save the Planet? by Rauch pg. 542	
4/16	Against GMOs	The Unholy Alliance by Ho pg. 549	
4/21	Food Policies	One Thing to Do about Food by Schlosser et al pg. 595	
4/23	Geoengineering	Re-Thinking the Unthinkable: Environmental Ethics and the Presumptive Argument against Geoengineering by Preston pg. 697	
4/28	Inflection Points	A Special Moment in History: The Challenge of Overpopulation and Overconsumption by McKibben pg. 716	
4/30	Sustainable Futures	The Challenge of the Future: Private Property, the City, the Globe, and Sustainability by Pojman pg. 493	

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
			<b>FINAL EXAM MAY 8TH 12PM-3PM</b>

## 5. Grading and Assignments:

### **B. Discussion Prep (10%)**

Every Sunday night you will post a response to the discussion questions for the Monday reading for the coming week. The discussion questions can be found in the topic descriptions on the discussion tab.

### **A. Quizzes (10%)**

There will be a short, 4-6 multiple choice question quiz due at the end of each week covering both readings for that week.

### **C. First Paper (20%)**

You will write a 1,500-1,800 word paper arguing for a specific policy conclusion based on one of the ethical theories discussed. I provide a list of potential topics, though you are free to choose your own topic, as well as a grading rubric that explains the desired structure for the paper, and a sample essay. Papers will be submitted online through Canvas. **Please make your paper anonymous by not including any identify information on the document itself.** Late papers will receive 2 points off (out of 40) for every day that they are late.

### **D. Second Paper (20%)**

You will write a 1,700-2,000 word paper arguing for a specific policy conclusion based on one of the ethical theories discussed. If you want to write on something we haven't covered yet, please see me for approval. I provide a list of potential topics as well as a grading rubric that explains the desired structure for the paper, and a sample essay. It is expected that the quality of your writing will improve based on feedback from the first paper. Papers will be submitted online through Canvas. **Please make your paper anonymous by not including any identify information on the document itself.** Late papers will receive 2 points off (out of 40) for every day that they are late.

### **E. Midterm (20%)**

This will be a take home midterm posted on Canvas covering topics from the first half of the class. It will contain 10 multiple choice questions, each worth 10 points, and one essay question worth 40 points. The exams are administered through Proctortrack.

## F. Final Exam (20%)

This will be a take home exam posted on Canvas covering topics from the first half of the class. It will contain 10 multiple choice questions, each worth 10 points, and one essay question worth 40 points. The exams are administered through Proctortrack.

**Late Work Policy:** If you don't submit an assignment on time, you will not be able to submit it late unless you have an appropriate excuse and the relevant documentation.

Your letter grade will be determined by the following grading scale:

A	B+	B	C+	C	D	F
100%-90%	89%-87%	86%-80%	79%-77%	76%-70%	69%-60%	59%-0%

## 6. Canvas Site:

Important information, including your assignments and grades, will be available on the site. You can check Canvas for this information, and an email will be sent to you when any information is added to the site. Emails sent through Canvas will be sent to your Rutgers email address. So, if you do not check the Canvas site regularly and primarily use another email aside from your Rutgers one, you should set up the email that you primarily use so that messages sent from Canvas to your Rutgers email account can be forwarded to your primary email address.

The Canvas site can be accessed at:

<https://Canvas.rutgers.edu/portal>

## 7. Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend all classes. Attendance will be taken each class. For every unexcused absences beyond the first two (free passes) you will lose one point off your final grade. If you require an excused absence beyond the first two, you will need to provide me a copy of the excused absence form on Canvas as well as documentation of some sort.

My policy for missed classes is that students who miss classes are responsible for finding out **from other students** what they missed.

If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

## **8. Behavior Policy:**

Please note that none of the following disruptive activities are permitted:

- a) Engaging in private conversations during lecture components of the class;
- b) Using cell phones or laptops in class; or
- c) Engaging in discussions unrelated to the course during group work time.
- d) Packing up early

If you cannot adhere to this code of conduct on a particular day, please don't attend class on that day. If you repeatedly disrupt class, I will ask you to leave.

A note on in class discussion:

Productive intellectual inquiry – the basic purpose of colleges and universities – requires respectful, constructive discussion that enables all parties to participate fully. Philosophy has an especially vital role to play in facilitating such inquiry, because philosophers have been developing and honing practices of critical discussion over many centuries: techniques for uncovering, justifying, and assessing assumptions lurking behind any claim, from the most obvious to the most controversial.

Philosophy is thus a valuable tool for self-reflection and for communal debate. This is especially true at a time when so much is being debated, in such heated terms. But like any tool, in order to work, it must be used well. In our community we expect all participants to observe basic norms of civility and respect. This means stating your own views directly and substantively: focusing on reasons, assumptions and consequences rather than on who is offering them, or how. And it means engaging other's views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial to be discussed; but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive way.

## **9. Policy on Cheating:**

Anyone caught cheating in any way, or aiding anyone else in cheating, will receive an automatic F for the course and be referred to the appropriate authorities for further measures to be taken. These further measures may include suspension or expulsion.

Rutgers Academic Integrity Informatin: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Tutorial about plagiarism: <http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModules/Plagiarism/>

## **10. Student-Wellness Services:**

### **Just In Case Web App**

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

**(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/**

[www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)**

**(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)**

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### **Disability Services**

**(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

### **Scarlet Listeners**

**(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>**

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.