The course explores the values, rights, responsibilities and status of entities underlying alternative ethical approaches to environmental issues. Subjects include: anthropocentric vs. biocentric frameworks to natural resource protection; precautionary principle; ethics of cost-benefit analysis; equity and risk management; status of “rights” of non-human species and future generations; ethical considerations of sustainable development & energy use; genetically modified crops; transgenic animals; deep vs. narrow ecology; economic and non-economic value of wilderness & sacred lands.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Studies the role of ethical reasoning in framing environmental problems
- Explores the interactions between science, ethics/values, and policy.
- Engages students in an ethical analysis of policy issues.
- Acquaints students with different ethical theories (consequentialist vs non-consequentialist; naturalism, ethical relativism, intuitionism; ecofeminism) applied to environmental problems and moral voices of writers like Leopold, McPhee, Taylor, Shiva, and Wilson.
- Discusses the use of ethical principles and theories guiding environmental decision making (non-anthropocentrism; precautionary principle; utilitarianism; deep ecology).

The course will be run in a quasi-discussion format with active participation from students. Students will be encouraged to clarify and sharpen their ethical perspectives on environment problems and to critically assess other perspectives.

**Readings:**

*Books*: (available at the book store)

John McPhee. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
Vandana Shiva. *Biopiracy*. South End Press
James Garvey. *The Ethics of Climate Change*. Continuum International Publishing

**Other Readings on Blackboard.**
Jan. 23. Introduction: Ethics and Environmental Problems  
Wk 1  
(Wed)  
The role of ethics in popular discourse and policy: 6 dimensions of policy.  
Distinguishing ethical from non-ethical (policy/scientific debates).  
Students’ experience with moral arguments.  
Popular views about ethics. www.storyofstuff.com  

Seminal questions in environmental ethics.  

Jan. 28. Ethical Theory in Practice  
Wk 2  
Different roles of ethics in society.  
First principles: naturalism (including natural law ethics); utilitarianism;  
deontological ethics; virtue ethics; intrinsic vs. instrumental value;  
The dilemmas of ethical reasoning: the rhetorical power of moral discourse.  

Readings  
Frederick A. Kaufman. Ch. 1. “Moral Philosophy and the Natural World.” In:  

Joseph R. Des Jardins. Ch. 1 “Science ethics and the environment.” pp. 1-14; Ch. 2.  

John McPhee. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Part 1, A Mountain, pp. 1-75  

Feb. 4. Sacred Lands vs. Natural Resources: Conservation, Preservation Development  
Wk 3  
How we value natural resources; land ethic; dams and river diversions;  
managing forests. Competing values in conflict: preservation vs. development. Distinction between the built and natural environment; why humans are considered outside of nature.  

Readings  


**Feb. 11.**  **Biodiversity, Biopiracy and Globalization**

**Wk. 4**

Biodiversity convention; genetic colonialism; patents on plant; rights of indigenous farmers; biophilia hypothesis

**Readings**

|------------------------------------------|

**Feb. 18**  **No Classes**

**Feb. 21.**  **Ecological Ethics: Transgenic Food Crops**

**Wk. 5**

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<td>Historical background of genetically altered crops; biopollution; GMOs vs chemical pesticides; labeling; GMOs and world hunger.</td>
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**Readings**

| Peter Rosset. Taking seriously the claim that genetic engineering could end hunger: a critical analysis. In: *Engineering the Farm*, pp. 81-93. [B] |


Feb. 25. Climate Change, Greenhouse Gases and Distributive Justice
Wk. 6

Global responsibility for reducing Greenhouse gases; moral basis of the Kyoto Protocol; US position; allocating CO₂ emission between North and South

Readings
Des Jardins: Ch. 4. Ethics, energy, and responsibilities to future generations, pp. 64-88. [B]

Pojman: Ch. 13, Air pollution, the greenhouse effect, and ozone depletion, pp. 245-259.


Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, Ch. 1-3, pp. 1-86,

Debate: Is a just principle for determining global climate change responsibility “equal share of the world’s allowable emissions”? 

Mar. 3 Population Ethics, Pollution, Markets & World Hungar
Wk. 7

Contribution of global population growth to pollution and world hunger; IPAT equation; lifeboat ethics; markets and population growth; demographic transition; free markets & sustainability.
Readings

Taking Sides #6  pp. 86-109. [B]


Speth, The Bridge at the Edge of the World, Ch. 4-9.

Debate: Is population a key factor in preventing environmental deterioration?

Mar. 10.  Pesticides, Mosquitoes & Disease
Wk. 8

DDT, POPs treaty, and malaria; spraying pesticides for West Nile Virus; Public health vs. environmentalism; precautionary principle;

Readings


Debate: Should DDT be banned internationally under the POPs treaty?

March 17   Spring Break

Mar. 24  Consumerism, Sustainability & Earth Ethics.
Wk. 9

Obligation to consume less; redefining quality of life; responsibility to future generations; North-South wealth disparity; the phenomenon of “affluenza.”

Readings


Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, Ch. 10-12.

Debate: Do citizens of affluent countries have an obligation to consume less?

March 31  Rights and Considerations of Animals
Wk. 10

Animals as sentient beings; utilitarian vs deontological foundations for animal protection; animals in research; moral basis of vegetarianism. Is the humane exploitation of animals an oxymoron?

Readings


April 7. Non-Anthropocentric Ethics I
Wk. 12
Human vs. biocentric ethics; intrinsic value of living things; A non-human centered ethical theory.

Readings


April 14 Non-Anthropocentric Ethics II
Wk 13
Taylor’s theory of non-anthropocentric ethics; conflicts between humans and non-human living things; basic and non-basic rights/needs of species.

Readings

April 21. Patriot’s Day—No Classes

April 28. Critique of Respect for Nature:
Wk. 14. Rethinking anthropocentrism as a basis for environmental ethics

Readings

Don E. Marietta, Jr. In For People and the Planet. Temple Univ. Press, 1994, Anthropocentrism and Environmental Ethics, pp. 69-80; The status of values in nature, pp. 119-139; Contextual environmental ethics, pp. 141-153. [B]

Environmental Ethics

Assignments

Class presentations on designated readings……… 20pts
Essay 1 (3-5 pages)………………………………..10pts
Debate Brief (3-5 pages) …………………………20 pts
Peer Review (2-3 pages) ………………………….10pts
Semester Final Paper (at least 12 pages + ref………40pts
100 pts