
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS in Fall 2020 (PL2041)

Course Code	PL2041	Professor(s)	Jula Wildberger
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-106
Class Schedule	W: 09:00-12:25 in RMOTE-00 W: 09:00-12:25 in G-009	Office Hours	https://aup.libcal.com/appointments/julawildberger
Credits	4	Email	jwildberger@aup.edu
Semester	Fall 2020	Office Tel. Ext.	681

Course Description

To check for homework, assignments, deadlines, and instructions, please use the course organizer website: <https://ac.aup.edu/~jwildberger/PL2041EnvironmentalEthics/index.html>

Almost every moment you are called upon to make decisions that have an impact on the environment and those who live in it. Whenever you shop, travel, style yourself, rent an apartment, buy a car, build a house, raise a child, whenever you vote or promote an idea as an activist, your behavior contributes to the well-being or suffering, even death of people, animals, plants, species, or ecosystems. Our planet is transitioning from the Holocene, the era of all present life forms, to the Anthropocene, the era in which one species, humankind, is transforming Earth and even the space around it irrevocably. As a human being and citizen of this planet, you are a part of this story.

This course will supply you with methods of reasoning that help you become a better informed, more reflective and critical agent or decision maker. It introduces you to practical ethical reasoning, ethical theory and meta-ethics by the example of environmental ethics.

Environmental ethics explores the role of human as moral agents within a context that extends beyond the people living on earth today to comprise future generations, other beings, and the whole planet with its biosphere. The questions we will raise have significant philosophical interest and are central to current debates about how individuals should behave and how states as well as global organizations should devise and implement their policies.

Whatever your current opinion on environmentalism and environmental issues, you can benefit from the course in various ways: If you haven't yet made up your mind on such matters, you will find examples and learn techniques to conduct your own ethical inquiry. If you believe you already know what to think, you can acquire a better understanding of the values and theories implied in your judgments and the opinions you hold. Thus you will be able to support them

more effectively in debates with others and to apply them more consistently in everyday life. If you are engaged in environmental activism, you will learn more about the different justifications philosophers have found for the ideals you are defending and about possible theoretical and metaphysical foundations of your values. As a citizen of a democratic state or a future policy maker who has to decide which of the suggested policies is to be preferred, you will acquire a better understanding of the theoretical grounding and soundness of arguments presented for and against certain solutions. As just an ordinary person coming into this course out of curiosity, you will receive some tools you can use to become better in what you cannot help doing every day: negotiate with yourself and others whether something is right or wrong and how you should act.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will have come to know the basics of modern environmental ethics (key figures, key theories, key issues and debates) and understand specific characteristics of environmental ethics (embedded in activism, i.e. justification tendency; ethics for non-humans and the concomitant question whether it has to be a completely new type of ethics, different from traditional ethics).

They will learn to make sense of an original philosophy paper in environmental ethics.

They will become more aware of the ethical implications in current environmentalist discourse and decision making about environmental issues.

They will become able to participate in debates about the ethics of environmental issues and develop a well-considered concept of moral agency as persons whose choices and behavior have an impact on the natural environment they live in.

They will get to know different functions and sub-disciplines of ethics, such as inquiry, justification, critical analysis, meta-ethics.

They will be able to distinguish basic types of ethical issues, e.g. justice vs. the good life of the individual; deontology vs. utilitarianism and axiology; and also be able to distinguish ethical reasoning from both prudential and legal discourse (including religious law and the discourse of sin).

They will develop their skills in making a consistent, well-organized, valid ethical argument, both orally and in writing.

They will learn how to analyze and assess ethical arguments presented by others, and to recognize theoretical and metaphysical assumptions implied in such arguments.

General Education

The general education program at AUP consists of four requirements: Speaking the World, Modeling the World, and Comparing Worlds Past and Present. This course can be used to fulfill the requirements 'Comparing Worlds Past and Present' (-C; GE100) and as such has the following learning objectives:

Investigate different ways in which humans and societies can view their roles as moral agents in a context that extends beyond their own life and society, comprising the whole planet, its biosphere and future generations of people and other living beings.

Get acquainted with types of ethical argument, theory or discourse and learn essentials both about their historical origins and their relation to specific places and cultures.

Be able to recognize and reflect on key components and theoretical implications of current global and intercultural environmental discourse.

Understand the various ways in which environmental debates, values and concepts (such as 'wilderness') are situated in a temporal, geographical and social context (e.g. white protestant American vs. native American; US American vs. European; accusations of environmental colonialism and eco-fascism; environmentalism vs. development and growth; global and intergenerational justice).

Course Outline

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD

WEEK 1: ETHICS? ENVIRONMENT?

Short excerpt from Harari. Sapiens

A first introduction to meta-ethics

From course textbook David Schmidtz, ed. Philosophy: Environmental Ethics, Macmillan

Reference US, 2017. <https://go-gale-com.proxy.aup.fr>

/ps/eToc.do?contentModuleId=G%3AScr&resultClickType=AboutThisPublication&searchType=&docId=GALE%7C8NWE&userGroupName=aupl&inPS=true&rcDocId=GALE%7CCX3648600010&prodId=GVRL

Chapter 1: 'The Relationship between Human and Nature', by Douglas MacLean

WEEK 2: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND ITS PLACE WITHIN THE FIELD OF ETHICS

Introductory videos on basic ethical theories and meta-ethics

Kees Vromans. *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction and Learning Guide*, Routledge 2012, section 2.1 (pp. 34-45)

Richard Routley (Sylvan). "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethics?",

Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy 17th to 22nd September, 1973

Varna, Bulgaria. Varna, Bulgaria: Sofia Press, 1973, pp. 205-210. [http://ac.aup.edu](http://ac.aup.edu/~jwildberger/PL2041EnvironmentalEthics/sylvan.html)

[/~jwildberger/PL2041EnvironmentalEthics/sylvan.html](http://ac.aup.edu/~jwildberger/PL2041EnvironmentalEthics/sylvan.html)

John Asafu-Adaye, et al. 'An Ecomodernist Manifesto,' *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*, April 2015, <http://www.ecomodernist.org/manifesto-english/>

Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home.

BASIC THEORIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

WEEK 3: ANIMAL RIGHTS AND ANIMAL WELFARE (KANTIAN DEONTOLOGY VS. UTILITARIANISM)

Katie McShane. 'Truth and Goodness: Metaethics in Environmental Ethics', *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental*

Ethics, edited by Stephen M. Gardiner and Allen Thompson, Oxford Handbooks Online, Oxford University Press, 2017. <https://www.oxfordhandbooks-comproxy.aup.fr/view10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199941339.001.0001/oxfordhd-9780199941339-e-13>

From Schmidtz 2017, chapter 6: "Animal Ethics," by Clare Palmer

Peter Singer. 'All Animals Are Equal.' *Philosophic Exchange*, Vol. 5 (1974), pp. 103-116 https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/phil_ex/vol5/iss1/6/

Tom Regan. 'The Case for Animal Rights,' *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, edited by Tom Regan and Peter Singer, 2nd edition, Prentice Hall, 1989 pp. 105-114 <https://web.archive.org/web/20120428171934/https://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/philosophy/animals/region-text.html>

Md Nazrul Islam and Md Saidul Islam. 'Human-animal relationship: understanding animal rights in the Islamic ecological paradigm, 'Journal for the study of Religions and Ideologies, vol, no.41, 2015. <https://link-gale-com.proxy.aup.fr/apps/doc/A430393788/AONE?u=aupl&sid=AONE&xid=054f0609>

Edwin Etieyibo. 'Anthropocentrism, African Metaphysical Worldview, and Animal Practices: A Reply to Kai Horsthemke. 'Journal of Animal Ethics, vol. 7, no. 2, 2017, pp. 145-162. Project Muse, <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.aup.fr/article/671929>

WEEK 4: BIOCENTRISM, TELEOLOGICAL CENTERS OF LIFE, ARISTOTELEAN TELEOLOGY AND VIRTUE ETHICS

From Schmidtz 2017, chapter 7: "Two Views of Animals in Environmental Ethics, ' by Gary Comstock

Paul W. Taylor. "The Ethics of Respect for Nature,"Environmental Ethics, vol. 3, 1987, pp.197-218 https://www.-pdcnet-org.proxy.aup.fr/collection/authorizedshow?id=enviroethics_1981_0003_0003_0197_0218&pdfname=enviroethics_1981_0003_0003_0005_0026.pdf&file_type=pdf

WEEK 5: HOLISM VS. INDIVIDUALISM, ECOCENTRISM, ALDO LEOPOLD'S LAND ETHIC

J. Baird Callicott. 'The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic. 'Companion to a Sand County Almanac: Interpretive and Critical Essays, by J. Baird Callicott, University of Wisconsin Press, 1987 <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.aup.edu.fr/lib/aup/reader.action?docID=3444942&ppg=197>

MOVING BEYOND SINGLE APPROACHES

WEEK 6: 'CONVERGENCE ETHICS': CAPABILITIES APPROACH, DEEP ECOLOGY, ECOPRAGMATISM

Chapter 2: 'The Central Capabilities' from Martha C. Nussbaum. Creating Capabilities. Harvard University Press, 2011. <https://www.-jstor-org.proxy.aup.fr/stable/j.ctt2jbt31> (pp.17-45)

Arne Naess. "The Basics of the Deep Ecology Movement,' The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess, edited by Alan Drengson, and Bill Devall, Counterpoint, 2008<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.aup.fr/lib/aup/reader.action?docID=478753&ppg.21-31>.

Andrew Light. 'Methodological Pragmatism, Pluralism, and Environmental Ethics.' Environmental Ethics: The Big Questions, edited by David R. Keller, Wiley-Blackwell. 2010, pp. 318-326

WEEK 7: POPULATION; CRITIQUING ENVIRONMENTAL CHAUVINISM

Garrett Hardin. 'The Tragedy of the Commons. ' Science, New Series, Vol. 162, No.3859 (Dec.13, 1968), 1243-1248 https://www.jstor-org.proxy.aup.fr/stable/17247745?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Amartya Sen. 'Population: Delusion and Reality.' The New York Review of Books, 22 Sep. 1994. <https://www.nybooks.com/article/1994/09/22/population-delusion-and-reality/>

From Schmidtz 2017, chapter 3: 'Populations and the Environment,' by Norva Y.S. Lo and Andrew Brennan

Val Plumwood. 'Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism. 'Hypatia, vol. 6, no. 1, 1991, pp. 3-27. https://www.jstor-org.proxy.aup.fr/stable/3810030?seq=#metadata_info_tab_contents

WEEK 8: RACIST DISCRIMINATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Peter S. Wentz. Environmental Ethics Today, Oxford University Press, 2001, chapter 9.

From Schmidtz 2017, chapter 9: 'Ecological Justice, 'by David Schmidtz

Smith, Kimberly K. 'African-American Environmental Ethics. ' Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman, vol. 1, Macmillan Reference USA, 2009, pp. 18-20. Gale eBooks, access the article via the entry page of the Encyclopedia. <https://go-gale-com.proxy.edu.fr>

[/ps/infomark.do?eisbn=9780028661407&userGroupName=aup.l&prodId=GVRL&](https://ps.infomark.do?eisbn=9780028661407&userGroupName=aup.l&prodId=GVRL&action=interpret&type=aboutBook&version=1.0)

[action=interpret&type=aboutBook&version=1.0](https://ps/infomark.do?eisbn=9780028661407&userGroupName=aup.l&prodId=GVRL&action=interpret&type=aboutBook&version=1.0)

Collection pf case studies and voices by Black activists and scholars (videos and online articles)

CAUSATION, AGENCY, RESPONSIBILITY

WEEK 9:DISCUSSION WITH ACTIVISTS FROM EXTINCTION REBELLION (AND POSSIBLY OTHER GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS)

From Schmidtz 2017, chapter 10: '**Turning Adversaries into Allies: Conciliation in Environmental Politics, "** by Dan C. Shaha

WEEK TO DO ABOUT THE CLIMATE?

Dale Jamieson. Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed - And

What It Means for Our Future, Oxford University Press, 2014.

WEEK 11: WHAT IS MISSING FROM THE STORY?

Lucius Annaeus Seneca. Letters on Ethics: To Lucilius, University of Chicago Press, 2015,

Letters 50 and 90. [https://proxy.aup.fr/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com](https://proxy.aup.fr/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db==nlebk&AN=1048745&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_Cover)

[/login.aspx?direct=true&db==nlebk&AN=1048745&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_Cover](https://proxy.aup.fr/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db==nlebk&AN=1048745&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_Cover)

Amitav Ghosh. The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, Penguin Books 2016, part 2: 'History'

Selections from Vishwas Satgar (editor). The Climate Crisis: South African and Global Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives, Wits University Press, 2018.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.18772>

WEEK 12 = FINAL EXAM PERIOD

Project presentation due on 17 December

18-19 December: look at, appreciate and comment on the projects of your peers

19 December 19-20h (Paris time), optional meeting to celebrate and talk about everyone's work

22 December: last day to submit coursework (project paper, project portfolio, etc.)

Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Since I myself am teaching remotely, you are free to attend class from home. Some students prefer to be in a classroom, though, and if you're one of them, there is a classroom reserved for us in which you can attend the whole-class meetings, and, as far as this is possible your study group's meeting with each other and with me.

For the first class, on 23 Sept., we will spend all the assigned time together. Each of you needs to use their own device for that session because we'll do online exercises and practice using teams.

Special health and safety measures during the reign of COVID-19:

Please for everyone's safety you must wash your hands well before you enter the classroom. You are required to wear a mask during all face-to-face classroom time or for individual meetings with me or other students. The mask must cover your nose and mouth at all times. No exceptions!

Unfortunately, no food or drink will be allowed inside the classroom.

If you feel ill, DO NOT COME TO CLASS. If you are well enough, you can join us online instead. If you experience ANY symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, dry cough, aches and pain, respiratory difficulty), please seek medical help immediately. Make sure to keep me informed, and get a note from the doctor if you have to be absent from class.

Grading Policy

1: CONTRIBUTION TO YOUR STUDY GROUP (20%)

- a. Independent meetings to complete set weekly tasks (as much as needed; if all group members come well prepared, an hour should be amply sufficient; but you might like to make this a real study group and spend more time together to figure out readings, etc.)
- b. weekly report on your group`s work and progress (due at the beginning of your group`s instructor`s meeting)
- c. Weekly instructor meeting (30 minutes)
- d. Group blog post with your group`s answers (due after weekly instructor`s meeting but before whole class session on Wednesday)

Grading: Cumulative, based on diligent completion of tasks. You start out with an A, and deductions are made for missed work. For a, b, and d, all group members earn the same grade, but individual deductions may be made if a member of the team does not contribute their fair share. Attendance at the weekly instructor`s meetings is weighed individually. In order to earn an overall grade A, you must serve as group secretary for at least one week.

2: WEEKLY READING QUESTIONNAIRES (20%)

... for you to demonstrate that you have done the prescribed readings and to prepare a productive class discussion.

Grading: cumulative, completion.

3: FOLLOW-UP BLOG POSTS (10%)

Your personal take on the questions addressed in the first group blog post (1.d). Make a comment (a) to your own group`s post and (b) to the post of one of the other groups.

Grading: cumulative, completion.

4: THREE ORAL EXAMS (15%, I.E. 5% EACH) IN WEEKS 3, 6, AND 9 OF THE SEMESTER

Recorded conversation via Teams on the topics and texts covered in the course section before the exam.

Grading: qualitative, i.e. the grade will depend on how well you do in the exam

Criteria: Familiarity with topics, issues, and texts, ability to use terms correctly (i.e. explain what they mean, define them, distinguish them from related concepts, apply them to environmental

issues), for the second and third exam also learning curve since last exam.

5: CONTINUOUS CONTRIBUTION (10%)

such as in-class participation, entries to our racism/discrimination wiki, text comments via hypothesis and other annotation tools, peer support, and any other activities connected to the progress of our whole class.

Grading: qualitative

Criteria: intensity and quantity of engagement; quality of contributions; constructive and cooperative attention to the shared learning project of the class as a whole

6. YOUR PROJECT (25%)

You make a case on a specific topic of your choice. This includes:

10% research portfolio (list of readings, videos, other sources you have consulted) & three paraphrases of key passages from original readings

10% paper in which

- you formulate an ethical claim concerning some concrete issue that matters to you
- you present the facts to which your claim applies
- you make an argument in which you conclude your claim from those facts and your ethical principles
- you address possible objections to your argument

5% appropriate presentation (different formats; to be discussed; creative work, activism can be included)

Grading: qualitative

Criteria: For research portfolio: relevance, appropriateness, and quantity of sources (appropriateness also assessed by the way in which they shape the argument); accuracy, clarity, and precision of paraphrases

For paper: accuracy, clarity, and precision of language and structure; consistency and validity of the argument; presentation and development of evidence; ability to recognize and address weaknesses of own argument

For presentation: completion -- just share your thoughts and findings with us. But try to make it as engaging as you can.

Timeline:

You should work steadily on this project throughout the semester. The following times mark out basic stages.

Week 3: define area of interest & face-to-face meeting to discuss it

Week 5: formulate claim, abstract, project proposal with outline and realistic planning of tasks ahead (written document)

Week 6: meeting to discuss and approve your proposal

Week 10: last opportunity to submit version of your paper for preliminary feedback/rewrite option

Week 12 = final exam period: submission of project, presentation to class, celebration. Presentation due on 17 Dec, portfolio & paper due on 22 Dec.

Other
