

PHL273H1 – ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Fall 2019

Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto (Mississauga campus)

1. CONTACT

INSTRUCTOR

Name: Dr. Aaron Henry

Office: NM6154

Office Hours: Thursday (2-3pm)

Email: aaron.henry@mail.utoronto.ca

LECTURE

Lecture Location: IB150 & MN2190

Lecture Time: Mon 3-4 and Wed 3-5

E-mail policy: E-mails must be sent from your UTORmail e-mail address and must include the course code (PHL273) in the subject line. E-mails are for administrative purposes only – questions about course material will be addressed during office hours. I try to reply to e-mails within one or two business days.

2. COURSE

OVERVIEW

Intuitively, it doesn't matter how we treat inanimate objects, like a rock. But does it matter how we treat non-human organisms, like fish, pigs, cows, or chickens? If so, what gives these organisms their moral standing? Is it whether they are intelligent? Whether they can feel pain? Whether they are alive? Whether they are instrumental to the maintenance of an ecosystem? In the first part of the course, we will study the main answers that philosophers have offered in response to these questions and the relevance of each answer to the moral acceptability of common practices like meat-eating and animal experimentation (e.g., for designing cosmetic products). Assessing the arguments in this part of the course will help equip us to make informed decisions about these matters.

In the second part of the course, we will examine global environmental challenges confronting humanity today. We will begin by asking whether there are too many human beings for the planet to sustain everyone, and, if so, what should be done about it. We will then turn from the problem of overpopulation to the problem of climate change, focusing on who is primarily responsible for dealing with climate change. For example, should all countries equally shoulder the burden of reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, or are some countries more responsible than others? And is it exclusively the role of governments to fight climate change (e.g., through the introduction of legal regulations), or does each of us, as individual moral agents, also possess obligations to restrict our own carbon footprints (regardless of what our government may be doing to address the problem)? And what attitude should we take to people who deny that the climate is changing and accordingly recommend inaction? We will conclude by considering how the problem of climate change intersects with economics, including whether capitalism can be made environmentally sustainable and what it is to act virtuously in an age of consumerism.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A primary objective of any philosophy course is skill development. Some of the skills you will be developing in this course include:

- Understanding of some of the central controversies within environmental ethics.
- The ability to read, analyze, and critically assess an analytic philosophy paper;
- The ability to write a well-argued philosophy paper;
- The ability to defend your views in conversation.

EXPECTATIONS

What I expect from you:

- to attend lectures;
- to come to lecture on time and prepared to discuss assigned readings;
- to complete assignments on time and as per the instructions;
- to treat your peers with respect;
- to ask questions when you feel you don't understand something;
- to take responsibility for your own learning.

What you can expect from me:

- to come prepared for each lecture;
- to create a positive and stimulating learning environment;
- to provide support and constructive feedback throughout the term;
- to treat you with respect;
- to think carefully about your questions and make a serious effort to answer them.

TEXTS

All readings will be available either through our course website or electronically through U of T library system. If you don't find a text on our website, then the library has it electronically.

1. ASSESSMENT

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|--|
| 1 st paper (1,000 words) | (25% of final) | Due: Fri. October 11th |
| 2 nd paper (2,000 words) | (35% of final) | Due: Last day of classes |
| Final Exam | (30% of final) | TBD |
| Participation | (10% of final) | |

Papers are to be submitted, and will be returned, via Quercus. You should upload your written assignment as an attachment on the submission page using .doc or .docx format.

2. POLICIES

COURSE WEBSITE

All announcements and course documents will be posted on Quercus. To access this site, go to q.utoronto.ca and login with your UTORid and password. PHL273H5 will appear under 'Courses' on the left side of the welcome page. Click on the link to access our site. You should check this site regularly for updates.

LATENESS

Assignments will be penalized 1/3 a letter grade for each day that they are late. Extensions may be granted if extraordinary circumstances are documented, but students should contact me to request an extension before the due date. Assignments more than 5 days late will not be accepted.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences [...]. All

suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources. (from <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca>)

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom, or course materials, do not hesitate to speak to me and please make sure to contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible (at <http://accessibility.utoronto.ca>).

Some other helpful support resources at St. George campus include:

- Students for Barrier-Free Access (<http://www.uoftsba.com>)
- Health & Wellness (<http://healthandwellness.utoronto.ca>)
- The Hart House Accessibility Fund (<http://harthouse.ca/accessibility>)
- Library Services for People with Disabilities (<http://onereach.library.utoronto.ca/services-for-people-with-disabilities>)

3. SUPPORT

It's crucial to keep up with the readings and to attend as many lectures as you can. If you feel you need additional help with any of the course material, please don't wait to contact me.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Here is a link to information about the University of Toronto's many writing resources:
<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/>

Here are some links to information about how to write a good philosophy paper:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>

<http://catpages.nwmissouri.edu/m/rfield/guide.html>

Here is a link to information about the 'Cornell' note taking system:

<http://lifehacker.com/202418/geek-to-live--take-study+worthy-lecture-notes>

4. SCHEDULE AND READINGS

| Part I: Moral Standing | | |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Sep 9 | Introduction to the course | No readings |
| Sep 11 | Anthropocentrism | Descartes, selection from <i>Discourse on Method</i> ("Animals are Machines"); Optional: Regan "Animal Awareness" (pp. 1-12) |
| Sep 16 | Animal intelligence and animal consciousness | <i>The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness</i> ; Rowlands, Ch. 1 of <i>Animals Like Us</i> ("Do Animals have Minds?") Optional: Regan "Animal Awareness" (pp.12-33); Andrews, "Animal Cognition" |
| Sep 18 | Utilitarianism and animal welfare #1 | Singer, "All Animals are Equal" |
| Sep 23 | Utilitarianism and animal welfare #2 | Singer, selections from <i>Practical Ethics</i> |
| Sep 25 | Deontology and animal welfare #1 | Regan, "The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights"; Warren "A Critique of Regan's Animal Rights Theory" |
| Sep 30 | Factory farming | Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases" (up to p. 235); Rowlands, <i>Animals like Us</i> (Chapters 3 and 5) |
| Oct 2 | Rethinking animal welfare | Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People"; Taylor; Excerpt from <i>Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation</i> |
| Oct 7 | Rethinking anthropocentrism | Szytbel, "Taking Humanism Seriously: 'Obligatory' Anthropocentrism" |
| Oct 9 | Biocentrism | Goodpaster, "On Being Morally Considerable" |
| Oct 14 | Reading week - No classes | |
| Oct 16 | Reading week - No classes | |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Oct 21 | Ecocentrism | Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair"; Leopold "The Land Ethic" |
| Oct 23 | Ecocentrism #2: Deep ecology | Naess "The shallow and the deep, long range ecology movement. A summary" |
| Oct 28 | The value of species | Russow "Why do species matter?" |
| Part II: Global environmental challenges | | |
| Oct 30 | Overpopulation and the 'tragedy of the commons' | Hardin, "The Ecological Necessity of Confronting the Problem of Human Overpopulation"; Commoner, "Poverty Breeds Overpopulation" |
| Nov 4 | Climate change: an ethical overview | Gardiner, "Ethics and Global Climate Change" |
| Nov 6 | Why is motivating widespread action against climate change so difficult? | Gardiner, "A Perfect Moral Storm" |
| Nov 11 | Who is most responsible for ensuring action against climate change? | Shue, "Global Environment and International Inequality" |
| Nov 13 | How should we distribute the right to emit greenhouse gases? | Caney, "Climate Change, Energy Rights, and Equality" |
| Nov 18 | What, if any, moral obligations do individuals have to limit their greenhouse gas emissions? | Sinnott-Armstrong, "'It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations"; Avram Hiller, "Climate Change and Individual Responsibility" (stop at page 358) |
| Nov 20 | An opposing 'virtue-theoretic' answer | Jamieson, "When Utilitarians Should Be Virtue Theorists" |
| Nov 25 | How ought climate change to change our conception of the good life? Is living simply a virtue in our age? | Joshua Colt Gambrel and Philip Cafaro, "The Virtue of Simplicity"; Hill, "Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments" |
| Nov 27 | Should we extend tolerance toward the climate change denial movement? | McKinnon, "Should We Tolerate Climate Change Denial?"; Scanlon, "The Value of Tolerance" |
| Dec 2 | Capitalism and sustainability | Desjardins, "Business and Environmental Sustainability"; Ajl, excerpt from <i>A People's Green New Deal</i> |
| Dec 4 | Capitalism and sustainability cont'd | Schweickart "Is sustainable capitalism an oxymoron?"; Bookchin "Social Ecology" |