

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT  
SPRING 2012  
PHIL 209 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS  
SEC. 2 TUES. & THURS. 11:00 – 12:15 NICELY 108  
SEC. 3 TUES. & THURS. 12:30 – 1:45 NICELY 108

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**Course Description:**

This course serves as an introduction to ethics and more specifically to environmental ethics. “Ethics” is concerned with “right conduct” and environmental ethics is then concerned with right conduct in regard to objects in the environment, such as animals, vegetation, fish, insects, water, mountains, and soil. Ethics is generally concerned with what sorts of things have *value*, and with what *obligations* we have toward ourselves and others, and most importantly *why* we have obligations at all, if we do. *Environmental* ethics poses special problems for ethics, because, the object of ethical concern (the environment) cannot itself have ethical obligations toward us, nor is it very clear why we have obligations to the environment, other than ‘it is good for us.’ In other words, environmental ethics asks us to consider the value of nature beyond its obvious “anthropo-centric” value. Thus, one of the important questions we will deal with is whether nature has *intrinsic value*, i.e., value independent of human needs and desires. Environmental ethics is not simply about appreciating the environment, or about awareness of environmental problems, or about which policies are best for the environment—although these matters do arise; rather, it is centrally concerned with philosophical questions about the environment, such as: What distinguishes, if anything, *nature* from human artifact? What sorts of entities are entitled to “moral consideration,” non-human animals, plants, rocks—and why? Should we be concerned more about the eco-system as a whole, at the expense of some of its individuals, or should we be more concerned to preserve individuals, regardless of the benefit to the whole? Environmental ethics fundamentally challenges us to extend our moral consideration beyond the relatively small circle of human beings. You will be expected to grasp and to engage in this fundamental challenge.

Basically, each week we will read one or two articles and discuss them in class. You are expected to have read them ahead of time, so that we can discuss them. These articles are difficult, sometimes long, abstract, and will require intense concentration. You will need to keep track of complicated arguments, details, scientific findings, and terms. You will then write in class-essays, analyzing these arguments and building a case for or against them. Indeed, an important goal of this course is to turn you into a more effective thinker and writer. We will have occasional quizzes and you will complete an experimental game. Occasionally, we will do “group work” where you will answer several questions in a small group and discuss them with the class. This is not an easy class. If you are not willing to work hard, I advise you to take something else—or, stay and learn!

This course mainly emphasizes philosophical thinking, which I take to mean the slow, careful, reflective reading and analysis of texts and concepts. Classes will be discussion-driven and centered on the assigned readings. My goal is not only to introduce the student to various problems in environmental ethics, but to develop the habit of reading and thinking philosophically.

**Course Outcomes**

- The ability to precisely identify the conclusion for which a writer is arguing.
- The ability to accurately represent the argument(s) which someone is using to support his or her conclusion.
- The ability to identify and assess objections to arguments in our readings.
- The ability to develop, explain, and defend your own views.

**Essential:** Read this syllabus carefully. By taking this class, you agree to understand and comply with this syllabus. By ‘syllabus’ I mean the following documents, available on Moodle: (1) this document (2) Calculating and Estimating Your Course Grade; (3) Documenting Sources: Rules & Mechanics;

(4) What is Plagiarism? (5) any other document I have placed in the “syllabus” section. To maintain organization and fairness, I must maintain the policies stated herein. If I make any changes to the syllabus, I will inform you. If you have a question about any policy, I am happy to talk about it. But if it is in the syllabus, you can never say that you did not know.

Note: You may attend ONLY the section you are officially *registered* for, e.g., if you are registered for Sec. 1, you may not attend Section 2. *No* exceptions; do not even ask.

**Required Texts:** See course schedule below for assigned readings.

- Course Packet, available at AUB Bookstore.
- Additional readings available in class or on Moodle.

**Graded Requirements:**

- Quizzes (approx. seven, dispersed throughout the semester): 20% of course grade
- In-class midterm essay 1: 20%
- In-class midterm essay 2: 25%
- Climate Challenge game report: 5%
- Final exam: 30%

**Quizzes:** These are multiple choice or short answer quizzes given occasionally (according to Course Schedule) designed to keep you up with the readings and to sharpen comprehension. The Quiz for that day will be over the readings assigned for that day (or the previous day) only. Quizzes may *not* be made up. Your lowest quiz score will not be included your total Quizzes score. Here is how they are scored:

-1 = 90; -2 = 80; =3 = 70; -4 = 60; -5 = 0 Note that if you cheat on the quiz by looking at someone else’s quiz or by giving or obtaining answers from some other source, you will receive a zero for the quiz.

**Climate Challenge Game:** This is a fairly simple online game that challenges you (the President of the European Nations) to manage various resources without destroying the planet, and without getting booted out of office. Your assignment is to play the game **three** times (each game consists of 10 *stages*, each of which take approximately five minutes to play). Then you are to write up a **seven paragraph** report (two paragraphs on each game), consisting of the following: For each game, make an assessment of your results (Did you “win”? Why or why not? How well did you manage your resources? What problems or considerations did you encounter?) In your final (seventh) paragraph, summarize what you learned. Explain whether your strategy changed from game to game. What was your main goal? Your grade will be based on the thoughtfulness and completeness of your reflections on the game, as well as clarity of expression. The game may be found here:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/hottopics/climatechange/climate\\_challenge/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/hottopics/climatechange/climate_challenge/)

Click on “open” to download. It is best **to do a practice run** using the tutorial and reading the remarks and instructions. You can also click on the “question mark” anytime you need additional information. Please do not start playing the game until the 5<sup>th</sup> week of the semester. You may hand in your report anytime after then, up until the deadline stated on the syllabus. For more details, please see “Climate Challenge Game” posted on Moodle.

**In-class essays and final:** You will be given a choice of two out of three questions to answer. The questions will be based on the previously assigned readings. Along with the question, I will usually give you a passage from the reading I want you to analyze or respond to. Here are the bases on which I will grade your essay: You must be able to identify and discuss the main idea (thesis) of the readings. You must be able to identify the reasons that are given in support of that thesis. You must be able to critically evaluate that thesis. You must be able to write in clear, grammatically correct, English. Your thoughts must be well-organized. Essays that fulfill all of the above in an excellent manner will receive 90 points. Those that do so in a “good” manner, or fulfill the criteria partially, will receive 80 points or more. Those essays that need work in at least two of the above criteria will receive 70 points or more. Those that do not fulfill several of the criteria, or do so in a weak manner, will receive 60 points or more. Those essays that fail to display much knowledge of the readings, *or*

are incomprehensible or thoughtless in expression, will receive a 59 or less. The best way to prepare for these essays is to read the assigned readings *carefully* and pay attention to how we discuss them in class. Also, for most of the readings, I will provide “reading questions” on Moodle that will help you focus on what is important.

**Attendance:** is up to you. However, given that your final grade depends on your performance on the in-class essays and quizzes, and that we will be discussing these difficult essays in class, it is in your best interest to attend every class, to be attentive, and to participate in the discussions. You must work hard to get a good grade in this class.

**Participation and class conduct:** Participation is strongly encouraged. In order to participate well, you must do the assigned readings *before* class, and *always bring the assigned text to class*. Ask questions, make comments, and respond (respectfully) to other students. No question or comment is too silly or off-base. Everyone has questions, and surely others have the same questions as you. However, please do not monopolize the discussion. Give others a chance to speak. *Be respectful of me and others by listening to what is going on, rather than talking among yourselves*. A philosophy class is one of the very few places where you have the opportunity to express and examine opinions. However, you should expect to have your opinions *challenged*. You should also expect me to call on you unexpectedly. So, be prepared.

NOTE: Repeat offenders of the following behaviors will be ejected from class and will have **points removed from their final grade**. (1) Talking while someone else is talking. If you cannot avoid talking to your neighbor, then sit somewhere else. (2) Text messaging in class. Answering calls. All electronic devices must be turned off and put away completely out of sight. I reserve the right to take your “Crackberry” until class is over. If you insist on taking notes with a computer, the internet connection must be turned off. (3) Leaving the room to make or answer phone calls; playing games or reading non-class material during class. (4) Repeated lateness; leaving early. (5) Also, as a courtesy to me, *do not make preparations to leave class until I say class is over*. If I seem unaware that class time has expired, kindly alert me, thank you.

**Grade Calculation:** I want you to understand how your grades are assigned and calculated, so that you can know better what I expect and so that you can exercise more control over your own progress. See “Calculating and Estimating Your Grades” on Moodle.” This will show you completely explicitly how all calculations are made, so that you can do them yourself. Here is a brief explanation: All grades are recorded on Moodle’s “Grades” (as well as on the assignments themselves), so you can view them as soon as I have put them up (Moodle→Administration→Grades).

To *estimate* your grade at any point in the semester, simply figure your average and multiply it by the “weighted” amount; then sum the weighted amounts (see “Calculating and Estimating. . .”). Be sure to drop the lowest score on your quizzes. Your course grade will not be rounded up. An 82.75 is an 82.

**NOTE:** Never tell me that you “need” a certain course or paper grade, nor ask me to “go easy” on grades or anything else. The request is completely inappropriate. The only reason students make such a request is that they think it will influence their grade—and they are right. If made, I will *reduce* your course grade by at least 2 points. The best way to get the grade you need is to do the required work as best you can; although I offer no guarantees that you will get it.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the intentional or careless use of someone else’s writing or ideas as if they were your own. I consider it equivalent to stealing, lying, and cheating, and no amount of it will be tolerated in my class. Plagiarism is wrong for another reason: The general objective of college is to become a better writer, thinker, learner, and person. Plagiarizing severely undermines that objective and harms, not only you, but all students, professors, the university, and society in general. If you plagiarize, you fail to learn how to write and think. You represent yourself as having skills and knowledge that you in fact do not have. Also, *I despise plagiarism and plagiarists*. I take your work and my work seriously. If you plagiarize, then my work becomes a pointless waste of time. I hate wasting time, because I wish to fill my life with meaning and accomplishments. Nor do I wish to have

false relationships. When I read and respond to your work, I consider myself as engaged in a mutual relationship of trust, respect, truth, care, and progress. If I am reading your plagiarized work, then I am having a false relationship with you. I despise false relationships because they destroy the substance of life. **If you plagiarize anything in this class, you will receive a grade of zero for the assignment and be reported to the Dean. It will go on your record and you could be dismissed from the university.** This includes any submitted work whatsoever (including essay drafts, single sentences and ideas, using dictionary definitions, encyclopedia entries, or any part thereof, paraphrasing, whether from books, internet, magazines, friends, wherever). You must also discourage plagiarism by not giving your paper to someone else to copy. Unfortunately, I catch plagiarizers *every semester*. I am an experienced reader and can usually tell, simply by reading, when a student has plagiarized. I can tell because the writing does not match the assignment, because the text has an “internet feel,” or because it uses awkward wording in an attempt to disguise the source. I also use Google and other resources.

You can, of course, easily avoid plagiarism simply by *citing your sources properly*. If you are unsure of how to cite sources properly, see “**Documenting Sources: Rules & Mechanics**” posted on Moodle. But *you are responsible for any plagiarism*. If you are struggling with an assignment, or with your English, please come and talk to me. I am here to help.

**Turnitin.** Unfortunately, due to a few people’s insidious attempts to plagiarize, I must force everyone to submit all assignments to Turnitin.com. Failure to submit your work to Turnitin results in an automatic 0 for the assignment.

Here is how it works: As their website says, “Every paper submitted is returned in the form of a Originality Report. Results are based on searches of billions of pages from current and archived instances of the Internet, millions of student papers submitted to Turnitin, and commercial databases of journal articles and periodicals” ([http://www.plagiarism.org/plag\\_solutions.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_solutions.html)). NOTE that Turnitin only submits a “similarity” report, not a plagiarism report. The similarity report shows the percentage of your text that is similar or identical to another text, and therefore helps me determine whether you have plagiarized. Some similarity is fine and to be expected. But identical similarity or paraphrased similarity is plagiarism. NOTE: Writing papers does *not* consist of using a source and changing a few words here and there. Nor does paraphrasing a source consist of changing a few words here and there. It means making a compact summary of the main point of a paragraph, for purposes of clarification for the reader. All paraphrasing must be documented.

To submit your paper to Turnitin, go to Moodle and click on “Turnitin submission” for the current assignment.

**More information on Plagiarism is posted on Moodle.**

**The Writing Center:**

If you have writing issues that need extra attention, please take advantage of the Writing Center. Their instructors help all students, from first-year to doctoral. Keep in mind that they will *not* proofread or copy-edit your work. Walk in or make an appointment: 9 am - 5 pm, Monday – Friday. West Hall 336; Ext. 3157; E-mail: [writing@aub.edu.lb](mailto:writing@aub.edu.lb)

**Moodle:** Here you will find course material such as the syllabus, some course readings, citation mechanics, tips on writing papers, and such. Class notices and announcements will be sent to you by e-mail (via the “News Forum”) so, **check your AUB e-mail** regularly. You may also post your own thoughts on the News Forum for everyone to see.

**E-mail:** So that we may better communicate, you must use your AUB e-mail and “authenticate” it so that I can see your name and know who you are.

See Course Schedule, next page--

**Course Schedule:** This schedule is subject to change, although any changes will be announced well in advance. To be prepared for class discussions, read the assigned material *prior* to class time. *Always* bring the assigned material to class. Bring whatever is assigned for Tuesday to Thursday's class as well. *If you do not bring the readings to class, I may ask you to leave until you return with them!*

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
1 Jan.	29 Introduction to Course Syllabus, Wordsworth and Emerson	31 Some troubling news (Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow" & "The Obligation to Endure")
2 Feb.	5 WHAT IS ETHICS? Rachels, "A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy"	7 Rachels continued <b>Quiz 1</b>
3	12 Hobbes and the problem of collective action (vs. self-interest)	14 Hobbes cont. Prisoner's Dilemma game
4	19 WHAT IS NATURE? John Stuart Mill, "Nature." <b>Quiz 2</b>	21 Mill cont.
5	26 Harden, "The Tragedy of the Commons."	28 "Extensions of The Tragedy of the Commons"
6 Mar.	5 Leopold, "The Land Ethic"	7 <b>In-class Essay 1</b>
7	12 Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects"	14 Zimeri, "Muslims and the Environmental Crisis: An Islamic Deep Ecology." <b>Quiz 3: Group work</b>
8	19 Sober, "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism."	21 Sober cont.
9	26 Jamieson, "Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming." <b>Quiz 4: Group work</b>	28 Jamieson cont. (Latin Easter, Fri. to Mon.)
10 Apr.	2 Singer, "Not for Humans Only: The Place of Nonhumans in Environmental Issues." <b>Quiz 5</b>	4 Singer cont.
11	9 Regan, "Animal Rights: What's in a Name?"	11 Regan cont.
12	16 Katz, "Is There a Place for Animals in the Moral Consideration of Nature?"	18 Katz cont. <b>Quiz 6</b>
13	23 O'Neill, "The Varieties of Intrinsic Value." (focus on section IV)	25 <b>In-class essay 2</b>
14 May	30 Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature."	2 Taylor, continued (Orthodox Easter, Fri. – Mon.)
15	7 Rachels, "Virtue Ethics" Hill, "Preserving the Environment." <b>Quiz 7</b>	9 Hill, continued <b>LAST CLASS</b> <b>Deadline to hand in Climate Challenge Game Report</b>
16	14 Reading period	16
17	21 <b>Final exams: 10:30 AM</b> <b>Sec. 2: Nicely 322</b> <b>Sec. 3: Nicely 323</b>	23 May 24 End of Semester