

Introduction to Ethics and The Environment
Honors/112E 80
Autumn 2015
Tu/Th 12:40-2:00
DHC #120

Professor Pat Burke

Office: DHC 106; Office Hours: Thursday 3-4:30 p.m. or by Appt.

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In this course we examine the three great western ethical traditions: Deontological (Kantian) ethics, Utilitarianism and Virtue ethics and the ways in which they influence our thinking about how we should act and what constitutes the good life. However, our focus will be on the ways in which these traditions understand the more-than-human natural world and what ethical obligations we have towards it. In particular, we will discuss environmental ethics as it has developed over the past fifty years and see how it has expanded upon and sometimes radically departed from the traditional ways ethics has been understood. We will explore some of the major practical issues that environmental ethics attempts to address with a particular emphasis on the ethical challenges associated with global climate change and species extinction. We will ask which (if any) of the various approaches to environmental ethics gives an adequate account of our responsibility to act in the face of these impending environmental catastrophes.

This is a discussion-based seminar that requires your active engagement during class! Please come to every class having read the material assigned for that day and with a hard copy of the readings. I will generally introduce the readings and then we will have a discussion about the issues that they raise. I will call upon individuals to answer questions and give their thoughts. The issues we will be discussing are complex and difficult. All of our attempts to reflect upon them (including mine) will be imperfect. The only way our thinking will improve is if we engage each other on a continuing basis in a respectful way. So, don't be shy; we are all interested in what you have to say. Be sure to bring your own questions and concerns to class and we will discuss them.

Texts:

Rolston, Holmes. *A New Environmental Ethics: The Next Millennium for Life on Earth*. (2012 Routledge). 244 pp.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. (2014 Henry Holt). 319 pp.

Readings on Course Moodle Site:

Selections from:

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by Martin Ostwald. (1962 Macmillan/Library of Liberal Arts). 316 pp.

Kant, Immanuel. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Lewis White Beck. (1997 Macmillan/ Library of Liberal Arts). 128 pp.

Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*, (2001 Hackett Publishing), 63 pp.

Pope Francis I. *Laudato Si: On Care For Our Common Home*.

And other articles as designated in Course Schedule by an “M.” ***Note: You must print the readings in Moodle and bring this printed copy to class on the days that we are scheduled to discuss the text.**

Course Schedule

This schedule is only approximate and may change depending on class discussion of the readings and their application to contemporary issues. I will update you in class regarding changes to the schedule. It is your responsibility to know of any revisions to the schedule.

Week 1

Tuesday, 9/1—Introductions, Syllabus, Overview of course

Thursday, 9/3—Rolston: Preface and Chapter 1

Week 2

Tuesday, 9/8—Rolston: Chapter 2

Thursday, 9/10—Rachels: “Cultural relativism” (M1); “Subjectivism in Ethics” (M2)

Week 3

Tuesday, 9/15—Rolston: Chapter 3 ***First weekly 2-page response Paper due**

Thursday, 9/17—Aristotle: Selections from *Nicomachean Ethics* (M3)

Week 4

Tuesday, 9/22—Aristotle (continued) *Response paper due.

Thursday, 9/24—Rolston: Chapter 4

Week 5

Tuesday, 9/29—White: “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis” (M4)

*Response paper due.

Thursday, 10/1—Pope Francis: *Laudato Si—Care For Our Common Home* (M5).

***Guest Lecture/Discussion—Dan Spencer—“Religious Responses to Our Environmental Crisis”**

Week 6

Tuesday, 10/6—Kant: Selections from *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (M6). *Response paper due.

Thursday, 10/8 Kant (continued)

***Saturday, 10/10-Sunday 10/11: Optional Hike to Heart and Pearl Lakes, Great Burn Wilderness Study Area. This trip will be dependent on student interest, weather and fires.**

Week 7

Tuesday, 10/13—Kolbert: Prologue and Chapter 1. *Response paper due.

Thursday, 10/15—Kolbert: Chapter 2 & 3. *Term paper topics distributed.

Week 8

Tuesday, 10/20—Rolston: Chapter 5. *Response paper due

Thursday, 10/22—Kolbert: Chapters 4 & 5

Week 9

Tuesday, 10/27—Rolston: Chapter 6; Warren: “The Power and The Promise of Ecological Feminism” (M7). *Response paper due.

Thursday, 10/29—Leopold: The Land Ethic (M8)

Week 10

Tuesday, 11/3—Kolbert: Chapter 6 & 7. ***No Response paper this week.**

Thursday, 11/5—Turner: “The Abstract Wild” (M9); Abram: “Depth Ecology” (M10). ****Term Paper Due**

Weeks 11

Tuesday, 11/10—Rolston: Chapter 7. *Response paper due.

Thursday, 11/12—Kolbert: Chapter 8 & 9

Week 12

Tuesday, 11/17—Mill: Selections from “Utilitarianism” (M11). *Response paper due

Thursday, 11/19—Kolbert: Chapter 10, 11 & 12

Week 13

Tuesday, 11/24—Kolbert: Chapter 13 *Response paper due.

11/26—Thanksgiving No Class)

Week 14

Tuesday, 12/1—McKibben, Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math (M12).

***Guest Lecture/Discussion: “The Ethics of Geoengineering”— Christopher Preston.** *No Response paper.

Thursday, 12/3—Gardiner, The Perfect Moral Storm (M13). ****Final day to submit re-written Term Papers.**

Week 15

Tuesday, 12/8—Borgmann (M14) *** Guest Lecture/Discussion: “Climate Change, Technological Fixes and the Good Life” –Albert Borgmann.** ***Final Response paper due.**

Thursday, 12/10)—Synthesis and Final Discussion: How should we act toward the natural world?

FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 14th: 3:20-5:20

Requirements and Grading:

A two-page double-spaced weekly response paper to the prior weeks readings and discussions will be due every Tuesday beginning on 9/15. These response papers should be your reflections on what we have read and our discussions, not an exposition of the readings nor what you think my position is on the issues. There will also be one 6-8 page term paper due Thursday, November, Thursday November 5th on an topic selected from several options that will be distributed on Thursday, October 15th. This paper may be rewritten based upon my comments and submitted for regrading no later than Thursday, December 3rd. There will be a comprehensive Final Exam.

Assignment grades will reflect the following criteria:

- F: Failure to meet minimum requirements
- D: Unsatisfactory, but some effort to meet minimum requirements
- C: Satisfactory; meets minimum requirements of assignment but not much more
- B: Good to Very Good; thoughtful reflection, good analysis, clear writing style
- A: Excellent depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, and writing style; demonstrates creativity and mature analytical skills in going beyond the primary requirements of the assignment

Final grades will be determined based on the following weighting of assignments.

- Weekly response papers: there are 11 response papers. I will drop your lowest grade and the ten remaining grades will be averaged and worth a total of 35% of your final grade.
- The 6-8 page term paper will be worth 25% of your final grade.
- Your active engagement in our discussions is critical to the success of this class and will be worth a total of 20% of your final grade.
- The Final Exam will be 20% of your final grade in the class.

Late Work: Assignments are due in class on or before the date listed in the syllabus. Unless you have made a prior agreement with me I will take off one grade level (A becomes A-) for each class day an assignment is late.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is representing another's work as one's own, a serious violation of academic integrity. Please review the University's plagiarism definition and policy in the catalog; "*Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion.*" If you have any doubts about plagiarism and attribution of others' work, please consult your Instructor.

Students with Disabilities: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students [DSS]. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. (406) 243-2243.

Attendance: Four (4) unexcused absences (i.e. absences without a written note from a doctor; evidence of official university business or serious hardship) will result in an automatic "F"

****No electronic devices (cellphones, ipods, laptops etc.) in the classroom without my prior approval. I will ask you to leave the classroom if you are using an unapproved device during class**