

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY
Philosophy 470
Environmental Ethics
Fall, 2007
M.W. 14:10-15:25; Room HUM 386; 3 Units

Last Day to Drop a Class: September 24, 2007

Last Day to Withdraw from a Class without Dean's Approval: November 16, 2007

Graduation Role: Environmental Studies B.A. Core Requirement for "Human Values and Environmental Ethics" Section; and Environmental Studies B.A. in "Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice" Concentration Elective

Professor: Joel Kassiola
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Office Hours: M.W. 1600-1700; and by appointment

Official Course Description

Exploration of how different philosophers, religions, and cultures understand our relationships to the environment. Applying ethical paradigms to the analysis of environmental problems and proposals for solutions.

Prerequisite: completion of Segment I of GE Program

Perspective of Course This Semester

“. . . I contend that humanity will not be able to save the world from environmental catastrophe unless and until the normative (including environmental ethical) nature of environmental problems is recognized. Once this understanding of the value-based nature of environmental problems is achieved, I maintain . . . that the reply to

[the] inquiry into the possible significance of environmental ethics to solving (in all of its possible senses) environmental problems . . . is profoundly and necessarily in the affirmative. I believe environmental ethics *can* solve environmental problems and save the world but first the essential normative nature of environmental problems and their solution must be recognized. Environmental ethics as a normative philosophical inquiry about how humanity should ethically live on our finite planet *can*—and I would add . . . *must*—contribute to our comprehension and effective response (‘solution?’) to the urgent environmental problems we confront at the beginning of the twenty-first century.”

--Joel Kassiola, “Can Environmental Ethics ‘Solve’ Environmental Problems and Save the World? Yes, but First We Must Recognize the Essential Normative Nature of Environmental Problems,” *Environmental Values*, Vol. 12, 2003, 490 (emphasis in original)

Philosophy ought to question the basic assumptions of the age. Thinking through, critically and carefully, what most people take for granted is, I believe, the chief task of philosophy, and it is this task that makes philosophy a worthwhile activity.

--Peter Singer, “A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation,” in Pojman and Pojman, 78.

Since the early 1960s, the environmental movement has changed the world. It is arguably one of the most successful social movements in human history.

--Paul Pojman, “Introduction,” in Pojman and Pojman, 2.

Required Reading

Louis P. Pojman and Paul Pojman, eds. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Fifth Edition. Belmont, CA. Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2008. pb.

1. The Nature of Environmental Ethics

Reading: Pojman and Pojman: “Introduction,” 1-3.

2. The Nature of Ethics

Reading: Pojman and Pojman: “What is Ethics?” 4-8.

3. How to Write Rationally Persuasive Essays

Reading: Joel Kassiola, "Rationally Persuasive Writing is Like House Painting: It's All in the Preliminaries," [available on Instructor's Webpage <http://bss.sfsu.edu/Kassiola>]

4. The Roots of The Ecological Crisis

Readings: Chapter One, Pojman and Pojman: 10-48.

Paul Pojman, "Introduction," 10-12.

***Genesis* 1-3; 12-14.**

Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," 14-22.

Lewis W. Moncrief, "The Cultural Basis of Our Environmental Crisis," 22-28.

Patrick Dobel, "The Judeo-Christian Stewardship Attitude to Nature," 28-33.

Karen J. Warren, "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," 33-48.

5. Animal Welfare and Rights

Readings: Chapter Two, Pojman and Pojman: 61-62; 73-103.

Paul Pojman, "Introduction," 61-62.

Peter Singer, "A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation," 73-82.

Tom Regan, "The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights," 82-90.

Mary Anne Warren, "A Critique of Regan's Animal Rights Theory," 90-97.

Dale Jamieson, "Against Zoos," 97-103.

6. Biocentrism, Ecocentrism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Justice

Readings: Chapter 3, Pojman and Pojman: 139-172; 234-241; 252-264.

Paul Pojman, "Introduction," 104-106.

Paul Taylor, "Biocentric Egalitarianism," 139-154.

Kenneth Goodpaster, “On Being Morally Considerable,” 154-163.

Aldo Leopold, “Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic,” 163-172.

Richard Watson, “A Critique of Anti-Anthropocentric Ethics,” 234-241.

James Sterba, “Environmental Justice: Reconciling Anthropocentric and Nonanthropocentric Ethics,” 252-264.

7. Applications: Collective Choice of Class from:

Population and Consumption;

Food Ethics;

Pollution: General Considerations

Pesticides;

Climate Change;

Economics and the Environment;

Environmental Justice

From Dysfunctional to Sustainable Society

Course Objectives and Means to Achieve Them

1. This course will examine environmental issues from an ethical perspective. It will try to convey the nature of ethical discourse and principles and how they are applied to environmental problems. It will seek to ask and answer the questions of: what is the nature of an environmental problem? What is the nature of a solution to such problems? And, finally, what is the nature and roots of the environmental crisis facing humanity today?

2. Like all of my classes in political philosophy, Philosophy 470 aims to improve class members’ ability to read and write critically or philosophically by discussing the meaning of challenging theoretical and philosophical readings and by detailed assessment of written rationally persuasive papers.

3. To achieve the objectives of this course and to understand the nature of environmental ethics, both scientific and normative, or value-based, inquiry will be required.

Additional Information

1. Components of Grade: the components of the final grade for this course will be: first and foremost, performances on the written essays [50%]; next will be, the final examination (which will be open-book)[25%], and, finally, class attendance is required and the quality of the contribution to class discussion [25%] could be an important component of the final grade. There will be no in-class examinations. Instead, class members will be asked to write rationally persuasive essays defending their chosen positions on issue of their own definition drawn from the readings and class discussion.

2. Instructor's Office: Office of the Dean of The College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Room HSS 359.

3. Office Hours: see times above and by appointment (or walk-in, if available). Also, telephone conversations are welcome at: 415.338.1846. To make an appointment, please call the BSS College Receptionist, or stop by the Dean's office in HSS 359. The Dean's Office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

4. E-mail Address: kassiola@sfsu.edu. I most enjoy e-mail messages from students, so please feel free to write about anything about the course and its many issues as well as general BSS College or University issues or Philosophy advising needs. Also, do not hesitate to give my e-mail address to friends who wish to confer with the Dean of BSS College via this medium since I welcome conversations with students.

5. Instructor's Webpage: for information about the Instructor, other courses he teaches, his publications, and teaching philosophy, please consult his Webpage: <http://bass.sfsu.edu/kassiola>.