

# L30 PHIL 235F: INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS<sup>1</sup>

Washington University in Saint Louis, Spring 2019

Instructor: Dr. Taylor Cyr (tcyr@wustl.edu)

## Basic Information:

Class Meeting Times: MW 10:10-11:30am

Instructor's Office: Wilson Hall 101

Class Meeting Location: Psychology 251

Instructor's Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30pm  
(and by appointment)

## Required Text:

- John Broome, *Climate Matters: Ethics in a Warming World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012). ISBN: 978-0393063363.

## Course Overview

### Description:

This course aims to familiarize students with some of the central issues in environmental ethics. At the same time, more generally, this course will provide some of the necessary tools for thinking critically, being rational, arguing for what one believes, and investigating the question of how to live morally. In the first section of the course, we will investigate ethical issues related to sentient life, including other human beings as well as non-human animals. Next, we will turn to ethical considerations regarding non-sentient life, including plants, ecosystems, and species. In the third and final part of the course, we will examine a host of ethical topics related to climate change, including dealing with uncertainty, whether we have individual and collective obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, how we should think of the well-being of future generations, among others.

### Learning Outcomes:

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Distinguish philosophical questions about the environment from non-philosophical ones
- Analyze and evaluate complex philosophical arguments

### Instructional Objectives:

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Critically read philosophical texts by identifying and assessing the author's reasoning
- Analyze and critique ethical arguments related to global environmental moral issues
- Present arguments in their own words and provide their own objections to them

## Course Requirements (% of Final Grade)

- Midterm Exam (25%)
- Final Exam (30%)
- Paper (20%)
- Environmental Change Project (5%)
- Reading Quizzes (20%)

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus is subject to change (at the instructor's discretion) with advanced notice.

**Midterm and Final Exam:**

- The midterm exam and final exam will be similar in length and in format and are designed to test understanding of all of the course material. The final exam is not cumulative.
- The format of these exams will be a combination of true/false, multiple-choice, shorter-answer (4-6 sentences) essay questions, and longer-answer (2-3 paragraphs) essay questions.

**Paper:**

- A paper of 4-5 pages in length is due during week 12. There will be several topics from which students may choose, and more specific instructions for the paper will be given during week 7.
- Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B- to C+) for each day past their due date.

**Environmental Change Project:**

- Students will be asked to make one change to their personal lives which positively affects their relationship to the environment. We will discuss some options after the midterm, and more specific instructions will be given then.
- A brief (1-2 page) report about the experience is due during week 15.
- Late reports will not be accepted.

**Reading Quizzes:**

- There will be 12 unannounced reading quizzes throughout the term. These will be short, multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank quizzes that will test basic comprehension of the assigned readings for the day of the quiz.
- At the end of the course, I will drop students' two lowest scores (i.e., only a student's 10 best reading quizzes will count toward her final grade). Make-up quizzes will not be offered.

**Course Policies****Academic Integrity:**

Students are expected to act with academic integrity. For details, visit <https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/academic-policies/undergraduate-student-academic-integrity-policy/>. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be reported to the relevant academic integrity officer and will result in an F on the assignment.

**Respect:**

Students are expected to treat each other and the instructor with respect. This includes, among other things, paying attention to what a person is saying, being charitable to others' points of views, and criticizing ideas rather than persons.

**Email:**

Course announcements will be delivered via email, so students are expected to check their email at least once per day on weekdays. The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours (and often much more quickly than that).

**Disabilities:**

Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resources at 935-4153. Disability Resources is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for WU students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. I will accept Disability Resources VISA forms by email and personal delivery. If you have already been approved for accommodations, I request that you provide me with a copy of your VISA within the first two weeks of the semester.

### **Accommodations Based upon Sexual Assault:**

The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to [Kim Webb](#), Director of the [Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center](#), or [Jen Durham Austin](#), Support Services Counselor. Both Kim Webb and Jen Durham Austin are confidential resources; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University's Title IX Director. If you would like to speak with directly Ms. Kennedy directly, she can be reached at [\(314\) 935-3118](tel:(314)935-3118), [jwkennedy@wustl.edu](mailto:jwkennedy@wustl.edu), or by visiting the [Title IX office](#) in Umrath Hall. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards or by contacting WUPD at [\(314\) 935-5555](tel:(314)935-5555) or your local law enforcement agency. See: [Title IX](#)

You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling [\(314\) 935-3445](tel:(314)935-3445) for an appointment or visiting the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Seigle Hall. See: [RSVP Center](#)

### **Bias Reporting:**

The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University's Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team.

See: [brss.wustl.edu](http://brss.wustl.edu).

### **Mental Health:**

Mental Health Services' professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These

include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression.

### **Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI):**

The Center of Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) supports and advocates for undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students from underrepresented and/or marginalized populations, creates collaborative partnerships with campus and community partners, and promotes dialogue and social change. One of the CDI's strategic priorities is to cultivate and foster a supportive campus climate for students of all backgrounds, cultures and identities.

See: [diversityinclusion.wustl.edu/](http://diversityinclusion.wustl.edu/)

## **Course Schedule and Readings<sup>2</sup>**

### **Part I: Sentient Life**

- Week 1
  - 1/14: Introduction
    - *No Readings*
  - 1/16: Famine and Global Poverty
    - Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
- Week 2
  - 1/21: *Martin Luther King Day* (no class)
  - 1/23: Famine and Global Poverty (continued)
    - Leif Wenar, “Poverty Is No Pond”
- Week 3
  - 1/28: Famine and Global Poverty (continued)
    - *Philosophy Bites*, “Larry Temkin on Obligations to the Needy” (podcast available [here](#))
    - Theron Pummer, “Risky Giving”
  - 1/30: Overpopulation
    - Derek Parfit, “Overpopulation and the Quality of Life”
- Week 4
  - 2/4: Animal Ethics
    - Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”
    - *Earthlings* (film shown in class but also available [here](#))
  - 2/6: Animal Ethics (continued)
    - Tom Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights”
    - Mary Anne Warren, “Difficulties with the Strong Animal Rights Position”
- Week 5
  - 2/11: Animal Ethics (continued)
    - Carl Cohen, “The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research”
    - Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, and People”
  - 2/13: Animal Ethics (continued)
    - Elizabeth Anderson, “Animal Rights and the Values of Nonhuman Life”

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<sup>2</sup> With the exception of the readings from Broome’s *Climate Matters* (the assigned textbook), all readings will be made available electronically.

## Part II: Non-Sentient Life

- Week 6
  - 2/18: Biocentrism
    - Paul Taylor, “The Ethics of Respect for Nature”
    - David Schmidtz, “Are All Species Equal?”
  - 2/20: Ecofeminism
    - Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen, “Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health”
- Week 7
  - 2/25: Ecocentrism
    - Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic”
  - 2/27: “Nature”
    - Steven Vogel, “Why ‘Nature’ Has No Place in Environmental Philosophy”
    - *Discuss Paper Topics*
- Week 8
  - 3/4: Value of Biodiversity
    - *Radiolab*, “Galapagos” (podcast available [here](#))
    - Lilly-Marlene Russow, “Why Do Species Matter?”
  - 3/6: *Midterm*
- Week 9
  - 3/11: *Spring Break* (no class)
  - 3/13: *Spring Break* (no class)

## Part III: The Ethics of Climate Change

- Week 10
  - 3/18: Introduction to Climate Change (guest lecture by Daniel Gilford, atmospheric scientist and postdoctoral associate at Rutgers University)
    - John Broome, *Climate Matters*, chapters 1-2
    - *Optional Supplemental Reading*: Kerry Emanuel, “Climate Science and Climate Risk: A Primer”
  - 3/20: Economics and Uncertainty
    - John Broome, *Climate Matters*, chapters 3 and 7
    - *Optional Supplemental Reading*: Paul Slovic, “Perception of Risk”
- Week 11
  - 3/25: Individual Responsibility
    - Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s Not *My* Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations”
  - 3/27: Individual Responsibility (continued)
    - John Broome, *Climate Matters*, chapters 4-5
    - *Planet Money*, “Money Trees” (podcast available [here](#))
- Week 12
  - 4/1: The Non-Identity Problem
    - Molly Gardiner, *The Non-Identity Problem* (WiPhi Video available [here](#))
    - Derek Parfit, “The Non-Identity Problem”
  - 4/3: Discount Rates and Well-Being
    - John Broome, *Climate Matters*, chapters 6 and 8
    - *Paper Due*
- Week 13

- 4/8: Future Lives
  - John Broome, *Climate Matters*, chapters 9-11
- 4/10: Group Responsibility
  - Peter Singer, “One Atmosphere”
- Week 14
  - 4/15: Group Responsibility (continued)
    - Martino Traxler, “Fair Chore Division for Climate Change”
    - Stephen Gardiner, “Ethics and Global Climate Change” (selections)
  - 4/17: Group Responsibility (continued)
    - Henry Shue, “Climate Hope: Implementing the Exit Strategy”
    - “Climate Change in India” (podcast series available [here](#))
- Week 15
  - 4/22: Geoengineering
    - Stephen Gardiner, “Is ‘Arming the Future’ with Geoengineering Really the Lesser Evil?”
    - *Optional Supplemental Reading*: Alan Robock, “20 Reasons Why Geoengineering May Be a Bad Idea”
  - 4/24: Changing the Dialogue on Climate Change and Review
    - Bob Inglis, *Changing the Dialogue on Energy and Climate* (TEDx Talk available [here](#))
    - Katharine Hayhoe, “When Facts Are Not Enough”
    - *Environmental Change Project Report Due*
- Reading Week
  - 5/6 (Monday), 10:30am-12:30pm: *Final Exam*