



CAMOSUN COLLEGE
School of Arts & Science
Humanities

Phil 204, Environmental Ethics
Fall, 2010

COURSE OUTLINE

Please note: This outline will not be kept indefinitely. It is recommended students keep this outline for their records.

Instructor Information

- (a) Instructor: Karen Shirley
- (b) Office hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs. and Fri.: 10:30 – 11:20
- (c) Location: Y320
- (d) Phone: 370 3518 Home: 383 8164

Intended Learning Outcomes

- a) Students will be able to identify common errors in arguments, such as the careless use of certain terms and fallacious arguments. For example, students will be alert to arguments that depend on indefensible definitions of ‘alive’ and narrow definitions of ‘ecosystem’ and they will be on the lookout for the very common equivocal use of ‘natural’ in arguments on environmental issues.

- b) Students will be able to comprehend, describe and critically assess classical and new ethical theories such as biocentric ethics and ecocentric ethics.

- c) Students will have developed positions on and be able to discuss issues in applied ethics, such as reproductive rights related to human population growth, moral obligations in relation to atmospheric conditions and duties to future generations.

Texts

Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application, 5th Edition, edited by Louis P. Pojman

If your grammar needs work, you may wish to purchase a small style guide with a section on common errors in grammar and usage.

Basis of Student Assessment

Midterm (closed book).....	25%
Final (Final exam period - closed book).....	25%
Debate.....	20%
Paper (Due on March 21).....	20%
Verbal participation (during the question period after the debate).....	10%

Note: Keep *all* marked assignments in case there is a discrepancy between your record of your marks and my record of your marks.

5. Grading System

Percentage	Grade	Grade Point Equivalency
90-100	A+	9
85-89	A	8
80-84	A-	7
77-79	B+	6
73-76	B	5
70-72	B-	4
65-69	C+	3
60-64	C	2
50-59	D	1
0-49	F	0

Temporary grades are assigned for specific circumstances and will convert to a final grade according to the grading scheme being used in the course. See Grading Policy E-1.5 at camosun.ca for information on conversion to final grades, and for additional information on student record and transcript notations.

Course Content and Schedule

If you make basic errors in English usage, I will deduct marks. In cases where I judge that something will be gained from doing so, I may allow you to get those marks back. The way you get the marks back is by learning the rule related to your mistake and then coming to my office during office hours and successfully completing a sheet of exercises on that rule. However, should you repeat the mistake on later assignments, I will deduct double the number of marks I deducted in the first place.

Formatting Assignments and Exams

- Put the following information on each assignment:
 - your student number;
 - your seminar letter (“A” or “B”).
- Write on both sides of the page, where more than one page is required, and double-space.

Exams

You should always bring a dictionary and, if you need one, a style guide. You should also familiarize yourself with the last page of this course outline for guidance on some errors in English usage that may cost you marks.

Double space. Illegible or *hard-to read* exams will have marks deducted. Capitalise traditionally or lose marks.

Mid-term and Final Exams: The midterm is 50 minutes long and the final is two hours long. Both are closed book. However, you may bring this course outline, a dictionary and a style guide. You may rewrite the midterm, but you may not get the same study question as you got for the mid-term. The final is not cumulative. You will be asked to do two things on each exam:

- 70% - Answer a study question that I pull out of a hat at the beginning of the exam. . (I will choose the study question at random at the beginning of the exam.)
- 30%- Make an argument defending either a pro or con position on one of the debate topics. (I will chose the topic at random at the beginning of the exam.)

Paper: Argue for an answer to this question: What distinguishes morally considerable beings from other things? Your answer must take account of any relevant arguments presented in the text. Ensure that you cite your sources.

Papers must be typed. You may print out your paper on the blank side of used paper. No title pages. The paper should be between 1000 and 1250 words long. It may be shorter but you risk being too general; it may not be longer. Grammar and spelling count and 5% per day will be deducted from late papers.

You may rewrite your paper if you do not like the grade you get on it. In order to get a rewrite marked, you must correct the errors that I note on your original paper and submit both the original paper and the rewrite within a week of getting the mark for the original. If you radically change your paper in the process of rewriting it, some of my comments on the original paper may become redundant. Nevertheless, you must hand in the original paper with the rewrite.

Debates: You are required to participate in a debate (during the seminar) which is worth 20% of your final grade.

During the first class, students will be divided into groups of two to four people. One or two people in each group will take either the pro or con position on a chosen topic. Each group will be given a topic and a date. Upon that date, the group will debate the topic during the seminar period.

You and your interlocutor may wish to get together to debate the topic ahead of time so that you have an opportunity to refine your objections and responses.

You will be graded on the strength of your arguments, the knowledge you show on the topic and your ability to present your arguments in a way that helps other students understand the relevant issues.

Do not read out your presentation or any other part of the debate. If you do read, you will automatically lose 5 of the 20 marks. You may *occasionally* refer to notes.

Handouts are forbidden.

Structure of Debates

Be concise: You don't have time to verbally meander around.

First,

- a) Pro side: *one strong* argument in favour of the claim. (Speak for up to two minutes.)
- b) Con side: objection to the above argument. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- c) Pro side: response to the above objection. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- d) Con side: objection to above response or a second objection to the pro side's original argument. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- e) Pro side: response to the second objection. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)

Second,

Repeat steps one through five above, beginning with the con side this time.

Third,

Pro and con sides now address points put to them by the class.

Lecture Schedule

Sept. 7

Administration and introduction

Seminar: Bring any problems or questions. (No marks)

Sept. 9 Making strong arguments

Seminar: Bring any problems or questions. (No marks)

Traditional Ethics

Sept. 14

Reading: What is Ethics? p. 4

Seminar: Metaethics

Sept. 16

Reading: What is Ethics? cont'd

Study Questions:

1. Assess moral relativism.
2. Assess moral objectivism.
3. Describe utilitarianism, Kantianism and virtue ethics.
4. What is the role of intentions in morality?

Seminar: Metaethics

Animal Rights

Sept. 21

Reading: Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth, p. 62

5. Study Question: Given the role of emotions in Kantianism, is Kant's view that we have indirect duties to animals defensible according to Kantianism?

Debate: Commercial whale watching is immoral.

Sept. 23

Reading: A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation, p. 73

6. Study Question: Is Singer correct in thinking that his position implies that vegetarianism is morally obligatory? Why?

Debate: Commercial whale watching is immoral.

Sept. 28

Reading: The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal rights, p. 82

7. Study Question: Assess Regan's two objections to utilitarianism.

Debate: People are morally obliged to be vegetarians. (Do not consider unusual cases like that of people who cannot easily access vegetable protein.)

Sept. 30

Reading: On Being Morally Considerable, p.154

8. Study Question: TBA

Debate: People are morally obliged to be vegetarians. (Do not consider unusual cases like that of people who cannot easily access vegetable protein.)

Does Nature Have Intrinsic Value?

Oct. 5

Reading: Naturalizing Values: Organisms and Species, p. 107

9. Study Question: Do plants and species value their continued existence? Consider Ralston III's arguments.

Debate: Environmentalists should stop pushing for a DDT ban in countries where people still get malaria.

Oct. 7

Reading: Same as last week

Study Question: Same as last week

Debate: Environmentalists should stop pushing for a DDT ban in countries where people still get malaria.

Oct. 12

Reading: Nature, p. 123

10. Study Question: What does Mill think are the two legitimate uses of “nature”? What are Mill’s objections to the view that moral standards are provided by nature?

Debate: Fish can’t feel pain. (This debate will be covered on the final, not the midterm.)

Oct. 14- MIDTERM

Biocentric and Ecocentric Ethics and Deep Ecology

Oct. 19 Reading: Biocentric Egalitarianism, p. 139

1. Study Question: Taylor says that “This structural framework for a theory of human ethics is meant to leave open the issue of consequentialism (utilitarianism) versus non-consequentialism (deontology).” Does the framework leave that issue open?

Debate: The advantages of genetically modified foods outweigh the disadvantages.

Oct. 21

Reading: Biocentric Egalitarianism, p. 139

2. Study Question: Critically assess what is viewed as the central claim of the land ethic: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”

Debate: The advantages of genetically modified foods outweigh the disadvantages.

Oct. 26

Reading: Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic, p. 163

3. Study Question: Does Leopold make a case for the intrinsic value of the biotic community, or does he only assume this?

Debate: Human activity is causing a devastating greenhouse effect.

Oct. 28

Reading: Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness, p. 186

4. Study Question: Hettinger and Throop say that “the wildness of some natural systems gives us a strong reason for valuing them intrinsically. We support this claim by showing how wildness value is in reflective equilibrium with many considered judgments...” Do Hettinger and Throop ignore non-Western values when they provide this support?

Debate: Human activity is causing a devastating greenhouse effect.

Nov. 2

Reading: Deep Ecology, p. 228

5. Study Question: What are the consequences of using “life” as Devall and Sessions use the term?

Debate: People have a duty to try to prevent the extinction of the Vancouver Island Marmot.

Nov. 4

Reading: Why do Species Matter?, p. 269

6. Study Question: Suppose human beings were about to die out. Nothing can be done to save our species. According to Russow’s position, would it be morally permissible to kill (painlessly, just in case that matters) all other life on earth before it became extinct? Why or why not?

Debate: People have a duty to try to prevent the extinction of the Vancouver Island Marmot.

Preservation of Species, Nature and Natural Objects

Nov. 9

Reading: Faking Nature, p. 290

7. Study Question: One difference between an original artwork and a fake is in the relevant mental states of their creators. Does the fact that there are no mental states involved in the development of a natural area mean that the analogy between faked artwork and faked nature fails to explain why some people value faked areas less than natural areas? (See Elliot.)

Debate: Fish can’t feel pain.

Non-Western Perspectives on Environmental Ethics

Nov. 16

Reading: The Buddhist Attitude Towards Nature, p.319

8. Study Question: TBA

Debate: Relatively wealthy countries may offer poor countries money in exchange for dealing with the waste products of the wealthy countries.

Nov. 18

Reading: Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique, p.338

9. Study Question: Does Guha establish that the distinction between biocentric and anthropocentric is largely irrelevant to understanding environmental degradation?

Debate: Relatively wealthy countries may offer poor countries money in exchange for dealing with the waste products of the wealthy countries.

Obligations to Future Generations

Nov. 23 PAPERS DUE TODAY

Reading: Who Cares for Posterity?, p. 350

10. Study Question: How does Hardin link a concern for ancestry with concerns for posterity? Is he correct?

Debate: Illegal destruction of property is morally acceptable in some present-day struggles to protect parts of nature.

Nov. 25

Reading: Limited Obligations to Future Generations, p. 357

Study Question: Do we have obligations to future generations? Why?

Debate: Illegal destruction of property is morally acceptable in some present-day struggles to protect parts of nature.

Practice

Nov. 30

Reading: Population: General Considerations, p. 376 and

A Special Moment in History: The Challenge of Overpopulation and Overconsumption, p. 378

11. Study Question: How many children is it morally acceptable for a Canadian couple to biologically produce in light of environmental issues?

Debate: People have a duty to try to alleviate the suffering that wild animals inflict upon each other.

Dec. 2

Reading: The Tragedy of the Commons, p. 389

12. Study Question: Critically assess Hardin's view that appealing to conscience will not limit population growth.

Debate: People have a duty to try to alleviate the suffering that wild animals inflict upon each other.

Dec. 7

Reading: Population and the Environment, p. 431

13. Study Question: Should governments license parents?

Seminar: Review (generated by student questions)

Dec. 9

Reading: Lifeboat Ethics, p. 443

14. Study Question: How useful is the lifeboat metaphor in illuminating morally significant aspects of the relationship between rich and poor countries?

Seminar: Review (generated by student questions)

SEE EXAM SCHEDULE (ON THE WALL OUTSIDE THE BOOKSTORE)

You will lose 1% of the assignment mark every time you break the following rules.

1. Do not use the first or second person in written assignments. Here are two examples of the first person: “**We** cannot pass students who cannot use the English language adequately,” and “**I** cannot pass students who cannot use the English language adequately.” Here is an example of the second person: “**You** don’t realise that it is not our fault that we were not taught how to write in high school.” The following are examples of sentences written in the third person. “**People** cannot pass the buck forever.” “**One** will find that a style guide is essential in university.”
2. Do not ask rhetorical questions.
3. Do not use a pronoun which disagrees with the noun it refers to. You are advised that in many cases, pronoun disagreement can be avoided through the use of plural nouns. Here is an example of a sentence in which the pronoun disagrees with the noun: “**A philosopher** should not be so picky about English; **they** are not English teachers.” Here is the corrected version: “**Philosophers** should not be so picky about English; **they** are not English teachers.”
4. Do not confuse “its” with “it’s.” Since you are not allowed to use contractions, you should never use “it’s.”
5. Do not confuse “their” with “there.”
6. Do not add “ly” to “first,” “second” and so on.
7. Do not forget possessive apostrophes and do not put them in the wrong place.
8. Do not use abbreviations or a contractions.
9. Do not use “e. g.”; use “for example.”
10. Do not use “etc.”; use “and so on” or “etcetera.”
11. Do not use “i.e.”; use “that is.” Better yet, say it clearly the first time.
12. Do not use the upper-case where the lower case is standard. 5% will be deducted from a student’s exam if he or she makes this mistake.
13. Do not misspell the following words:
despite
argument (*one* “e”)
philosophy