The course investigates the rights and responsibilities of persons toward nature and all of its biological inhabitants. It acquaints students with leading ethical theories (Utilitarianism; Naturalism, Ethical Relativism, Deontology, Intuitionism; Ecofeminism, Virtue Ethics, Species Egalitarianism) and explores their relevance to the resolution of environmental conflicts between: economic development and preservation of natural resources; inexpensive food versus factory farms; consumerism versus toxic waste reduction; climate change policy versus environmental justice. Topics include: anthropocentric vs. biocentric theories for natural resource protection; precautionary principle; tragedy of the commons, 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 ecology; the culture-nature split; ecofeminism and other green social movements; economic and non-economic value of wilderness and sacred lands; ecological economics. The moral voices of writers like Leopold, Mill, Locke, McPhee, Taylor, Ehrlich, Hardin, Callicott, Singer, Commoner, Passmore, and Rollston will be discussed. Students will be encouraged to develop a coherent ethical framework for addressing environmental conflicts that is consistent with their moral and cultural values.

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; biocentrism,) applied to environmental problems.
- 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); articles on Trunk.

John McPhee. Encounters with the Archdruid. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
Paul G. Harris, Global Ethics and Climate Change Edinburgh University Press. 2016

Sept 7. Introduction: Ethics and Environmental Problems
Sess 1

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.
Seminal questions in environmental ethics.

Sept 14. Ethical Theory in Practice
Sess 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. Moral realism; ethical naturalism; subjectivism; emotism.

Readings

In Keller:
“What is Environmental Ethics,” pp. 1-23
“Is there a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?” pp. 98-103.

John McPhee. Encounters with the Archdruid. Part 1, A Mountain, pp. 1-75
James Garvey, Ch. 2. “Right and Wrong,” pp.33-55.

Sept 21. Sacred Lands vs. Natural Resources: Conservation, Preservation vs. Development
Sess 3

How we value natural resources; land ethic; dams, river diversions;
mining, fracking; managing forests. Competing values in conflict:
preservation vs. development. Distinction between the built and natural
environment; why humans are considered outside of nature.

Readings

John McPhee. Encounters with the Archdruid. Part 2, An Island. Part 3 A River, pp 79-
245.
In Keller:


**Sept 28. Anthropocentrism vs Biocentrism**
Sess. 4 Concept of “anthropocentrism” and its importance in environmental ethics. Different forms of anthropocentrism. Can humans escape an anthropocentric viewpoint?

**Readings**


In Keller:

“In Defense of Anthropocentrism,” by Beckerman and Pasek, 83-88
“The End of Anthropocentrism? by Mary Midgley, 137-142.

**Oct 5 Ecological Ethics: Sustainable Agriculture & Transgenic Food Crops**
Sess 5 Historical background of genetically altered crops; biopollution; GMOs vs chemical pesticides; labeling; GMOs and world hunger. Are GM crops sustainable? Post-mechanistic agricultural ethic.

**Readings**

In Keller,


Keller & Brummer. “Putting Food Production in Context: Toward a Postmechanistic Agricultural Ethic,” 481-490


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

Paull B. Thompson. Why food biotechnology needs an opt out. In: Engineering the Farm, 27-43. [T]


Oct 12. Climate Change, Greenhouse Gases and Distributive Justice
Sess. 6 Global responsibility for reducing Greenhouse gases; moral basis of the Kyoto Protocol; US position; allocating CO₂ emission between North and South; Personal responsibility and climate change.

Readings

In Harris:
  Paul G. Harris. Global Ethics and Climate Change. Ch. 1 “Global Climate Change.”
  Ch. 2 “Justice in a Changing World.” Ch. 4. “International Justice & Climate Change.”


Oct 19 Population Ethics, Pollution, Markets & World Hunger
Sess. 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

In Keller,
  “Some Environmental Dimensions of Environmental Public Policy,”
  Introduction, .415-421,
Thomas R. Malthus. An essay on the principle of population, 422-426


Garett Harden, “The Ecological Necessity of Confronting the Problems of Human Population,” 434-442


Biospheric egalitarianism: social, political, economic and ecological; importance of “scale” as an independent variable in environmental sustainability; transpersonal ecology: caring for people and the biosphere; Ecofeminism: domination of women connected to domination of nature; nature-culture dualism.

Readings

In Keller:


“Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory,” by Carolyn Merchant, 291-300

Readings

Nov. 2 Consumerism, Sustainability, Forms of Market Economy, & Earth Ethics.

Obligation to consume less; redefining quality of life; responsibility to future generations; North-South wealth disparity; the phenomenon of “affluenza,” the treadmill of production; theories of consumption.
Readings

Paul G. Harris. *Global Ethics and Climate Change* Ch.6. Affluence, Consumption and Atmospheric Pollution, 123-157.


Allan Schnaiberg. “The Expansion of Consumption” in *The Environment: From Surplus to Scarcity* [T]

Nov. 9: Rights and Considerations of Animals
Sess. 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


Nov. 16. Non-Anthropocentric Ethics I
Sess. 11 Human vs. biocentric ethics; intrinsic value of living things; A non-human centered ethical theory.

Readings


Nov. 23: No Class
Nov. 29       Non-Anthropocentric Ethics II
Sess. 12.  Taylor’s theory of biocentric ethics; resolving conflicts between humans and non-human living things; basic and non-basic rights/needs of species.

Readings

Sess. 13.    Rethinking biocentrism as a basis for environmental ethics. Cultural Theory of 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. [T]

Assignments

Class participation (includes attendance & preparedness),,,10pts
Essay 1 (3-5 pages)………………………………………………………….20pts Due Oct 4
Class presentation & analysis on designated readings……20 pts TBD for each person
Topic for semester paper reviewed by instructor: 1-2 pages................. Oct. 12
Draft Paper for peer review............................................................  Nov. 16
Peer Review (2-3 pages) .........................................................  10pts Nov. 30
Semester Final Paper (at least 12 pages + ref......................... 40pts Dec. 12 5PM (paper copy)

100pts

The semester paper is written in three stages.

1. Submit a 1-2 page problem statement, which defines your subject of investigation on Oct. 12.
2. Submit a draft of the paper which will be reviewed by me and one of your colleagues; the review is 2-3 pages (you will be given guidelines).  Nov. 16
3. Submit your review of your colleagues paper on Nov. 30th.
4. Use my comments and your colleagues review to revise your paper. Final paper due Dec. 12 at 5PM.