

## ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

PHIL 368-051

SPRING 2004

Tu 6:20-9:00 PM

**Instructor:** Prof. John Clark   **Office:** Stallings 125   **Tel.:** (504) 865-2128

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**Office Hours:** TuWTh 5:00-6:15. I'm also in my office most mornings & afternoons. Please call for appointments.

**Text:** Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce, *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2002).

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*And the earth died screaming*

*While I lay dreaming . . .*

--Tom Waits

**General Description:** What are our moral responsibilities in relation to the natural world, the earth, other species, and future generations? Are we really headed for global ecological catastrophe, and if so, what can we do to avoid it? We will discuss major theories in environmental ethics, consider the many dimensions of global ecological crisis and examine carefully a number of important contemporary issues in environmental ethics. In short, we will consider, in the light of ethical theory, our role and responsibilities as members of the earth community at this critical juncture in earth history.

**Class Discussions:** Classes will consist of detailed discussion of issues in environmental ethics, based on our readings. It is important that all assigned readings be done before the classes for which they are assigned. It is recommended that you keep a journal or notebook in which you briefly record your reflections on each chapter read. These journals are for the purpose of class preparation and will not be submitted for evaluation.

**Class Participation:** Class participation is an important part of this course. Each class several students will be asked to comment on the assigned readings for that class. All students are expected to be able to comment intelligently on the assigned readings and under no circumstances should students use class time to read material that was assigned. On the other hand, students are encouraged to read journal entries or notes on the readings prepared before class.

**Examinations:** There will be three examinations on the assigned readings. Each will consist of essay questions in which you show your familiarity with the information in each chapter. The questions will be entirely factual, asking the student to summarize the major points in the chapters. Please bring blue books, pens and no other materials to your desk for the exam.

**Grading and Attendance:** Grades will be based on the three examinations and on class participation. Each will count for one-fourth of the grade. Excessive absence will result in a reduction of the grade according to

the degree to which it occurs. More than two absences in a semester for a weekly class are considered excessive. If a student misses three classes in a semester, the grade will be reduced one letter grade. It will be reduced an additional half letter grade for each additional absence. If any student comes in after roll is taken and wishes to be marked present, the student should notify me at the same class session. Students are expected to remain present for the entire class session, and should not habitually come late or leave early. Anyone who plans to leave at the break should notify me.

**City College Attendance Policy:** "City College faculty consider interaction with students crucial to the teaching and learning process. To help ensure a quality educational experience, the following policies govern class attendance: If a student misses 20% or more of class meeting time, a one full letter grade reduction will be applied to the final course grade. Twenty percent of classes amounts to three (3) classes in a semester in the once a week format, six (6) classes in a twice a week format, two (2) partial sessions in an intensive weekend format (Friday evening and/or Saturday morning and/or Saturday afternoon) in a semester. If a student misses the first weekend of an Intensive Weekend class, the student must withdraw from the class. The foregoing attendance policy statements are minimum standards. Instructors have the right to exceed those standards and establish grade adjustments as warranted."

**City College Statement on Intellectual Honesty:** "Intellectual honesty is simply acknowledging, through documentation, all those sources that the writer has used in preparing any written work. Plagiarism, the obverse of intellectual honesty, is the use of any form of material, whether written or verbal, without formal indebtedness through documentation. The paraphrasing of any work, either written by other students or found in print or in electronic form, without acknowledgement, is plagiarism. Not properly identifying the source of a quotation, even though the quotation is enclosed in quotation marks is also plagiarism. Not only the exact language of a sentence or phrase, but any material falsely presented as one's own--an idea, a concept, data, graphs, or a line of argument--constitutes plagiarism. Any material that neither originates with the student nor is common knowledge among educated persons must be formally acknowledged. It must be remembered that written work stands on its own, not on the intention of the writer. The burden of intellectual honesty rests on the student, not on the instructor. If students have any doubts about what is required, they should inquire before the work is submitted. Otherwise, they open themselves to charges of plagiarism. The penalties for plagiarism are severe: a student who is found to have plagiarized or to have assisted another student in plagiarizing may be given a failing grade for the course on the first violation; a second offense may result in exclusion or dismissal from the university." (Adapted from "Standards of Writing," City College, 1971. For the complete details on standards, penalties, and appeals procedures, see "Integrity of Scholarship and Grades," *Loyola Undergraduate Bulletin*)

**Note:** Please do not call me or City College to ask for grades. Grades for the course will appear online as soon as they are submitted. The papers for the last exam will be in the City College office after the deadline for grade submission. Please pick them up during the several weeks following that date.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 13      **1. Ethical Theory**

“Introduction” (1 -42)

Jan. 20      **2. The Moral Status of Animals**

Singer, “Animal Liberation” (135-142)

Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights” (142-149)

Jan. 27      **3. The Moral Status of Nature and of Future Generations**

Leopold, "The Land Ethic" (215-224)

Devall and Sessions, "Deep Ecology" (263-268)

Partridge, "Future Generations" (428-436)

Feb. 3      **4. Ecofeminism**

Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism" (282-296)

Shiva, "Development, Ecology, and Women" (296-302)

Feb. 10     **5. Biodiversity & the Moral Status of Species**

Wilson, "The Diversity of Life" (459-465)

Russow, "Why Do Species Matter?" (469-476)

Rolston, "Why Species Matter" (476-484)

Feb. 17     **Examination** (sections 2-5)

**6. Economics, Cost-Benefit Analysis & the Environment**

Freeman, "The Ethical Basis of the Economic View of the Environment" (318-

326)

Sagoff, "At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima or Why Political Questions Are Not

All Economic" (327-335)

Feb. 24     **Mardi Gras Holiday**

**Mar. 2      14. Global Climate Change**

Michaels, "The Climate-Change Debacle: The Perils of Politicizing Science" (607-615)

Flavin, "A Response" (615-620)

**The National Academy of Sciences, "Climate Change Science" (620-622)**

Mar. 9      **8. Population, Scarcity & the Environment**

Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics" (402-408)

Simon, "Can the Supply of Natural Resources Really Be Infinite? Yes!" (408-413)

Dasgupta, "Population, Poverty, and the Local Environment" (414-419)

Mar. 16     **9. Food, Agriculture, and the Environment**

Pollan, "A Plant's-Eye View of the World" (491-496)

Palumbi, "Brute-Force Genetic Engineering" (498-502)

Lewontin, "Genes in the Food!" (502-508)

Schollosser, "What's in the Meat" (516-518)

Mar. 23     **Examination** (sections 6-9)

**10. Corporations & the Environment**

Newton, "The Chainsaws of Greed: The Case of Pacific Lumber" (559-571)

Stone, "Why Shouldn't Corporations Be Socially Responsible?" (571-574)

Mar. 30     **11. Forests**

Myers, "Tropical Forests and Their Species: Going, Going?" (529-534)

Knize, "The Mismanagement of National Forests" (534-542)

Norton, "Forest Service Policy" (543-545)

Apr. 6     Easter **Holiday**

Apr. 13     **12. Environmental Justice**

Grossman, "Environmental Racism" (550-555)

Camacho, "Consumption as a Theme in the North-South Dialogue" (556-558)

Apr. 20     **13. Global Ecological Crisis**

Carson, "Silent Spring" (595-598)

Sylvan and Plumwood, "The Nuclear Train to the Future" (436-438)

Goodland, "The Case That The World Has Reached Limits" (598-607)

Apr. 27     **7. Property Issues & the Environment**

Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (364-372)

Monbiot, "The Tragedy of Enclosure" (373-374)

Locke, "The Creation of Property" (374-377)

Shrader-Fr chet te, "Property Rights in Natural Resources" (377-378)

May 4      **Examination** (topics 10-14)

### **MAJOR PERSPECTIVES IN ETHICAL THEORY**

Moral theories fall generally into two categories. **Teleological** theories (from the Greek *telos*, "end," and *teleios*, "perfected") focus on some good that can be achieved through our activity. **Deontological** theories (from the Greek *deont*, "that which is binding") focus on our duty to do what is right. Teleological theories include utilitarianism, which defines the right as that which maximizes happiness for all affected, and self-realization theory, which defines the right as the achievement of virtues or excellences or, more generally, the actualization of the greatest potentialities for oneself and for other persons (or beings). Deontological theories stress obedience to moral law or natural law, respect for persons, and obligation to adhere to agreements and contracts. Most theories contain both teleological and deontological elements.

Various teleological and deontological moral theories support such principles and considerations as the following: **Utility**. We should maximize the happiness or good of all persons (or beings) affected by our actions. **Justice** and **Fairness**. We should treat other persons (or beings) as we would wish to be treated under similar circumstances, and support social practices and institutions that would result in such treatment for all persons (or beings). **Contract**. We should abide by contracts and agreements freely entered into. **Respect for Persons**. We should treat other persons (or beings) as ends in themselves and never as mere means to our ends. **Care**. We should remain open to the experience of other persons (or beings) and treat them with care and consideration. **Self-Realization**. We should seek the actualization of our best potentialities (including human virtues or excellences), and contribute to a similar self-realization on the part of all other persons (or beings). **Recognition of Rights**. We should act only in those ways which do not infringe on the rights of other persons (or beings), including such rights as life, liberty, pursuit of happiness or the good, and disposition of personal property or possessions. **Equality**. We should give every person (or being) affected by our actions equal consideration when we deliberate concerning

a moral course of actions.

It is important to place these principles and considerations in a larger context. For example, the idea of self-realization is related to the ideal of the **Good Life**. The idea of carrying out duties, showing respect, and caring for others are related to the ideal of the **Moral Life**. Utilitarian goals are related to the ideal of the **Greatest Good for the Greatest Number**. As noted above, moral concern is increasingly being accorded not only to persons, but to other beings and to greater wholes of which we are a part. An emerging ideal is thus the **Universal Good** or the **Good of the Whole**.