

Environmental Ethics

ENVS 345

Fall Term 2015 – University of Oregon

Instructor: Nicolae Morar

Syllabus

1. Course Description

Why should I really care about the environment? What makes environmental issues genuine moral issues?

Imagine yourself in the following situation: you are in a room where you can press a button that says “If you press it, the Grand Canyon will be blown away”. What philosophical/ethical reasons would you have to refrain from pressing that button? Are there any such reasons? Is it morally wrong to destroy something we (humans) deem beautiful? Some philosophers believe that there is no moral value without a valuator. So, what if you were the last person on Earth and you would not care about the Grand Canyon, would it still be wrong to press the button? And even if you were not the last person, would it suffice to appeal to the idea that you might deprive future generations from experiencing such ineffable scenery? Imagine the button says, “it you press it, the Grand Canyon will be blown away, *but* in doing so, you save x human lives.” How many lives would justify blowing away the Grand Canyon? What if those lives are the lives of some people you will never know/meet with? Does it have to be a human life? What about a non-human animal life? What about an ecosystem?

This course will attempt to answer some of the questions above and to conceptualize central notions in environmental ethics. We will focus on defining what it means to have moral standing or to be a (moral) person. Is this concept coextensive with the set of human beings? How far can/should we extend the borders of our moral community?

2. Class Meetings

Class will meet **Tuesday** and **Thursday** from **12:00 - 1:20 pm** in **111 LIL**. Discussion sections will meet on **Friday**. Here is the schedule.

CRN	TIME	LOCATION	INSTRUCTOR
12196	1000-1050	475 MCK	Erin Crnkovich
12197	1100-1150	475 MCK	Erin Crnkovich
16420	1200-1250	475 MCK	Erin Crnkovich

3. Office Hours and Contact Information

Office: 250 B Susan Campbell Hall
 Email: nmorar@uoregon.edu
 Office Hours: TU 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

GTF: Erin Crnkovich
 Office: COL 241
 Email: ecrnkovi@uoregon.edu
 Office Hours: TU & TH 11:00 - 12:00 pm

4. Course Requirements and Grading

Grades on papers and exams will be given on the standard 0-100 point grading scale:

100-93:	A
92-90:	A-
89-87:	B+
86-83:	B
82-80:	B-
79-77:	C+
76-73:	C
72-70:	C-
69-60:	D
59-0:	F

Final grades will be weighted as follows:

Class participation/Attendance	10%
Homework (14)	40%
Field Trips and Field Trip Reports (2)	10%
Midterm Exam (paper)	20%
Final Exam (paper)	20%

Participation and Attendance. You are expected to participate actively in this class, which includes attending class (both lectures & discussion sections), reading all assigned material prior to class, and participating productively and professionally in discussion sections. Missing more than one discussion section FOR ANY REASON will result in a 1/3 of a full grade reduction (e.g. from A to A-). An additional full grade reduction will be made for each additional missed class after the second (e.g. from A to B). Three late arrivals for class will count as one absence. Discussion is crucial to this class, and all instructors will do their best to make you feel at ease and welcome to contribute to the class conversations. Please feel free to contribute any question, objection, or other thought about the topic at hand when such occurs to you. Although no relevant remark is out of bounds in this class, you will be expected to treat all members of the class respectfully and professionally. The quality and quantity of your participation in the class discussion will be evaluated in assigning 10% of your final grade. Obviously, failure to attend class will negatively affect your participation grade.

Homework – During the following weeks (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9), before our lecture meetings on Tuesday and Thursday (the homework schedule is attached at the end of the syllabus), you will have to submit by 11 am your homework via Canvas. Your homework will consist of a series of questions (of various formats: multiple choice, short answers, etc.) on a philosophical issue

related to the reading for that day or questions key to understanding that week's topic. The homework is an opportunity to think critically and to engage with the material.

Field Trips and Field Trip reports: In this class, we will have two-field trips. The ENVS Program covers the travel expenses for this trip.

On **Tuesday November 3rd**, we will have a field trip to a local conservation and ecology restoration project - Mount Pisgah Arboretum and South Bottomlands. We will take off from campus by 11:00 am and return to campus by 2:00 pm. For this field trip, you have to sign up at the end of week 1 at the latest.

On **Saturday November 21th**, we will have a second field trip to a local organic farm – Deck Family Farm. We will take off at 8:30 am, from campus, and return to campus by 1:00 pm.

You will be expected to dress appropriately for walking around the Mount Pisgah Arboretum and around a working farm. We will have a presentation of the restoration ecology project on Mount Pisgah and of the organic meet production at the Deck farm. A report is expected from you for each field trip – format: journal description of this experience – one page single-spaced (~ 500 words, normal margins) and the report has to be submitted on Canvas (at the latest) by 5pm on December 4th.

Although each field trip is a required part of the course, those who are unable to attend due to some conflicts (schedule, etc.) may complete a substitute assignment, which will consist in doing 2 hours of volunteering (per field trip you cannot attend) plus a report for each activity in the format described above. Each student who is unable to attend is in charge of making the arrangements to complete the alternative assignment. Here below some places that you would benefit visiting and volunteering for:

1. Lane County Youth Farm

Contact: Ted Purdy (Youth Farm Coordinator)

Email: youthfarm@foodforlanecounty.org

Phone: 541-343-2822

2. Grassroots Garden

Contact: Merry Bradley (Garden Coordinator)

Email: merrybradley@foodforlanecounty.org

Phone: 541-343-2822

3. Huerto de la Familia – The Family Garden

Contact: Sarah Cantril (Executive Director)

Email: familygarden@efn.org

Phone: 541-255-6120

4. School Garden Project

Contact: Elizabeth Goward (Volunteer Coordinator/Garden Educator)

Email: elizabeth@schoolgardenproject.org

Phone: 541-284-1001

One Midterm and One Final Paper Exam: Midterm and Final Papers will be 4 – 5 pages (double spaced, Times New Roman 12, standard margins, ~ 1000-1250 words) and paper topics will be posted one week before they are due. ***Midterm and final papers will be submitted electronically via Canvas.***

Papers not turned in the day they are due are LATE, and will lose one letter grade for each calendar day that they are late. If you are absent on an exam day, you must (1) have contacted me in advance to tell me of the absence, and (2) return with a written excuse (i.e. medical), in order to be permitted to make up the exam.

Failure to complete any of the two exams will result in an automatic failure in the course (grade F).

Grading rubric for exam essays (midterm and final):

A = Excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B = Good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C = Okay. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D = Poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F = Failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Note: At any time (without prior notification), you can receive a reading quiz (from the reading of the day), if the instructor judges this necessary.

6. Course Policies

Incompletes and extensions will be given *only* in the event of documented emergencies.

Emergencies: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances.

Sexual Violence: The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are *required reporters*. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24h hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu

Accessibility: If you have a documented disability, please contact me in advance. If you need accommodations in this class, I will work with the Accessible Education Center to find a solution for you.

Academic Misconduct: With the advent of the Internet, plagiarism has become an increasingly serious problem at universities around the country, particularly in classes like this one, where papers determine a substantial part of the grade.

In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged. If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me.

Plagiarism and cheating on exams undermines the integrity of the academic community. When undetected, it gives the perpetrator an unfair advantage over students who are graded on the basis of their own work. In this class we will do our best to detect plagiarism and cheating. Students who are aware of violations by others should bring this to my attention. This is the right thing to do. It is also in your own self-interest.

There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course. Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be given to the university authorities. For more on the University of Oregon policy on plagiarism, see the following website:

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

External Sources: Using sources not listed on the syllabus in researching and writing your papers is fine, as long as they are both to the point, and are properly cited. And at all times, when in doubt, cite your sources! It is the best way to avoid being accused of plagiarism. This is probably the best place to make this point, too: Wikipedia can be valuable for getting a very broad grasp of positions and debates, but when it gets into details, especially on philosophic topics, it is very often horrible – sketchy, convoluted, misinformed, and often simply wrong. If you wish to consult online resources, I suggest you use some of the other, much better sites. Most prominent is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, but others are useful as well:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <http://plato.stanford.edu/>
The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

6. Website

All the information about this course and other comments or events related to the class will be posted on the course website, which can be reached via Professor Morar's homepage and on Canvas:

http://pages.uoregon.edu/nmorar/Nicolae_Morar/Envs345Fall15.html

7. Texts

No textbooks are required for this course. **ALL the required readings** are available on Canvas.

Other useful (recommended) but not required resources include the following:

- Pojman & Pojman, *Environmental Ethics*, 5th Edition (Thomson-Wadsworth, 2008)
- Dale Jamieson, *Ethics and the Environment*, (Cambridge, 2008)
- Robert Elliot, *Environmental Ethics*, (Oxford, 1995)
- Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics*, (Wiley Blackwell, 2002)

Supplemental readings will be posted on the course website as the term progresses.

8. Topics and Readings

Here is a tentative schedule of topics and readings. Amendments and alterations will be announced in class as we go and on the webpage. Since reminders and other information will frequently be posted on the course website & Canvas, *make sure you check the website on a fairly regular basis.*

<p>Week 1: Moral Reasoning & Environment</p>	<p>Session 1. Introduction to the course Desjardins, “Ethical Theory and the Environment”</p> <p>Session 2. Desjardins, “Science, Ethics, and the Environment” <i>Homework 1</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p>
<p>Week 2: Animal Ethics</p>	<p>Session 1. Kant, “Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth” Wilson, “The Green Kant” <i>Homework 2</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>Session 2. Singer, “Animal Liberation” - Chapter 1 “All Animals are Equal” <i>Homework 3</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p>
<p>Week 3: Animal Ethics</p>	<p>Session 1. Singer, “Animal Liberation” - Chapter 1 “All Animals are Equal” Steinbock, “Species and the Idea of Equality” <i>Homework 4</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>Session 2. Callicott, “Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair” Callicott, “An Introductory Palinode” <i>Homework 5</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p>
<p>Week 4: Biocentrism</p> <p>Midterm Exam</p>	<p>Session 1. Goodpaster, “On Being Morally Considerable” Stone, “Should Trees have Standing?” <i>Homework 6</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>Session 2. Taylor, “Biocentric Egalitarianism” <i>Homework 7</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>Friday 10/23 – Midterm Exam - Questions will be posted on Canvas.</p>
<p>Week 5: Ecocentrism</p> <p>Midterm Exam</p>	<p>Session 1. Leopold, “Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic”</p> <p>Session 2. Rolston, “Naturalizing Values” Sagoff, “Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce”</p> <p>Friday 10/30 – Midterm Exam are due before 4:00 pm.</p>

<p>Week 6: Conservation Biology, Ecology & Biodiversity</p> <p>Field Trip #1</p>	<p>Session 1. FIELD TRIP # 1 (11/3) to Mount Pisgah Arboretum (11:00 am – 2:00 pm) Leopold, “The Conservation Ethic” Callicott, “Ecology: An Ethical Perspective” <i>Homework 8</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>Session 2. Norton, “Biodiversity: Its Meaning and Its Value” <i>Homework 9</i> (due before class at 11 am) cook</p>
<p>Week 7 Ecology and Biodiversity</p> <p>Movie Time (11/12)</p>	<p>Session 1. Morar, Toadvine, Bohannon, “Biodiversity at 25: Revolution or Red Herring?” Sober - Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism (<i>recommended</i>) <i>Homework 10</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>Session 2. Movie HOME (to be projected during class-time) <i>Homework 11</i> (due on 11/14 before 11 am)</p>
<p>Week 8: Biodiversity, Sustainability, and Poverty</p> <p>Field Trip #2 (11/21)</p>	<p>Session 1. Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” <i>Homework 12</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>Session 2. Rolston, “Feeding People vs. Saving Nature?” Engel, “Hunger, Duty, and Ecology: On What We Owe Starving Humans” <i>Homework 13</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>No Discussion Session on FR (11/20). FIELD TRIP (SAT, 11/21): Deck Family Farm, Junction City</p>
<p>Week 9: Feeding the Hungry and Biotechnology</p> <p>Session 2</p>	<p>Rauch, “Can Frankenfood Save the Planet?” Millestein, “GMOs? Not so fast” Movie: <i>Food Inc</i> (sections “From Seed to the Supermarket” & “The Veil”) <i>Homework 14</i> (due before class at 11 am)</p> <p>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</p>
<p>Week 10: The Politics of Food Production</p> <p>Session 2 (12/3)</p>	<p>Guest Lecturer: Paul Guernsey – Industrialization vs. Local Food Production Pollan, “In Defense of Food”, Chapter 3 “The Industrialization of Eating” Freakonomics, “The Inefficiency of Local Food”</p> <p>Class Cancelled (use this additional time to work on your final papers)</p> <p>Final Exam Questions will be posted on CAN one week prior to the day they are due on the Registrar’s Office schedule.</p>
<p>Week 11 Final Exam</p>	<p>Final Papers are due on TBA before 4:00pm on CAN.</p>