

# Environmental Ethics

ENVS 345

Fall Term 2012 – 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 **Monday** and **Wednesday** from **4:00 pm – 5:20 pm** in **229 MCK**.

Discussion sessions will meet on **Friday** with **Paul Guernsey**.

Section 1 (12862) from **8:00-8:50am** in **142 COL**.

Section 2 (12863) from **9:00-9:50am** in **142 COL**.

### 3. Office Hours and Contact Information

Office: 244 COL

Office Phone: 541-346-8056

Email: [nmorar@uoregon.edu](mailto:nmorar@uoregon.edu)

Fall Term Office Hours: **TU 12:00-2:00pm** and by appointment

GTF: **Paul Guernsey**

Office: 240 COL

Office Phone: 541-346-5426

Email: [guernsey@uoregon.edu](mailto:guernsey@uoregon.edu)

Fall Term Office hours: **MON & WED** from **3:00-4:00pm** and by appointment

#### 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 determined by in class participation/attendance, 4 reading summaries (out of 5), a field trip report, a midterm and a final paper. They will be weighted as follows:

Class participation/Attendance	10%
4 (best) Reading Summaries out of 5	20%
Field Trip and Field Trip Report	5%
Midterm Exam (paper)	30%
Final Exam (paper)	35%

**Class Participation/Attendance:** You are expected to participate actively in this class, which includes attending class, reading all assigned material prior to class, and participating productively and professionally in class discussions. Missing THREE classes FOR ANY REASON will result in a full grade reduction. An additional full grade reduction will be made for each additional missed class after the third. Three late arrivals for class will count as one absence. Discussion is crucial to this class, and I will do my best to make you feel at ease and welcome to contribute to the class conversation. 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.

**4 (best) Reading Summaries out of 5:** Each week, either on Sunday or Tuesday, you will have the opportunity to submit via **email (before 10:00pm to both Paul and Nicolae)** a summary of the next day's assigned readings.

Summaries should be limited to one single-spaced page (~600 words) for each assigned article and you should aim to be as clear, concise, and comprehensive as possible within that space. It is *very important* that in the last paragraph of the summary (1/3), you raise a philosophical concern/question with respect to the argument you've just summarized. You may submit a summary of the readings for either Monday or Wednesday during a particular week, but not on both days. Your summaries will be graded as either DUCK+ (especially insightful summary and sharp question), DUCK (accurate, and complete summary and good question), or DUCK- (completeness of summary and quality of question needs improvement). Numerically, these grades will be scored, respectively, as 5, 4, and 3 points out of 5 possible. Reading summaries will count as 20% of your final

grade. Extra or late summaries cannot be accepted in order to make up for delinquency in completing these assignments at the proper time.

**One Midterm and One Final Paper Exam:** Midterm and Final Papers will be 5 – 7 pages (double spaced, Times New Roman 12, standard margins) and paper questions will be posted 1 week before they are due. EMAILED AND ELECTRONICALLY SUBMITTED PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. 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 the two exams for this course will result in failure in the course.**

**Field Trip and Field Trip report:** On Saturday November 17<sup>th</sup>, we will have field trip to a local organic farm – Deck Family Farm. The ENVS Program covers the expenses for this trip. You will be expected to bring lunch and water and to dress appropriately for walking around a working farm. We will have a presentation of the farm, and also, will volunteer to help the farmer (for about 90 minutes). A Field trip report is expected from you – format: journal description of this experience – one page single-spaced (normal margins).

Although the 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 plus a report 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:

- a) **Lane County Youth Farm**  
Contact: Ted Purdy (Youth Farm Coordinator),  
Email: [youthfarm@foodforlanecounty.org](mailto:youthfarm@foodforlanecounty.org)  
Phone: 541-343-2822
- b) **Grassroots Garden**  
Contact: Merry Bradley (Garden Coordinator),  
Email: [merrybradley@foodforlanecounty.org](mailto:merrybradley@foodforlanecounty.org)  
Phone: 541-343-2822
- c) **Huerto de la Familia – The Family Garden**  
Contact: Sarah Cantril (Executive Director)  
Email: [familygarden@efn.org](mailto:familygarden@efn.org)  
Phone: 541-255-6120
- d) **School Garden Project**  
Contact: Jared Pruch (Executive Director),  
Email: [sgp@efn.org](mailto:sgp@efn.org)  
Phone: 541-284-1001

**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.

## 5. Course Policies

**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.

**Plagiarism:** 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/>

With each paper assignment, a handful of students may be selected at random to submit their papers to Safe Assignment, an online service that maintains an enormous database of papers that it uses to check for instances of plagiarism.

**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

Information, comments, and some readings will be posted on the course website, which can be reached via Professor Morar's homepage:

[http://pages.uoregon.edu/nmorar/Nicolae\\_Morar/Envs345Fall12.html](http://pages.uoregon.edu/nmorar/Nicolae_Morar/Envs345Fall12.html)

## 7. Texts

**No textbooks** are required for this course. **ALL the required readings** are available on Blackboard. The Movie HOME is available on YouTube.

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, *make sure you check the website on a fairly regular basis.*

Week 1 9/24 & 9/26	<b>Introduction to the course</b> Movie <b>HOME</b> (required) <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxENMKaeCU">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxENMKaeCU</a>
FR 9/28	Desjardins, "Ethical Theory and the Environment" DesJardins, "Science, Ethics, and the Environment"
Week 2 10/1 & 10/3	<b>Animal Ethics I</b> Kant, "Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth" Wilson, "The Green Kant"
FR 10/5	Singer, "Animal Liberation" - Chapter 1 "All Animals are Equal"
Week 3 10/8 & 10/10	<b>Animal Ethics II</b> Singer, "Animal Liberation" - Chapter 1 "All Animals are Equal" Steinbock, "Species and the Idea of Equality"
FR 10/12	Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair" Callicott, "An Introductory Palinode"
Week 4 10/15 & 10/17	<b>Biocentrism</b> Goodpaster, "On Being Morally Considerable" Stone, "Should Trees have Standing?"
FR 10/19	Taylor, "Biocentric Egalitarianism"
Week 5 10/22 & 10/24	<b>Ecocentrism</b> Leopold, "Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic" Rolston, "Naturalizing Values"
FR 10/26	Sagoff, "Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce"  <b>Friday 10/26 – Midterm Exam Questions – posted on Blackboard.</b>
Week 6 10/29 &	<b>Ecology &amp; Biodiversity</b> Sterelny & Maclaurin, <i>What is biodiversity?</i> Chapter 1 "Taxonomy Red in tooth and Claw" Rolston, "Biodiversity" from <i>A Companion to Environmental Philosophy</i>
10/31 (Guest Lecture)	<b>Biodiversity and Microbial Biology</b> - Brendan Bohannon, Univ. of Oregon (to be confirmed)
FR 11/2	<b>Friday, 11/2 - Midterm papers are due in ENVS Main Office in Prof. Morar's Mailbox before 4:30 p.m.</b>

<p>Week 7 11/5 (Paul) &amp; 11/7 (Nicolae)</p> <p>FR 11/9 (Nicolae)</p>	<p><b>Ecology &amp; Biodiversity</b> Sober – Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism</p> <p>Sober - Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism Norton, “Biodiversity: Its Meaning and Its Value” from <i>A Companion to Philosophy of Biology</i></p> <p>Discussion session on FR 11/9 – is lecture time (for each section).</p>
<p>Week 8 11/12 &amp; 11/14 (Guest Lecture)</p> <p>No FR session <b>Field Trip on Sat, 11/17</b></p>	<p><b>Climate Change, Economics and Environmental Justice</b> Rees, “Sustainable Development: Economic Myths and Global Realities” Daly, “Consumption: The Economics of Value Added and the Ethics of Value Distributed”</p> <p>Sagoff, “At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima, or Why Political Questions are not all Economic” (recommended)</p> <p><b>11/14 - Guest Speaker: Henry Shue, Oxford University</b></p> <p><b>No Discussion Session on FR (11/18). FIELD TRIP (SAT, 11/17): Deck Family Farm</b></p>
<p>Week 9 11/19 &amp; 11/21</p> <p><b>No Class on FR 11/23 Thanksgiving Holiday</b></p>	<p><b>Feeding the Hungry and Biotechnology</b> Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” Rolston, “Feeding People vs. Saving Nature?”</p> <p>Engel, “Hunger, Duty, and Ecology: On What We Owe Starving Humans” Rauch, “Can Frankenfood Save the Planet?”</p> <p><b>Friday, – Final Paper Questions will be posted on Blackboard</b></p>
<p>Week 10 11/26 &amp; 12/28 FR 11/30</p>	<p><b>The Politics of Industrial Food Production</b> Movie: <i>Food Inc</i> (recommended – on reserve Knight Library) Pollan, “In Defense of Food”, Chapter 3 “The Industrialization of Eating”</p> <p><b>Preserving Traditional Agriculture</b> Berry, “A Defense of the Family Farm” Worster, “Good Farming and the Public Good”</p>
<p>Tuesday, 12/4</p>	<p><b>Final Papers due in ENVS Main Office in Morar’s Mailbox (COL) before 4:30 p.m.</b></p>