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ENST 391.01: Earth Ethics: Moral Dimensions of Environmental Issues

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EARTH ETHICS: MORAL DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

ENST 391.01, Fall 2013

TR 9:40 – 11:00 am; LA 306

CRN: 75290

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

We often think of environmental issues primarily as issues of science and politics: what does science tell us about problems facing the environment, and how can politics help us respond? But environmental issues are simultaneously ethical issues with several moral dimensions: because each issue raises questions of how we *should* respond, exploring the moral dimensions of environmental issues can help us to discern better or worse responses, and to understand *why* we choose to respond as we do. In this course we will develop broad familiarity with different approaches within the field of environmental ethics in order to use a case study approach to examine a range of contemporary environmental issues. Students will have the opportunity to develop their own responses within a moral framework. By the end of the course students will know how to examine the moral dimensions of a range of environmental issues and how to ground their own perspectives within an ethical framework.

OBJECTIVES & LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze, critically evaluate, and correctly apply the basic concepts and forms of reasoning from the field of environmental ethics, particularly deontological, consequentialist, and virtue theories, to contemporary ethical issues.
2. Think critically about the social and environmental effects of different contemporary ethical issues.
3. Use a case study methodology to analyze the moral dimensions of contemporary ethical issues and articulate one's own personal perspective and position.
4. Incorporate information literacy into the moral analysis of environmental issues and writing assignments by finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing information from diverse sources.
5. Write more clearly and effectively about complex ethical issues related to social justice and the environmental issues and be able to communicate these issues and multiple perspectives fairly and clearly to diverse audiences.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Doing Environmental Ethics by Robert Traer [*Second Edition*] (Westview Press: 2013; ISBN: 978-0-8133-4741-7).

Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case Method Approach by James B. Martin-Schramm and Robert L. Stivers (Orbis Books: 2003; ISBN: 978-1-57-75-499-9)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Class Topic	Readings
	Introduction	
8/27	Tu 1 Introduction to the course and to each other	
8/29	Th 2 Earth Ethics: Thinking about the Moral Dimensions of Environmental Issues Spectrum exercises on approaches to environmental issues	CEE: Ch. 1
	I. Moral Philosophy and Environmental Issues	
9/3	Tu 3 Moral Philosophy: An Adventure in Reasoning Reflection Paper #1 due Autobiographical essay: "What has shaped me for how I do ethics?" (See end of syllabus for description)	Traer: Ch. 1
9/5	Th 4 Ethics and Science: Moral Consideration	Traer: Ch. 2
9/10	Tu 5 Ethics and Economics: The Common Good	Traer: Ch. 3
9/12	Th 6 Duty: Nature and Future Generations	Traer: Ch. 4
9/17	Tu 7 Character: Ecological Virtues Reflection Paper #2 due Ecological Autobiography Essay (See end of syllabus for description)	Traer: Ch. 5
9/19	Th 8 Relationships: Empathy and Integrity	Traer: Ch. 6
9/24	Tu 9 Rights: Humans and Animals	Traer: Ch. 7
9/26	Th 10 Consequences: Predicting the Future	Traer: Ch. 8
10/1	Tu 11 Midterm Exam	No Readings
	II. Using Cases to Examine Environmental Issues	
10/3	Th 12 Developing a Case Study Approach to Moral Deliberation on Environmental Issues	CEE: Ch. 3
	Part 1: Case Studies 1-4	

10/8	Tu 13	<i>Topic:</i> Ecological Living: Sustainable Consumption	Traer: Ch. 9
10/10	Th 14	<i>Case Study #1:</i> “Rigor and Responsibility: Stewardship and Consumption of Limited Resources	CEE: Ch. 4
10/15	Tu 15	<i>Topic:</i> Environmental Policy: Governments, Corporations, NGOs	Traer: Ch. 10
10/17	Th 16	<i>Case Study #2:</i> “Saving Snake River Salmon: Endangered Species and Habitat Restoration	CEE: Ch. 7
10/22	Tu 17	<i>Topic:</i> Air and Water: A Healthy Environment	Traer: Ch. 11
10/24	Th 18	<i>Case Study #3:</i> Taking on Water: Fairness and the Cost of Species Conservation	CEE: Ch. 8
10/29	Tu 19	<i>Topic:</i> Agriculture: Land and Food	Traer: Ch. 12
10/31	Th 20	<i>Case Study #4:</i> “Harvesting Controversy: Genetic Engineering and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa”	CEE: Ch. 12

Part 2: Case Studies 5-8

11/5	Tu 21	<i>Topic:</i> Public Land: Adaptive Management	Traer: Ch. 13
11/7	Th 22	<i>Case Study #5:</i> “Market Mountain Takeover: Land Exchanges and Protection of Old Growth Forests”	CEE: Ch. 6
11/12	Tu 23	<i>Topic:</i> Urban Ecology: Building Green	Traer: Ch. 14
11/14	Th 24	<i>Case Study #6:</i> “Sustaining Dover: Urban Sprawl, Habitat Fragmentation, and Sustainable Communities	CEE: Ch. 5
11/19	Tu 25	<i>Topic:</i> Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism	ERES

Readings

1. Robert Bullard: “Overcoming Racism in Environmental Decision Making”
2. Winona LaDuke: “All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life”
3. Lina Robyn: “Indigenous Knowledge and Technology: Creating Environmental Justice for the 21st Century”

11/21	Th 26	<i>Case Study 7:</i> “Skull Valley: Nuclear Waste, Environmental Racism, and Tribal Sovereignty”	CEE: Ch. 10
11/26	Tu 27	Climate Change: Global Warming & Energy Policy	Traer: Ch. 15
11/27	W	Thanksgiving break begins	

12/3 Tu 28 *Case Study 8: "Chlorine Sunset? Toxic Waste and the Precautionary Principle"* CEE: Ch. 11

12/5 Th 29 **Wrap Up: What have we learned about Moral Dimensions of Environmental Issues?**

FINAL EXAM: 10:10 am - 12:10 pm Thursday 12/12/2013

GRADING POLICY

1. Active Participation in Reading and Class Discussion: expected
2. Two short reflection papers: 15%
3. Midterm Exam: 15%
4. Participation in Two Group Presentations of a Case Study: 20%
5. One Group Outline Analysis of a Case Study and Oral Exam: 10%
6. Case Brief Analysis of a Case Study: 15%
7. Short opinion paper on a Case Study: 10%
8. Final exam: 15%

Note Re Papers: Papers 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. **Note: Email submissions will not be accepted; paper copies only.** Papers with an undue number of errors of punctuation, spelling, or grammar will be returned ungraded for correction and the final grade will be marked down one full letter grade. Written work will be evaluated in terms of your depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, clarity of writing, and ability to address issues raised in the text and in class on the topic at hand. Grades given reflect the following criteria of judgment:

- F: Failure to meet minimum requirements
- D: Unsatisfactory, but some effort to meet minimum requirements
- C: Satisfactory; meet 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; demonstrate creativity and mature analytical skills in going beyond the primary requirements of the assignment

Note: Final Grades will be recorded using pluses and minuses.

Attendance: Regular attendance and participation in the class is expected. More than **three** (3) absences will result in losing any benefit of the doubt on your final grade. More than **five** (5) absences will result in one grade reduction. More than **seven** (7) absences will result in a failing course grade. *Late arrivals in class will count as an absence.* (**Note:** I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences in totaling your number of absences. If you have a valid reason for missing several classes, such as illness or other conflicting commitments, you still **must** speak with the instructor.)

Cellphones & Electronic Devices: Please turn off all cellphones and electronic devices during class time. *Students who text or use electronic devices during class will be asked to leave and counted as absent for that class.*

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: All work submitted is expected to be the student's own. Any acts of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course, and may result in further academic punishment. If you have any doubts about definitions of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please review the relevant sections of the University Catalog.

WEIGHT AND TIMELINE OF ASSIGNMENTS

The total number of points available for class assignments is 500 points. There are no extra credit points available (so please don't ask).

In order of due dates, the assignments are:

	<u>points</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>due date</u>
1. Autobiographical essay	25	5%	September 3
2. Ecological Autobiography essa	50	10%	September 17
3. Midterm exam	75	15%	October 1
4. Two Group Presentations	50 each	20%	Section II, Parts 1 & 2 of Class
5. One Group Outline & Oral Exam	50	10%	One Week after Class Presentation in Part 1
6. Individual Opinion Paper	25	5%	One Week after Class Presentation in Part 1
7. Case Brief Analysis of Case Study	75	15%	One Week after Class Presentation in Part 2
8. Peer Evaluations	25	5%	One Week after Class Presentation in Parts 1 & 2
9. Final Exam	75	15%	Dec 12, 10:10 – 12:10

DESCRIPTION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. Short Reflection Papers: These two papers are intended to give you the opportunity to reflect on how your own background and experience have influenced the way you approach ethical issues.

Try to incorporate three levels of interpretation:

(a) Descriptive: Name and describe what you consider to be the most important factors or influences on how you approach ethical issues. That is, what is important to understand this topic?

(b) Reflective: What meaning or interpretation do you derive from these factors? That is, how and why are they important to understanding this topic?

(c) Analytical: How have these factors and influences--and the interpretation you give them--been shaped by the social-historical context? What social and/or historical factors have been important in this? This level requires digging below the reflective level to ask how the social and historical contexts may have shaped or influenced your background, experience, and thinking on these topics.

Use the following as guidelines for the papers:

Paper #1 Autobiographical Essay: "What has shaped me for how I do ethics?" In light of the readings and in-class discussion so far, what have been some of the primary influences on how you approach ethical issues and decisions, both large and small? Have factors such as your gender, race, sexual orientation, or class made a difference? What about your family's religious heritage, geographic location, and social history? Due: Sept. 3 (**Recommended length: 3-4 pages, double-spaced**)

Paper #2 Ecological Autobiography: "How has my relationship to the land and nature influenced the way I approach the environmental issues?" Use the Worksheet on Moodle to consider your own family's and/or primary community's history and place in society going back at least three generations (and farther if you can). What have been some of the important social, cultural, and economic factors that have shaped your attitudes toward the land and environmental issues. Why? Consider some of these questions: Were your ancestors native to this country? Are you or your parents first-, second-, or perhaps eighth-generation immigrants? What large events--wars, depressions, revolutions, social movements--shaped their lives? How did your families and/or communities use the land and relate to nature? Which of their values have you absorbed? Which have you rejected? How has the historical context in which you have grown up differed from your ancestors? Has this affected the way you think about environmental issues? Why or why not? Think also about other people you know and their family connections to the land. Attach the worksheet to your written essay. Due: Sept. 17. (**recommended length: 5-6 pages, double-spaced**)

[Note: see another description of this essay on p. 311 of *Christian Environmental Ethics*]

2. Group Presentation and Analysis of Ethical Issues in Case Studies: Roughly half of your final evaluation comes from participation in two group presentations and analysis of ethical issues as presented in case studies in *Christian Environmental Ethics*, and your individual analysis of the issues. In Section II, Part 1, each student will participate in a Class Presentation of the Case Study, and then develop a Group Outline of your ethical analysis, as well as write an individual opinion piece (each described below). In Section II, Part 2, each student will participate in a Class Presentation of the Case Study and then write an individual Case Brief Analysis of the case study. The main components of the case studies are:

a) Group Presentation: Your in-class presentation should be presented as a hearing being conducted on the case study you have researched that presents and examines the ethical issues in the case. (You may use whatever format you find most conducive to presenting your issue. Past formats have included Congressional hearings, court cases, talk-shows, conference debates, and town meetings.) You should present testimony on relevant background information, a description of the ethical issue(s) involved, and at least two different or opposing sides to the issue. (You don't have to all agree personally with these, but should be able to present a persuasive case for each position; avoid caricatures and straw figures). Plan to use a maximum of 30 minutes for your presentation, at the end of which the class will vote on what is the most ethical way to resolve the issue. Another 30 minutes will be used for discussion with other members of the class. Save the last 5 minutes to tell us how you as a group choose to resolve the issue. [Each student will be assigned to one case study in Part 1, and one case study in Part 2, and will participate in the group presentations for both cases].

b) Group Outline and Oral Exam: For the case study you present in Part 1 of Section II, within a week following your class presentation the group will have a *1-hour group oral exam* (to be scheduled with Dr. Spencer). One class prior to this exam you will present a written outline showing the structure of your analysis of your ethical issue which will form the basis of the discussion with Dr. Spencer. It should follow the 6-step model for ethical decision-making described in the handout on Moodle and further discussed in the Appendix of *Christian Environmental Ethics*. The outline should list the relevant background information and history, the ethical issues and dilemma(s) involved, alternatives and consequences, your recommendation(s) and reasons for your response. Evaluation will be based on the comprehensiveness of your outline and the depth of analysis demonstrated by the group as a whole during the discussion.

c) Individual Opinion Paper: For the case studies presented in Part 1 of Section II, each group member must write an individual opinion paper on the issue you have presented. Write it as if it were an Op-Ed piece for a newspaper editorial page where you pick a position and try to persuade the reader that your position is the ethically responsible choice. (If you are not clear what an Op-Ed piece is, check the editorial page of the New York Times or the Missoulian for examples). Your piece should reflect the strongest argument you can muster for that position, based on the research you and your group has done on this issue. The essay should be a well-reasoned argument that incorporate clear, ethical reflection that is persuasive, and addresses the claims of opposing viewpoints. Aim for clarity, brevity, and persuasiveness. Maximum length: 2 pages double-spaced. Due: one week after the group presentation. (Re-write option: after your paper has been evaluated and graded, you may rewrite it and resubmit it if you choose. Rewrites are due two weeks after I return your graded paper.)

d) Individual Case Brief Analysis of Case Study: For the case studies presented in Part 2 of Section II, instead of writing a group outline of the case, *each student* will write an Individual Case Brief Analysis of 5-6 pages of your case, following the guidelines on pp. 316-318 in the Appendix of *Christian Environmental Ethics*. In addition to drawing on class discussion and the written commentary in the book, you should include *at least four additional sources* that you have used to develop your analysis. Due: One week after your group presentation.

e) Peer evaluations: each student will fill out and submit peer evaluations on each group member (including the student) assessing each student's contribution to the group project. No credit for the group project will be given until peer evaluations are submitted.

3. Midterm and Final Exams: The two exams will be essay and short answer format to assess your knowledge and ability to use the terms, frameworks and theories in environmental ethics in reflecting on environmental issues. The Midterm exam will focus on the readings and class lectures in Section I on Moral Philosophy and Environmental Issues. The Final Exam will focus on ethical issues considered in Section II, both the background readings as well as the case studies themselves.

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY POLICIES, DATES AND DEADLINES: See the Calendar page in Cyberbear for a list of important dates for Fall 2013: <http://www.umt.edu/registrar/calendar.aspx>

P/NP Grade option: A minimum grade average of C- (70) is required for a P grade in the P/NP option. Incomplete Grade: Please see the criteria that must be met for an Incomplete in the University Catalog. No exceptions will be made for these criteria.

Grade Guidelines

The following grid represents a breakdown of estimated grades per assignment using a point system. On each assignment you will receive a certain number of points according to specified criteria. Grades will be assigned at the end of the semester using the total number of points accumulated as the primary criterion for evaluation. Active participation, preparation, and regular attendance can help to improve your grade, particularly where you may be on the border.

	AE	EA	GCP1	OO	PE	OP	GCP2	CAB	MT	FE	Total
#Pts	25	25	50	50	25	25	50	75	75	75	500
A	25	25	48	48	25	25	48	72	72	72	486
A-	23	23	46	46	23	23	46	69	69	69	460
B+	22	22	44	44	22	22	44	66	66	66	440
B	21	21	42	42	21	21	42	63	63	63	420
B-	20	20	40	40	20	20	40	60	60	60	400
C+	19	19	38	38	19	19	38	57	57	57	383
C	18	18	37	37	18	18	37	54	54	54	366
C-	17	17	35	35	17	17	35	52	52	52	346
D+	16	16	33	33	16	16	33	50	50	50	329
D	15	15	32	32	15	15	32	48	48	48	312
D-	14	14	30	30	14	14	30	46	46	46	292

F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44/below	44/below	44/below	Below 292
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End of Semester Grade Scale

- A = 460-500**
- B = 400-459**
- C = 346-399**
- D = 292-345**
- F = Below 292**

Misspellings and Typos: Papers with five or more misspellings or typos will be returned ungraded for correction, and will receive an automatic one full grade reduction (Use the Spell-Check function on your word processor or a proof-reader!)

Assignment Key

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| AE = Autobiographical Essay (5%) | EA = Ecological Autobiography (10%) |
| GCP = Group Class Presentation (10%) X 2 | |
| OO = Outline and Oral Exam (10%) | PE = Peer Evaluation (5%) |
| OP = Individual Opinion Papers (5%) | CAB = Case Analysis Brief (15%) |
| MT = Midterm Exam (15%) | FE = Final Exam (15%) |