

# **Philosophy 250: Environmental Ethics**

Instructor: Aaron Rabinowitz  
Email: [aaron.rabinowitz@rutgers.edu](mailto:aaron.rabinowitz@rutgers.edu)

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

1.730.250.01 Monday/Thursdays 10:20-11:40 in RC-2  
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 in environmental ethics in particular. 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	Homework
1/24	First Meeting	Introduction and What is Ethics pg. 1  Read Syllabus	
1/28	Is Climate Change Real?	The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We're Not Wrong? by Oreskes pg. 608	Forum Topic 1: Do you find Oreskes's defense of climate change consensus compelling? Why or why not? (due 2/1)
1/31	Intro to Ethics	Contested Frameworks in Environmental Ethics by Palmer pg. 14	
2/4	Applying Utilitarianism	A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation by Singer pg. 96	Forum Topic 2: Which model, deontology or utilitarianism, do you think better characterizes our moral obligation to animals? (due 2/8)
2/7	Applied Deontology	A Critique of Regan's Animal Rights Theory by Warren pg. 114	
2/11	Applying Virtue Theory	Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments by Hill pg. 26	Forum Topic 3: Do you believe entities like countries and corporations should accept the costs of climate change proportional to their involvement and capacity? (due 2/15)
2/14	Applying Social Justice Theories	Global Environmental and International Inequality by Shue pg. 37	
2/18	<b>NO CLASS</b>	The Tragedy of the Commons by Hardin pg. 728	

Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
2/21	Revisiting the Tragedy of the Commons	Revisiting the Commons by Ostrom et al. pg. 739	<b>FIRST PAPER DUE AT 11:55PM</b>
2/25	Human Centric Ethics	Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth by Kant pg. 85  The Green Kant: Kant's Treatment of Animals by Wilson pg. 87	Forum Topic 4: Do you believe we have a special obligation to rational or intellectually advanced entities, or the same kind of obligation to all living beings?(due 3/1)
2/28	Individualist Bio-centrism	Reverence for Life by Schweitzer pg. 169	
3/4	Deep Ecology	The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecological Movement by Naess pg. 218  Deep Ecology by Devall and Sessions pg. 231	Forum Topic 5: Do you find Deep Ecology provides useful insights on specific applied topics? Give an example or explain why not. (due 3/8)
3/7	Land Ethics	The conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic by Callicott pg. 248	<b>MIDTERM DUE AT 11:55PM</b>
3/11	Eco-Interests	Eco-Interests by Johnson pg. 261	Forum Topic 6: Does applying the concept of interests create more problems than it solves? (due 3/15)

Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
3/14	Against Eco-Interest  <b>Spring Break 3/16-3/24</b>	Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems by Cahen pg. 276	
3/25	Saving Species	Why do Species Matter? by Russow pg. 286	Forum Topic 7: Should we care about abstract entities like species or natural objects at any comparable level to living beings? (due 3/29)
3/28	Natural Objects	Should Trees have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects by Stone pg. 294	
4/1	Critiquing Deep Ecology	Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique by Guha pg. 307	Forum Topic 8: Should countries that produce large amounts of waste have to compensate the rest of the world in some way for that behavior? (due 4/5)
4/4	Racism in Environmental Ethics	Just Garbage: The Problem of Environmental Racism by Wenz pg. 332	
4/8	Third World Environmental Ethics	Deceiving the Third World: The Myth of Catching-Up Development by Mies pg. 341	Forum Topic 9: How should we balance the needs of developing countries with the other concerns we've discussed so far?(due 4/12)

Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
4/11	Ecofeminism	The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism by Warren pg. 389	
4/15	Advertisement	An Ecological Critique of Global Advertising by Durning pg. 485	<p><b>SECOND PAPER DUE AT 11:55PM</b></p> <p>Forum Topic 10: Give an example of the role that advertising plays in environmental ethics issues. How should we address this behavior? (due 4/19)</p>
4/18	For GMOs	Can Frankenfood Save the Planet? by Rauch pg. 542	
4/22	Against GMOs	The Unholy Alliance by Ho pg. 549	Forum Topic 11: Do you think we should make use of GMOs to address world issues? (due 4/26)
4/25	Food Policies	One Thing to Do about Food by Schlosser et al pg. 595	
4/29	Geoengineering	Re-Thinking the Unthinkable: Environmental Ethics and the Presumptive Argument against Geoengineering by Preston pg. 697	Forum Topic 12: Is there anything unethical about geoengineering or is it merely risky scientifically? (due 5/3)

Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
5/2	Inflection Points	A Special Moment in History: The Challenge of Overpopulation and Overconsumption by McKibben pg. 716	
5/6	Sustainable Futures	The Challenge of the Future: Private Property, the City, the Globe, and Sustainability by Pojman pg. 493	Forum Topic 13: Has this course changed your sense of relationship with the environment around you? Why or why not? (due 5/10)
		<b>FINAL EXAM DUE MONDAY MAY 13TH AT 11AM</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM DUE MONDAY MAY 13TH AT 11AM</b>

## 6. Grading and Assignments:

### A. Quizzes (10%)

There will be a short quiz posted on Sakai related to each reading due by 9am on the day the reading is assigned. The quizzes are meant to be completed alongside the reading to make sure you are getting through the material.

### B. Forum Responses (10%)

Each week I will post a forum discussion prompt related to that week's topic. You will have until the end of the day on Friday to post a 100-200 word response to the prompt. The goal is to make sure you are absorbing and retaining the material.

### C. First Paper (20%)

You will write a 1,300-1600 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 will provide a list of potential topics as well as a grading rubric that explains the desired structure for the paper, and a sample essay. Papers will be submitted online through Sakai. 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 1,600-1,900 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 will 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 Sakai. 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, open notes midterm posted on Sakai 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.

### **F. Final Exam (20%)**

This will be a take home, open notes midterm posted on Sakai 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.

**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%

## **7. Sakai Site:**

Some reading materials and important information, including your grades, will be available on the site. You can check Sakai for this information, and an email will be sent to you when any information is added to the site. Emails sent through Sakai will be sent to your Rutgers email address. So, if you do not check the Sakai 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 Sakai to your Rutgers email account can be forwarded to your primary email address.

The Sakai site can be accessed at:

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

## **8. 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 Sakai 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.

### **9. 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.

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.



## **10. 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 Information: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

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

## **11. 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 professionals 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.