

Environmental Ethics

Fall 2013



Description

This course will examine the morality of our treatment of the environment. We will start with a survey of ethical theory. Do we have moral obligations to animals, plants, species, and ecosystems? And do we ever have a right, or duty, to harm or kill some human or nonhuman animals in order to benefit or save others? We will then apply these ideas to different environmental problems. For example, do we have a duty to conserve or preserve natural resources or the wilderness? And do we have a duty not to contribute to pollution or climate change? Finally, we will consider applications and solutions. What are the costs and benefits of cultural solutions, political solutions, and technological solutions? Also, do we have a moral obligation to not participate in activities that harm the environment, as well as to advocate for environmental reform?

General Information

- Time: 6:10-8:10pm, 9/4, 9/11, 9/18, 9/25, 10/2
- Place: 1015 Schermerhorn Ext via Campus Main Entrance
- Instructor: Jeff Sebo
- Email: jeffsebo@gmail.com
- Course website: jeffsebo.net/teaching/

Readings

There are no required books for this course. All required readings will be made available electronically.

Assignments

This course will be graded pass/fail. In order to pass, you must complete all of the following assignments.

- **Paper:** You will write one paper explaining and evaluating the views and arguments discussed in class. Your paper will be 5-7 pages long, and you will be free to write on the topic of your choice.
- **Daily Questions:** At least one hour prior to each session, you will send me an email with (1) a brief description of one of the main claims from each reading and (2) a question or comment about this claim.
- **Attendance and Participation:** I expect regular attendance and thoughtful participation from all students.

Policies

- Laptops/Cell Phones: Laptops are allowed, but only for taking notes. Cell phones must be on silent.
- Special Accommodations: If you need special accommodations, please let me know so that I can properly assist you.
- Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.
- Extensions and Incompletes: Extensions and incompletes will be granted as long as you ask me in advance and have a good reason for asking.

Schedule

- **9/4 - Moral Status**
Dale Jamieson, "Humans and other animals"
Dale Jamieson, "The value of nature"
- **9/11 - Moral Theory**
Peter Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality"
Robert Solomon, "Morality and theories of morality"
- **9/18 - Natural Resources**
Brian Barry, "The ethics of resource depletion"
Wilfred Beckerman, "Sustainable development and our duties to future generations"
- **9/25 - Climate Change**
Peter Singer, "One atmosphere"
Stephen Gardiner, "Ethics and climate change"
- **10/2 - Solutions**
Garrett Hardin, "The tragedy of the commons"
Lori Gruen, "Technology"
- **Paper due**