

# **ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

PHILOSOPHY 3101, SPRING 2018

## **SECTION 01**

MWF, 1:00–1:50, Burgett 134

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Dr. Jonathan Spelman  
Burgett 129, (419) 772-3091  
[j-selman@onu.edu](mailto:j-selman@onu.edu)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course prepares you to think more critically about your relationship to the environment. In general, we'll investigate what we owe (if anything) to future generations, animals, plants, species, and ecosystems. We'll discuss whether it's wrong to eat meat, and we'll consider what we should do about elephants, climate change, and GMOs. Along the way, you'll develop the philosophical skills you need to answer these questions. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. construct, reconstruct, and evaluate arguments for validity and soundness
2. use analogies, examples, and thought experiments to support their views
3. use counterexamples to criticize opposing views
4. demonstrate intellectual humility, intellectual empathy, and courage
5. articulate why one might think that animals, plants, species, and ecosystems matter
6. clearly present their views on which of those things matter and how they matter
7. apply their views to a variety of environmental issues

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MINOR**

This course is (an elective component, a required component) for the environmental studies minor. The minor in environmental studies benefits students by giving them the ability to examine contemporary environmental issues from several disciplinary perspectives. Because of its interdisciplinary nature and topical focus, the minor fits well with nearly every major and the general education requirements of ONU. Thus, the minor provides a solid foundation for students interested in addressing current and future environmental challenges with creative, interdisciplinary solutions in policy, science, technology, engineering, humanities and business.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

- I will hold office hours Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00-3:00 pm.
- I will also be available by appointment.

## **REQUIRED TEXT**

- Schmitz, David and Elizabeth Willott, editors. *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford University Press, 2012.
  - ISBN-13: 978-0-19-979351-8

## **TECHNOLOGY POLICY**

Studies show that students who write their notes retain more information than those who type their notes (see, for example, <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>). In light of that, I ask that you not use laptops or tablets during class. As is the case with all of my policies, however, if you have reasons for thinking that this is a bad policy or that I should make an exception in your case, please let me know. You may convince me.

## **GRADES**

Students earn “A” grades by demonstrating their ability to reliably meet all (or almost all) of the course objectives. Students earn “B” and “C” grades by demonstrating their ability to meet all of the course objectives. Students earn “D” grades by demonstrating their ability to meet most of the course objectives.

## **GRADED ELEMENTS**

### *CLASS PREPARATION AND ATTENDANCE*

You should prepare for each class period by reading and flagging the assigned text and reflecting on its content. You are also expected to attend class regularly, but you may miss up to four classes without penalty. After your fourth absence, each additional absence will result in a 2.5% reduction in your final grade. (I don’t distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.)

### *PARTICIPATION*

During the semester, you will receive a number of miscellaneous assignment, each of which will be worth a certain number of points. For each assignment you complete with “B”-level work or better, you will receive that number of points. You can accumulate up to 30 points this way.

### *HOMEWORK*

You will have three homework assignments early in the semester. You must complete each homework assignment on your own, before class, and then you will rework it in class with a small group of your peers. You can accumulate up to 30 points this way. You will then be tested on your ability to construct, reconstruct, and evaluate arguments and your ability to use analogies, thought experiments, examples, and counterexamples.

### *JOURNAL*

Starting in Week 3, you will be asked to complete weekly journal entries in which you identify a passage from that the assigned readings that challenges you or helps you see the world differently. You’ll then contextualize the passage and draw out its implications and/or contest it. For each journal entry that is “B”-level work or better, you will receive 10 points. You can accumulate up to 80 points this way.

### *ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT*

In Weeks 9-10, you will identify a practice that you’d like to take up to improve your relationship to the environment. After engaging in this practice for a few weeks, you’ll write a paper reflecting on the experience. This assignment is worth 30 points.

### *PAPERS*

You will write one 1500-word papers that develops an idea you explored in your journal or engages an issue you are passionate about. You will work closely with me in writing this papers, which is worth 100 points.

### *FINAL EXAM*

The final exam will require you to clearly present your views, apply them to a variety of environmental issues, and defend them against objections. Your final exam is worth 100 points.

<i>GRADED ELEMENT</i>	points
Participation	30
Homework	30
Journal	80
Environmental Practice Assignment	30
Papers	100
Final Exam	100
Total	370

## ASSIGNED READINGS

### *Week 1 – Evaluating Arguments*

- 1/15 **No Class (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)**  
1/17 Syllabus  
1/19 Survey  
*Online: Evaluating Arguments*

### *Week 2 – Constructing and Reconstructing Arguments*

- 1/22 **Homework #1**  
1/24 *Online: Robert Elliot, “Normative Ethics”*  
1/26 *Online: Constructing and Reconstructing Moral Arguments*

### *Week 3 – Analogies, Thought Experiments, Examples, and Counterexamples*

- 1/29 **Homework #2**  
1/31 *Online: Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, and People”*  
2/2 *Online: How to Read Philosophy*  
*Online: Analogies, Thought Experiments, Examples, and Counterexamples*

### *Week 4 – Anthropocentrism*

- 2/5 **Homework #3**  
2/7 *EE: Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”*  
2/9 *Online: Richard B. Howarth, “Intergenerational Justice”*

### *Week 5 – Animals*

- 2/12 *EE: Peter Singer, “All Animals are Equal”*  
2/14 *Online: Lori Gruen, “The Moral Status of Animals”*  
2/16 *Online: Dan Lowe, “Common Arguments for the Moral Acceptability of Eating Meat”*

### *Week 6 – Biocentrism*

- 2/19 *EE: Gary Varner, “Biocentric Individualism”*  
2/21 *EE: Christopher D. Stone, “Should Trees Have Standing?”*  
2/23 *EE: David Schmidtz, “Are All Species Equal?”*

### *Week 7 – Holism*

- 2/26 *EE: Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic”*  
2/28 *EE: Holmes Rolston, III, “Values in and Duties to the Natural World”*  
*Online: J. Baird Callicott, from *Beyond the Land Ethic**  
3/2 **No Class (Conference)**

### *Spring Break*

- 3/5  
3/7  
3/9



### *Week 8 – Elephant Management*

- 3/12 *EE: Ian John Whyte, “The Elephant Management Dilemma”*  
3/14 *EE: David Schmidtz, excerpt from “When Preservationism Doesn’t Preserve”*  
*EE: David Schmidtz and Elizabeth Willott, excerpt from “Reinventing the Commons”*  
3/16 **Debate**

*Week 9 – Ecofeminism & Virtue Ethics*

- 3/19 *EE:* Karen J. Warren, “The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism”  
3/21 *EE:* Val Plumwood, “Being Prey”  
3/23 *EE:* Thomas E. Hill, Jr., “Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments”

*Week 10 – Consumption*

- 3/26 *EE:* Mark Sagoff, “Do We Consume Too Much?”  
3/28 *EE:* Joshua Colt Gambrel and Philip Cafaro, “The Virtue of Simplicity”  
3/30 **No Class (Easter Recess)**

*Week 11 – Climate Change – Why?*

- 4/2 **No Class (Easter Recess)**  
4/4 *EE:* Garrett Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons”  
4/6 *EE:* Stephen M. Gardiner, “A Perfect Moral Storm”

*Week 12 – Climate Change – What should we do?*

- 4/9 *Online:* John Broome, “Private Morality and Climate Change,” pp. 535-546  
4/11 *Online:* Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s Not *My* Fault”  
4/13 *Online:* Marion Hourdequin, “Climate, Collective Action, and Individual Ethical Obligations”

*Week 13 – Genetically Modified Organisms*

- 4/16 *EE:* Gary Comstock, “Ethics and Genetically Modified Foods”  
4/18 *EE:* Paul B Thompson and William Hannah, “Novel and Normal Risk”  
4/20 *EE:* Joshua Colt Gambrel, “Virtue Theory and Genetically Modified Crops”

*Week 14 – TBD*

- 4/23  
4/25  
4/27

*Week 15 – TBD*

- 4/30  
5/2  
5/4

***Final Exam***

Wednesday, May 9 from 11:45-1:45 pm in Burgett 134

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

### *ACADEMIC HONESTY*

[http://www.onu.edu/student\\_life/student\\_conduct/student\\_handbook](http://www.onu.edu/student_life/student_conduct/student_handbook)

The University expects its students to conduct themselves in a dignified and honorable manner as mature members of the academic community and assumes that individually and collectively they will discourage acts of academic dishonesty. The University also expects cooperation among administrators, faculty, staff, and students in preventing acts of academic dishonesty, in detecting such acts, reporting them, and identifying those who commit them, and in providing appropriate punishment for offenders. The University Code of Academic Student Conduct is found in Appendix C of the Student Handbook, which you can find at the website listed above.

### *CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR POLICY*

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

### *SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY*

[http://www.onu.edu/student\\_life/disability\\_services](http://www.onu.edu/student_life/disability_services)

Students requiring particular accommodations because of physical and/or learning disabilities should contact their Dean's office prior to or during the first week of classes. For additional information, see the website listed above.

I should also note that I will make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please let me know sometime during the first two weeks of class if one of your religious obligations prohibits you from attending class on a particular day or completing a particular assignment.

### *TITLE IX POLICY*

Ohio Northern University does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, transgender status, gender identity, or gender expression in its educational, extracurricular, or athletic programs, or in any admission or employment decisions. ONU is committed to promptly and equitably responding to all reports of sexual discrimination with the goal of eliminating the misconduct and/or harassment, preventing its recurrence, and addressing its effects on any individual or the community.

#### **To report sexual misconduct (violence) or sexual harassment, students may contact:**

- Title IX Coordinator, Nancy Sabol, (419) 772-2219, [n-sabol@onu.edu](mailto:n-sabol@onu.edu)
- Deputy Title IX Coordinator, LaShonda Gurley, (419) 772-3145, [l-gurley@onu.edu](mailto:l-gurley@onu.edu)
- Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Brian Hofman, (419) 772-1878, [b-hofman@onu.edu](mailto:b-hofman@onu.edu)

#### **To confidentially discuss sexual misconduct (violence) or sexual harassment, students may contact University Confidential Resources:**

- Counseling Center, (419) 772-2190
- Health Center, (419) 772-2086
- Chaplain, (419) 772-2200

For more information, the University's Sexual Discrimination Policy is available at [www.onu.edu/title\\_IX](http://www.onu.edu/title_IX).