CLASS SYLLABUS: INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS L30
235F Fall 2007

Instructor: Clare Palmer
Teaching Assistant: Ben Floyd-Clapman
Clare Palmer’s office: Wilson 108
Clare Palmer’s office hours: Monday 10.30-11.30; Thursday 3-4.
E-mails: Clare Palmer: cjpalmer@artsci.wustl.edu (Probably the best way to contact me);
Ben Floyd-Clapman: bfloydcl@artsci.wustl.edu (Office hours TBA)
Class times: 9.00-10.30, Mondays and Wednesdays.
Room: Cupples II 200

Required book:
Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book
(Wadsworth: 3rd edition) Most of the readings are from this book (some others will be available on Telesis).

Syllabus:

NOTE: There will be no class in Week 1 on August 29th.

Week 2:
September 5th: Introduction to the course. No reading required.

Part One: Approaches to Environmental Ethics

Week 3: 10th/12th September
September 10th: Articulating Values Exercise
September 12th: Key Questions, Key Terms, and a Very Short Introduction to Ethical Theories!
Reading:
Required: “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis” Lynn White Jr. V&P pp.52-58
Recommended: The section “An Introduction to Ethical Theory” pp.1-42 in VanDeVeer and Pierce (V&P). (It provides both background and added detail to what I’ll be talking about.)

Week 4: 17/19th September
Humans and Environment: Valuing the Environment for Humans.

Week 5: 24/26th September
Extending the Circle - Thinking about Animals
Readings: Required: Singer “Animal Liberation” (V&P 135-142) and Regan “The Case for Animal Rights” (V&P 143-149)

Week 6: 1st/3rd October
Valuing All Living Things?
Readings: Kenneth Goodpaster “On Being Morally Considerable” (V&P 183-180) and Paul Taylor “The Ethics of Respect for Nature” (V&P 201-215). Note: There’s quite a lot of reading here, and the Goodpaster article can be a bit difficult. But do your best with it!
Week 7: 8th/10th October
8th October: Valuing Ecological Wholes? The Land Ethic
10th October: The Land Ethic and Beyond: the Gaia Hypothesis
Reading for Wednesday: Aldo Leopold “The Land Ethic” (V&P 215-223) and James Lovelock “Reflections on Gaia” available on Telesis

Week 8: 15th/17th October
15th October: Catch up and review class
17th October: Mid-semester class test

Part II: Practical Issues in Environmental Ethics

Week 9: 22/24th October
22nd October: Hunting.
Roger Scruton “Fox-Hunting: The Modern Case” also on Telesis.
24th October DVD: Varmints

Week 10: 29th Oct/31st Oct
Species Extinction.

Week 11: 5th/7th Nov
Environmental Restoration
Readings: Elliott “Faking Nature” (available on Telesis) and Frodeman “A Sense of the Whole” (also on Telesis)

Week 12: 12/14th Nov.
Wilderness, Land Use, Population & Immigration in the US
Readings: Guha “Radical American Environmentalism” (V&P 521-528) and Cafaro & Staples “Environmental Argument for Limiting Immigration to the US” (on Telesis)

Week 13: 19 Nov (21st November = Thanksgiving break)
Climate Change (1) An Inconvenient Truth

Week 14: 26/28th Nov.
Climate Change (2)
Reading: Stephen Gardiner “Ethics and Global Climate Change” Ethics 114 April 2004 555-600.
(Available on Telesis)
On Wednesday 28th November, we’ll look specifically at ethics and biofuels and ethics and carbon offsetting. Keep your eyes open for news stories to bring in on this.

Week 15: 3/5 Dec
3rd December Environmental Beliefs and Practices.
Reading: Dave Foreman – “Strategic Monkeywrenching” (V&P 628-631) and Guy Claxton “Involuntary Simplicity” (V&P 643-648).
5th December: Catch up and Review Class

Week 16: 10 Dec.: Final Class Test
2. Format of classes
There will be a mixture of discussion and lecturing on both Mondays and Wednesdays, with a
couple of DVDs as well. Generally we’ll discuss readings on Wednesdays, but there are a couple
of weeks where it’s important to have the reading done for Monday, so check the syllabus above.
I will expect you to have done the readings each week, and I’ll randomly collect in reading notes
three times in the course of the semester. I won’t be giving these a grade, but anyone who misses
more than one hand-in will lose a third of a grade from their final essay mark (so, an A- will
become a B+).

3. Assessment
One of the aims of the course is for you to have an opportunity to undertake a number of different
kinds of work. So, the first assignment is a critical review; there are timed essays in the test;
there’s a longer research essay, which can concern the ethics of a particular environmental issue
in which you’re interested; and the final test includes discussion of a case study as well as an
essay. This should help you to develop a range of different writing skills: summarizing,
reviewing, researching, analyzing, applying theory to practice.

In general:
Length of coursework: Try to keep to the assigned length of the work. Work that is more than 1
page over length – unless permission has been obtained from Clare or Ben - will be penalized one
third of a grade (e.g. a B+ will become a B).
Late work: Handing in work late, except in special circumstances, may give an advantage over
other students. Therefore work will be penalized by one third of a grade for every 2 days or part
of two days it is late. (So, up to 2 days late an A will become A-; 2-4 days, B+ and 4-6 days, B).
If you need an extension for medical or other personal reasons, please contact Clare or Ben.
Taking the course on a Pass/Fail basis: If you are taking the course on a Pass/Fail basis, you will
need to get an average of a C+ mark to gain a Pass.
Grading: Environmental ethics is not the kind of subject where there are straightforwardly right
and wrong answers on which a grade is based. Good grades are gained by papers that display a
combination of the following:

a. A demonstration that you understand material that you’ve read, and an ability to
accurately summarize key points from the material. This generally requires
careful reading, as it is very easy to misrepresent others’ views.

b. An accurate account of empirical material concerning particular environmental
issues, where relevant. (This, though, should only constitute a small proportion of
your paper).

c. An ability to analyze critically the arguments in the work of authors that you
have read: to see weaknesses, inconsistencies, contradictions, places where the
conclusion does not follow from the premises, and to point these out. (You may
also want to suggest ways in which arguments could work better if appropriately
reformulated).

d. An ability to make a good argument yourself which involves: marshalling
relevant empirical information where it is available, explaining how it is relevant
and supports your case, providing grounds for any claims that are made,
considering counter-arguments to your own argument and showing why the
counter-arguments do not succeed if they do not; making sure that conclusions
follow from premises.
e. Clear writing, so that the reader can see immediately what you are trying to say; an introduction that sets up the essay, providing signposts so that the reader knows where the essay is going; paragraphs that follow on from one another, so that the essay has a sense of flow and structure.

Things to avoid: Unsubstantiated claims; discussions of feelings and opinions where these are not backed up by evidence or argument; inaccurate reporting of other positions; generalizations (such as “People think that” or “Westerners believe that”); discussions that have no reference to the work of those who have already written in the field. Papers that demonstrate some or all of these qualities will not get very good grades!

Referencing: You will be expected to reference all sources used, including web sites and materials from the text book, in your paper, and to provide a bibliography. The bibliography does not count towards your page total.

Assignments:

1. Critical Review – 20% of total mark, to be submitted on 10th October
   Critically review one of these articles set as a reading: Lynn White Jr., Julian Simon, Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Kenneth Goodpaster, Paul Taylor. A critical review involves:
   • Picking out the central arguments of the article and summarizing them clearly;
   • Pointing out any difficulties, problems and weaknesses in these arguments;
   • Where you have come across in class, or can find, criticisms of the arguments, indicate what those criticisms are, referring to the work of the critics;
   • Assessing the strength of these criticisms of your chosen article (both your own and the arguments of other critics), indicating where you think the arguments can be defended and where they fail;
   • Offering revisions of the arguments in the article, if you think you can, that in your view would strengthen it;
   • Offering some comment on the overall success of the article’s arguments, and whether it makes a significant contribution to thinking about environmental ethics.

A critical review is NOT JUST A SUMMARY of the article you have read. If you write just a summary, however accurate, you will not get above B-. The aim of this assessment is to encourage you to think critically about what is being argued, not only to present the argument, important though this is. I’ll give a bit more guidance nearer the time.

This critical review should be 4 double-spaced sides long.

2. Mid term class test – 25% of total mark
   This 1.5 hour class test is on 17th October, and you will be asked to answer 2 essay questions of 5 questions on the paper. More guidance on this test will be given nearer to the time.

3. Environmental Ethics Essay – 30% of final mark
   This essay should focus on one of the problems we will be considering in the second half of the semester: hunting, species extinction, environmental restoration, wilderness, environment and population/immigration, climate change (including carbon offsetting and biofuels). It’s designed to allow you to research in more detail an area that’s of particular interest to you. For that reason, you’re welcome to focus on a particular case study in which one of these problems is raised, perhaps one with which you’re familiar from your local area. You may also wish to write about an issue in environmental ethics that we are not covering (such as ecofeminism). If you want to
do this you **MUST** consult Clare or Ben first. I’ll provide more information about the essay nearer the time, but for now, here’s some recommendations (obviously, they can be adapted to reflect your topic)

Your essay should outline:

- **a)** What you understand to be the nature of the issue at stake. (In some cases, this outline is likely to include some scientific/factual information). If you’re looking at a particular case study, then provide key information about it.
- **b)** What ethical questions you think are raised by this environmental issue.
- **c)** How this issue might be (and, where relevant, has been) approached ethically. Here, you are advised to outline alternative possible (or actual) approaches (such as different understandings of what is *valuable* or of what *theoretical approach* is appropriate). You should draw on material we’ve covered in the course.
- **d)** What arguments might be made in support of these approaches, noting the strengths and weaknesses of the various arguments you present.
- **e)** Which arguments, and ethical approaches, you find to be most plausible, and why.

It’s recommended that you draw on a number of different readings in this essay: you should use at least 5 sources. (These need not all be set readings for the course, but they should not all be newspaper cuttings!). This essay should be **6 double spaced** sides long and is due Mon 3rd Dec.

4. **Final Class Test, 10th December – 25% of final mark.**

In this 1.5 hour class test there will be one compulsory case study question, where a short case study will be outlined and some questions asked about the ethical issues involved. You should also answer one essay question (out of four choices on the paper). Although the final class test will be oriented around the issues we’ve looked at in the second part of the semester, you will need to know material from the whole course, not just the second half of the semester, in order to answer the questions well.

4. **The Participation Grade**

A small participation grade will be awarded to students who contribute regularly and helpfully to class discussion. This grade will take the form of a one third additional grade on the second essay. No student should be disadvantaged by this grade (since nothing is lost by not getting it) but it is a way of rewarding students who have done the reading and help to keep the class discussions alive. There is a long tradition of verbal debate in Philosophy, and we want to encourage you to contribute to it!

5. **Dissatisfaction with Grades**

Occasionally a student is unhappy with a grade. If this is you, please do not knock on my door, brandishing your paper or test, expecting an instant judgment: thinking about grades is a process that takes time and reflection! Write an account explaining why you think the grade is unfair. Submit this account, with the contested piece of work, to Mindy Danner in the Philosophy office for the attention of Clare Palmer. Either Ben or I, or both of us (depending on who marked it) will re-read the piece of work concerned and will provide feedback and a view on the grade. If you are still unhappy, I will give the contested paper to another colleague in Philosophy to evaluate. If you wish to do this, you must agree to abide by the decision of the colleague: grades can go down as well as up by taking this route – and it is not uncommon for them to go down. Note: we will not enter into discussions about the award of the participation grade.
FURTHER READING AND USEFUL RESOURCES

Websites

General
Lawrence Hinman’s Ethics Updates: www.ethics.acusd.edu
Two on-line encyclopedias of philosophy:
Stanford http://www.plato.stanford.edu (This is an excellent resource and has a pretty
good entry on environmental ethics in it)
IEP http://www.utm.edu/research/iep
And an on-line philosophy dictionary: http://www.philosophypages.com/dy
The Philosopher's Index is a useful resource to search for topics/authors in journal articles and
edited book collections. It can only be accessed from university computers, and only supports
four users at a time: http://library.wustl.edu/databases/about/phil.html

On environmental ethics
The Center for Environmental Philosophy website at University of North Texas is the gatekeeper
to a number of useful resources, including the International Society of Environmental Ethics on-line bibliography. See http://www.cep.unt.edu. The ISEE Bibliography can also be found directly on http://www.cep.unt.edu/bib/

Ron Epstein’s site at:
http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Environ/Enviroethics.htm#Environmental%20Ethics%20Information
has some interesting links and readings.

The Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (FSEEE) has been an important
organization in the US: website at http://www.fsee.org/

Possibly the leading figure in environmental ethics, Holmes Rolston, has put much of his work
online. His website is at http://lamar.colostate.edu/~rolston/

The journal Ethics and the Environment is online here:
http://www.phil.uga.edu/eande/ You should have access to this journal free on university
computers.

Useful further reading in environmental ethics
(This is inevitably a very brief bibliography: please contact me if you want to look at any
particular area in more detail).

The journal Environmental Ethics is the leading journal in the field. It is only available in paper
copy. The library has a full run of it. Many of the articles have been reproduced elsewhere, and
there’s a complete index online at http://www.cep.unt.edu. This journal should be your first port
of call on any particular subject in which you’re interested.

In general:
(New York: McGraw-Hill). Textbook. contains a number of extracts from a variety of key works in
environmental ethics, introduced by the editors.
Somewhat eclectic, but has an interesting and unusual range of readings. Benson was well known
in British analytic philosophy in the 1970s.


Light, A and Rolston H (2001) Environmental Ethics (Oxford: Blackwell). A slightly higher-level reader, with an excellent overview essay (I'm kidding!) and sections on environmental pragmatism, restoration etc not covered in some other collections.

Soper Kate (1995) What is Nature? (Oxford: Blackwell) Perhaps more sociological than philosophical, Soper examines different ways in which "nature" has been interpreted and understood.

Animals


Bernstein, Mark On Moral Considerability (Oxford: OUP)


Singer, Peter (1976: 1883 ed.) Animal Liberation (London: Thorsons)

Journal special editions: The Monist 70 1987; Philosophy 53 1978

Biocentric and Ecocentric Approaches


Leopold, Aldo A Sand County Almanac (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Rolston, Holmes (1979) "Can We and Ought We to Follow Nature?," Environmental Ethics 1: 7-30
Rolston, Holmes. (1988). Environmental Ethics: Duties To and Values In the Natural World. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press). This is Holmes Rolston's major systematic work in environmental ethics. He examines a range of questions in environmental ethics, developing his own view on the nature of environmental value throughout.


The Triangular Affair

Hargrove, E. (ed.) The Animal Liberation/Environmental Ethics Debate (New York: SUNY Press 1993) This anthology contains many of the key articles in the animal rights/ environmental ethics debate, including 'Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair.' It's a convenient way of accessing papers spread through a range of journals, and also has a helpful historical introduction.


Environmental Restoration


Biodiversity and Species Extinction


Wilderness, Land Use, Population and Immigration
Light, Andrew “The Urban Blind Spot in Environmental Ethics" Environmental Politics 10 (2001): 7-35

Hunting
Bekoff and Jamieson ‘Sport hunting as instinct – another evolutionary just-so story’ Environmental Ethics 1991 vol. 13 no.4 pp. 375-378
Gunn , Alistair "Environmental Ethics and Trophy Hunting Ethics and the Environment 6 68-95
King, R. J. H. ‘Environmental ethics and the case for hunting’ Environmental Ethics 1991 vol. 13 no.1 pp.59-85

Climate Change


There’s a website on The Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change at Penn State University’s Rock Ethics Institute. There’s a massive and comprehensive bibliography there.
http://rockethics.psu.edu/climate/index.htm

Environment and Activism
