

PHIL 317: Ethics, Politics, and the Environment

Instructor	Prof. Joshua Mousie
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Office Hours	Fridays (Zoom), 9am-4pm.

Text:

Environmental Ethics: What Really Matter, What Really Works, eds. Schmidtz and Shahar

Description:

This class will look at the relatively new and growing field of environmental philosophy. We will discuss environmental thought broadly construed, which includes the natural environment, animals, food, sustainability, and a host of social and political concerns regarding human and nonhuman relationships. We will consider how environmental philosophy challenges traditional philosophical frameworks (especially in regard to metaphysics and ethics), and we will question the merits and limitations of philosophizing about the nonhuman world. We will also consider the practical side of these issues: How can our actions affect change in contemporary human and nonhuman relationships? As ethical beings, are we obliged to alter our actions to consider the nonhuman world in our day-to-day lives and future careers?

Goals:

1. To develop an understanding and appreciation for environmental thought, and how it relates to traditional philosophical enterprises. [Knowledge]
2. To discover and develop your own knowledge and the knowledge of others through an extensive research and writing project. [Scholarship]
3. To develop your academic leadership abilities by being responsible for guiding and facilitating discussion. [Leadership]
4. To develop your ability to construct and articulate your philosophical views, both on your own and by listening and being receptive to the critiques and suggestions of your peers. [Communication and Team Learning]

Requirements:

Research Project	35%
Discussion Facilitation	15%
Attendance & Participation	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Attendance and Participation

Since there will not be many small assignments due on a week-to-week basis, I expect everyone to have plenty of time outside of class to carefully read and think critically about all the readings. You should come to class with questions, ideas, and critiques that you want to discuss with everyone. Additionally, you should seek opportunities to build on the ideas and concerns that others bring to class. If you don't come prepared, disrespect/antagonize others, or if you are causing distractions in general (for instance, talking too much), your participation grade will suffer. You will receive one participation grade at midterm and one at the end of the semester. Your final participation grade is average of these two grades. A rubric is posted on our Blackboard homepage.

Research Project

Your research project will focus on one topic within environmental philosophy, and you will read and research a range of secondary literature on your specific topic in order to develop a strong and original thesis that you will defend throughout your paper. You are encouraged to develop an interdisciplinary project, especially one that examines a career pathway that interests you. I will meet with each student individually during the first few weeks of class in order to get your project underway, and I will occasionally meet with you individually throughout the semester to check on the progress you are making. Failure to meet with me or participate in classroom workshops will lower your paper grade. Additionally, we will workshop everyone's paper ideas occasionally during our class meetings. By the end of the semester, you will have a very polished paper (roughly 12 pgs long) that engages several sources (around 10) and clearly argues for and develops your own thesis. Ideally, this is a paper that you could (if you wanted to) submit to a philosophy conference or an undergraduate/graduate philosophy journal. There is a document with detailed instructions and a grading rubric for this assignment posted on Blackboard.

Discussion Facilitation

During the first week of class everyone will form discussion facilitation groups (two people per group). Five times during the semester (depending on class size), your group will be responsible for leading the class through our discussion, and you will provide examples and critiques that you would like the class to discuss and consider. Your group will not lecture; you will focus on developing questions and ways of approaching the ideas in the text that facilitates discussion. You are encouraged to use contemporary illustrations (for instance, a short video clip or discuss a recent event) in order to demonstrate the relevance of the reading. I will be providing a series of questions to help groups prepare, however you will receive credit for 1) your ability to engage your peers and spark a philosophical conversation about the key ideas in the essay being discussed and 2) your ability to keep the class and our discussion focused and organized throughout the class period. There is a document with detailed instructions and a grading rubric posted on Blackboard.

Exams

Your exams midterm exam will be a take-home essay, and your final will consist of short answer and essay questions.

Additional Information & Classroom Policies

Classroom Equity

I never give one student special accommodations (disabilities aside). Hence, whenever you want to ask me for something, first ask 'Is this something that he would/could reasonably do for everyone in the class?' If the answer is 'no,' then my answer will be no.

Turning in Assignments

All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class the day they are due. If you are not in class, you cannot turn in the assignment and receive credit, unless you have a doctor's note or you are on an official Emory trip (e.g., athletics). Along these lines, **I will not accept assignments that are e-mailed to me (unless you are asked to e-mail them)**. Any assignment that is not turned in by you (in person) at the beginning of class is late and will be penalized. For daily assignments, late work is not accepted.

Electronics

You are not allowed to have laptops or cell phones out during class. Although laptops are useful in many classrooms, they will not be needed for our purposes. The class will be heavily discussion-based and note taking can easily be done with paper and pen. On days when the reading comes from a pdf, **you are responsible for printing the document and having it with you in class.**

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating/plagiarism is not tolerated. Any form of cheating or plagiarism (no matter the assignment) will forfeit any possible credit for that assignment, and following school policy you will be reported to the Honor Council (Please consult the Academic Honor Code in the Student Handbook). If you have ANY questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism, don't hesitate to contact me, or visit someone in the writing center!