

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT  
FALL 2011-12  
PHIL 209 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS  
SEC. 1 TUES. & THURS. 12:30 – 13:45 NICELY 206  
SEC. 2 TUES. & THURS. 14:00 – 15:15 NICELY 206

Instructor: Dr. Chris Johns E-Mail: <a href="mailto:cj08@aub.edu.lb">cj08@aub.edu.lb</a> Phone: Ext. 4259	Office: 139 Fisk Hall Office Hours: 11:30 – 12:30, and by appointment.
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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 our conduct in regard, not only to each other, but also to objects in the environment, such as animals, vegetation, fish, water, mountains, soil, and so forth. Ethics is also concerned with what sorts of things have value, what obligations we have toward others, and most importantly *why* we have obligations at all. Environmental ethics poses special problems for ethics, because, the object of ethical concern (the environment) cannot itself have ethical obligations toward us. Moreover, the reasons for our obligations to the environment are difficult to separate from our “anthropomorphic” concern for the environment. Thus, one of the important questions we will deal with is whether nature has value “intrinsicly”, i.e., 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 the best for the environment—although these matters do come up—it is centrally concerned with philosophical questions about the environment—generally stated: what makes it that we have, if we do, any special obligations in our relations with nature. We must also bear in mind how our own nature and dependency on the environment weigh heavily on the value we place on the environment.

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 papers analyzing argument or taking issue with them. 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. Lectures will be minimal. 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.

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, Citing, Rules & Mechanics; (4) any other document I have placed in the syllabus section of Moodle. 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 do not understand or agree with the policies, feel free to discuss them with me. I am always happy to talk about anything. But if it is in the syllabus, you can never say you didn’t know.

Note: You may attend ONLY the section you are officially signed up for, e.g., if you are signed up for sec. 1, you may not attend section 2.

**Required Texts:**

Course Packet, available at AUB Bookstore. See course schedule for assigned readings.

**Requirements:**

- Two short midterm-ish papers: each worth 25% of course grade
- Several quizzes, dispersed throughout the semester, 15%.
- Final paper, 35% of course grade

**Papers**—For the first two papers, you will provide a “critique” of one of the articles we will have read. For the final paper ... Details in the coming weeks.

**Quizzes:** (if applicable) 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 only. Quizzes may *not* be made up. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped from calculation.

**Attendance:** Class attendance and participation are vital components of this course and will affect your grade both directly and indirectly. If you do not arrive by the time I take attendance, or if you leave the classroom for more than five minutes, you will be marked absent. 3 late markings = 1 absence. If you are late, you must tell me after class so that I can mark you “present”. For every unexcused absence over three, your course points will be reduced by 3. If you accumulate more than eight unexcused absences, *you automatically fail the course*. I accept excuses *only for extreme circumstances that you must discuss with me in person and provide documentation*—no exceptions. Also, do not ask me if you missed anything in class on your absence—of course you did! Any important notices will be posted on Moodle.

**Bonus for good attendance:** if you have no unexcused absences throughout the semester, 4 points will be added to your course grade; only one absence, 3 points; two absences, 2 points.

**Note:** You will not be excused for missing class due to special sessions, make-ups, or scheduling conflicts in other classes. If a teacher in another class schedules you for anything that conflicts with this class time, you must tell that teacher that by order of the Dean of FAS he/she must schedule you at a time you can make it. In other words, no scheduling conflicts are allowed. But it is your responsibility to attend class and to inform your professors of this policy. If your other professor objects, give me his contact information and I will set him/her straight.

**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 you do. Occasionally, I may call on you unexpectedly.

A philosophy class is one of the very few places where you have the opportunity to express and examine opinions. BUT, note the following:

- (1) you should expect to have your opinions challenged.
- (2) you are expected to listen to and to think about the opinions of your classmates. Be respectful of me and others by listening to what is going on, rather than talking among yourselves. In sum, **ONLY ONE PERSON MAY SPEAK AT A TIME, AND NO ONE MAY TALK IN THE BACKGROUND.**
- (3) **ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES MUST BE TURNED OFF and PUT AWAY COMPLETELY OUT OF SIGHT.** You may not text-message in class. 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.

**Repeat offenders of these rules will be told to leave the room, be marked absent, and points will be taken off your final grade.** You will also be penalized (as above) for the following behaviors I consider disrespectful: Leaving the room to make or answer phone calls; playing games or reading non-class material during class.

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.

**Grades: Criteria and 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. There are two main parts to the grading process: Criteria and Calculation. See the “Grading Criteria for Written Assignments” posted on Moodle; specific criteria will be given with the specific assignment. For Calculation, 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 “Gradebook,” (as well as on the assignments themselves), so you can view them as soon as I have put them up. 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. **NOTE:** Never tell me that you “need” a certain course grade in the class and expect or request me to give it to you. The request is completely inappropriate, and if made, I will *reduce* your grade. 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. **Therefore, if you plagiarize anything in this class, you will automatically fail the course 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 cited.

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)

**Citation Mechanics: See Instructions posted on Moodle**

**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	Date Tuesday	Date Thursday
1 Sept.	27 Introduction to Course Syllabus, Wordsworth, Thoreau, Emerson	29 Some troubling news (Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow" & "The Obligation to Endure"; Lovelock, & Review of Lovelock)
2 Oct	4 Rachels, "Some Basic Points about Arguments." Sober, "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism."	6 WHAT IS NATURE? Mill, "Nature." Hobbes, Ch 13 of <i>Leviathan</i> on human nature. <b>Quiz 1</b>
3	11 WHAT IS ETHICS? Hume, "Principles of Morals"	13 Mill, "Utilitarianism" <b>Quiz 2</b>
4	18 Kant, "The Categorical Imperative" <b>Paper 1 Due</b>	20 Rachels, "Virtue Ethics"
5	25 WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS? Palmer, "An Overview of Environmental Ethics."	27 Leopold, "The Land Ethic"
6 Nov	1 Cahen, "Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems" <b>Quiz 3</b>	3 Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects"
7	8 Al-Adha NO CLASS (6-8)	10 O'Neill, "The Varieties of Intrinsic Value."
8	15 APPLIED ISSUES and THE ETHICS OF SUSTAINABILITY Singer, "All Animals are Equal."	17 Regan, "Animal Rights, Human Wrongs." <b>Quiz 4</b>
9	22 Independence Day NO CLASS	24 Katz, "Is There a Place for Animals in the Moral Consideration of Nature?" <b>Quiz 5</b>
10 Dec	29 Nelson, "An Amalgamation of Wilderness Preservation Arguments" <b>Paper 2 Due</b>	1 cont.
11	6 Callicot, "A Critique of and an Alternative to the Wilderness Idea."	8 Noss, "Wilderness, Now More than Ever: A Response to Callicot." <b>Quiz 6</b>
12	13 Harden, "The Tragedy of the Commons."	15 Rolston, "Feeding People vs. Saving Nature?"
13	20 Attfield, "Saving Nature, Feeding People, and Ethics" <b>Quiz 7</b>	22 cont.
14	27 Christmas Break (NO CLASS)	29 NO CLASS
15 Jan	3 Nickel & Viola, "Integrating Environmentalism and Human Rights"	5 cont.
16	10 Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature." <b>Quiz 8</b>	12 LAST CLASS Hill, "Preserving the Environment."
17	17 (Reading period) Make-up class	19 (Exam period begins)
18	24 <b>Final paper due?</b>	26
Feb	31 (End of semester, Feb 1)	2