



CAMOSUN COLLEGE
School of Arts & Science
Humanities

Phil 204, Environmental Ethics
Fall, 2005

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: Monday, 1:30 - 2:20; Tuesday, 11:30 - 12:20; Wednesday, 12:30 - 1:20; Thursday, 11:30 - 12:20; Friday, 12:30 - 1:20.
(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, 3rd 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

Table with 2 columns: Assessment Component and Percentage. Components include Midterm (closed book) 25%, Final (Final exam period - closed book) 25%, Debate 20%, Paper 20%, and 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.

Grading System

The following percentage conversion to letter grade will be used:

Table with 3 columns of letter grades and their corresponding percentage ranges: A+ = 95 - 100%, A = 90 - 94%, A- = 85 - 89%, B+ = 80 - 84%, B = 75 - 79%, B- = 70 - 74%, C+ = 65 - 69%, C = 60 - 64%, D = 50 - 59%, F = 0.0 - 49%.

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

1. Put the following information on each assignment:
 - a) your student number;
 - b) your seminar letter (“A” or “B”).
2. 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: These are both two hours long and closed book. However, you may bring this course outline, a dictionary and a style guide. The final is not cumulative. You will be asked to do two things on each exam:

1. -70% - Answer a study question that I pull out of a hat at the beginning of the exam. . (I will chose the study question at random at the beginning of the exam.)
2. -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 moral patients 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.

If I deducted marks for basic errors in English usage, you may get those marks back by doing the following: learn the rule related to your mistake and then come to my office during office hours and successfully complete a sheet of exercises on that rule. You must do this in order to get those marks back even if you do a rewrite. However, should I notice that you have repeated the mistake on any future assignments, including the rewrite, I will deduct double the number of marks I deducted in the first place and I will not give them back.

Participation after Debates: Each instance of participation is worth up to 2.5%. Only four instances count and you must let me know *before* making the comment that you want it to count.) You may provide constructive criticism or detailed praise, suggest alternative arguments, comment on the quality of the contributions and so on. Simple questions will not usually be sufficient for a participation mark, as they do not usually require much thought.

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. 12 Making strong arguments

Seminar: Metaethics

Traditional Ethics

Sept. 14

Reading: What is Ethics? p. 3

Seminar: Ethical theories

Sept. 19

Reading: What is Ethics?, cont'd

Study Questions:

1. Assess moral relativism.
2. Describe utilitarianism, Kantianism and virtue ethics.
3. What is the role of intentions in morality?
4. Describe the domains of ethical assessment.
5. Assess Pojman's view on the five purposes of ethics.

Debate: It is immoral to keep whales in captivity. (Do not consider endangered species or injured individuals.)

Animal Rights

Sept. 21

Reading: Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth, p. 31

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

Quizz on Kant

Debate: It is immoral to keep whales in captivity. (Do not consider endangered species or injured individuals.)

Sept. 26

Reading: A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation, p. 33

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

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

Sept. 28

Reading: The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal rights, p. 40

8. 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.)

Oct. 3

Reading: Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair, p. 51

9. Study Question: Draw out the consequences of the following claim made by Callicott: 'The land ethic manifestly does not accord equal moral worth to each and every member of the biotic community; the moral worth of individuals (including n.b., human individuals) is relative, to be assessed in accordance with the particular relation of each to the collective entity which Leopold called "land".'

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

Does Nature Have Intrinsic Value?

Oct. 5

Reading: Nature, p. 89

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

Oct. 12

Reading: Naturalizing Values: Organisms and Species, p. 76

Study Question: See the study question for Oct. 18

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

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

Oct. 17

Reading: Naturalizing Values: Organisms and Species, continued

11. Study Question: Defend or condemn the view that some things have intrinsic value, in light of Ralston III's paper.

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

Biocentric and Ecocentric Ethics and Deep Ecology

Oct. 19

Reading: Biocentric Egalitarianism, p. 100

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

Oct. 24

Reading: The Land Ethic, p. 119

13. 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: Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness, p. 136

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

Oct. 31

Reading: Deep Ecology, p. 157

15. Study Question: What are the consequences of using "life" as Devall and Sessions use the term?

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

Nov. 2 - MIDTERM

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

Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology

Nov. 7

Reading: The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism, p. 189

Study Question: see Nov. 15

Debate: Human activity is causing a devastating greenhouse effect.

Nov. 9

Reading: A Critique of Ecofeminism, p. 199

1. Study Question: Does Warren establish that feminism includes ecological feminism?

Debate: Human activity is causing a devastating greenhouse effect.

Preservation of Species, Nature and Natural Objects

Nov.14

Reading: Why do Species Matter?, p. 208

2. 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.

Nov.16

Reading: Faking Nature, p. 229

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

Non-Western Perspectives on Environmental Ethics

Nov. 21

Reading: Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique, p.271

4. 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

Reading: Energy Policy and the Further Future: The Identity Problem, p. 289

5. Study Question: According to traditional ethics, people who come about as a result of bad policy choices cannot complain about our bad policies since, if it weren't for these policies, those people wouldn't exist. What does Parfit say about the traditional point of view?

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

Practice

Nov.28

Reading: Population: General Considerations, p. 299 and

A Special Moment in History: The Challenge of Overpopulation and Overconsumption, p. 302

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

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

Nov. 30

Reading: The Tragedy of the Commons, p. 311

7. Study Question: Critically assess Hardin's view that appealing to conscience will not limit population growth. (See "The Tragedy of the Commons.")

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

Dec. 5

Reading: Lifeboat Ethics, p. 356

8. Study Question: How useful is the lifeboat metaphor in illuminating morally significant aspects of the relationship between rich and poor countries? (See "Lifeboat Ethics.")

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

Dec. 7

Reading: Famine, Affluence and Morality, p. 367

9. Study Question: Explain Singer's strong principle. Do you agree with it?

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

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.”
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