

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
SPRING 2012
PHIL 209 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS
SEC. 1 TUES. & THURS. 12:30 – 1:45 NICELY 320
SEC. 2 TUES. & THURS. 3:30 –4:45 NICELY 417

Instructor: Dr. Chris Johns E-Mail: cj08@aub.edu.lb Phone: Ext. 4259	Office: 139 Fisk Hall Office Hours: T & Th 2:00 – 3:00 PM, and by appointment.
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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, insects, water, mountains, soil, and so forth. Ethics is generally concerned with what sorts of things have *value*, and with what *obligations* we have toward 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, 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 *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 come up; rather, it is centrally concerned with philosophical questions about the environment, such as: what makes it that we have, if we do, any special obligations in our relations with nature? What sorts of entities are entitled to “moral consideration”? Are biological processes “goal directed” or are they merely “blind” mechanisms? And what *moral* difference does that make, if any? Can we rightfully divide organisms into two basic types, sentient and non-sentient, and give moral consideration to the former, but not the latter? 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 papers analyzing arguments or building a case for or against them. Indeed, an important goal of this course is to turn you into a more effective writer. 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.

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) 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 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: 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. eight, dispersed throughout the semester, 20%).
- Two short midterm-ish papers: each worth 25% of course grade
- Final paper, 30% of course grade
- Attendance and participation count toward your final grade as extra credit or demerit.

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 only. Quizzes may *not* be made up. Your lowest quiz score will not be included your total Quizzes score. For my grading criteria, see Moodle.

Papers—For each paper, I will give you details in advance. But typically, your first paper (1000 words) will be to analyze a given passage or argument from an assigned text. Your second paper (1500 words) will be similar, and the final paper (2000 words) will likely involve the use of external sources (research). No hard copies of papers are needed. When you are ready to submit your paper, go to Moodle and submit it to the Turnitin submission for that assignment. I will type comments on your paper, grade it, and return it to you electronically. Grading criteria may be indicated when I post the assignment; but you should make yourself familiar with my general grading criteria posted on Moodle (Grading Criteria for Written Assignments). Late policy: Late papers (less than three days) will be accepted; however, they are subject to a 10-point penalty. And *do not plead or try to bargain with me*. If you do, I will subtract points. If you are having difficulty completing an assignment, it is best to let me know before it is due. However, I must apply my policies consistently.

Attendance, Participation, and Conduct: Class attendance and participation are vital components of this course and will affect your grade both directly and indirectly.

Lateness: 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”.

Unexcused absences: You are allowed three unexcused absences—no penalty. However, for every unexcused absence over three, your *final grade* will be reduced by 3. For example, if you have four unexcused absences, three points will be taken off your final grade. If you accumulate more than eight unexcused absences, *you automatically fail the course*.

Excused absences: 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 final grade; only one absence, 3 points; two absences, 2 points. Note, however, that excused absences will not count towards the bonus. So, if you have perfect attendance, but one excused absence, you get only 3 points. Two excused absences, 2 points. 3 excused absences, no bonus.

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.

IN ADDITION: You will 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. For criteria, 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 “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: the highest grade you can receive on a paper is a 90, and this is a rare grade. An 85 is considered excellent, and an 80, very good. 75 is good. 70 indicates you need some work. Below that and you need a lot of work, say, on grammar, punctuation, organization, or citing sources.

NOTE: Never tell me that you “need” a certain course or paper grade, nor ask me to “go easy” on grades, attendance, or anything else. The only reason students tell me this is that they think it will influence their grade. It will. The request is completely inappropriate, and 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. **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). 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

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.

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 Feb.	14 No class, holiday	16 Introduction to Course Syllabus, Wordsworth, Thoreau, Emerson
2	21 Some troubling news (Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow" & "The Obligation to Endure"; Lovelock, & Review of Lovelock	23 Rachels, "Some Basic Points about Arguments."
3 Mar.	28 Sober, "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism."	1 WHAT IS NATURE? Mill, "Nature." Quiz 1
4	6 WHAT IS ETHICS? Hume, "Principles of Morals"	8 Mill, "Utilitarianism" Quiz 2
5	13 Kant, "The Categorical Imperative"	15 Kant, an environmentalist? (handout available on moodle)
6	20 Rachels: "Does Morality Depend on Religion?" Divine Command & ... Paper 1 Due	22 Rachels, continued: ... Natural Law
7	27 WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS? Palmer, "An Overview of Environmental Ethics."	29 Palmer cont. Quiz 3
8 Apr.	3 Leopold, "The Land Ethic" Quiz 4	5 Leopold, cont. (Latin Easter begins 10pm)
9	10 Cahen, "Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems" Quiz 5	12 Cahen cont. (Orthodox Easter, begins 10pm)
10	17 Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects"	19 Naess continued. Zimeri, "Muslims and the Environmental Crisis: An Islamic Deep Ecology." Quiz 6
11	24 APPLIED ISSUES Singer, "All Animals are Equal." Paper 2 due	26 Regan, "Animal Rights, Human Wrongs."
12 May	1 LABOR DAY NO CLASSES	3 Katz, "Is There a Place for Animals in the Moral Consideration of Nature?" O'Neill, "The Varieties of Intrinsic Value." (focus on section IV)
13	8 Harden, "The Tragedy of the Commons."	10 "Extensions of The Tragedy of the Commons" Quiz 7
14	15 Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature."	17 Taylor, continued Quiz 8
15	22 Rachels, "Virtue Ethics" Hill, "Preserving the Environment." Quiz 9	24 Hill, continued LAST CLASS
16	29 Reading period, exams begin	31
17 June	5 Final Paper Due 3 PM	7
18	12 End of semester	14
	19	21