

**ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**  
**UEP 286 Spring 2009**

Department of Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning

Thursday 1:30-4 PM  
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The course explores the values, rights, responsibilities and status of entities underlying alternative ethical approaches to environmental issues. Subjects include: anthropocentric vs. biocentric frameworks to natural resource protection; precautionary principle; ethics of cost-benefit analysis; equity and risk management; status of “rights” of non-human species and future generations; ethical considerations of sustainable development & energy use; genetically modified crops; transgenic animals; deep vs. narrow ecology; economic and non-economic value of wilderness & sacred lands.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Studies the role of ethical reasoning in framing environmental problems
- Explores the interactions between science, ethics/values, and policy.
- Engages students in an ethical analysis of policy issues.
- Acquaints students with different ethical theories (consequentialist vs non-consequentialist; naturalism, ethical relativism, intuitionism; ecofeminism) applied to environmental problems and moral voices of writers like Leopold, McPhee, Taylor, Shiva, Sagoff, Singer, Garvey, and Wilson.
- Discusses the use of ethical principles and theories guiding environmental decision making (non-anthropocentrism; precautionary principle; utilitarianism; deep ecology).

The course will be run in a quasi-discussion format with active participation from students. Students will be encouraged to clarify and sharpen their ethical perspectives on environment problems and to critically assess other perspectives

#### **Readings:**

**Books:** (available at the book store)

Louis J. Pojman. *Global Environmental Ethics*, Mayfield Pub. Co.

John McPhee. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux

Paul W. Taylor. *Respect for Nature*. Princeton Univ. Press/

Vandana Shiva. *Biopiracy*. South End Press

James Gustave Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*. Yale Univ. Press.

James Garvey. *The Ethics of Climate Change*. Continuum International Publishing

#### **Other Readings on Blackboard.**

**Jan. 15. Introduction: Ethics and Environmental Problems**

Sess 1

The role of ethics in popular discourse and policy: 6 dimensions of policy  
Distinguishing ethical from non-ethical (policy/scientific debates).  
Students' experience with moral arguments.  
Popular views about ethics. [www.storyofstuff.com](http://www.storyofstuff.com)

Seminal questions in environmental ethics.

**Jan. 22. Ethical Theory in Practice**

Sess 2

Different roles of ethics in society.  
First principles: naturalism (including natural law ethics); utilitarianism;  
deontological ethics; virtue ethics; intrinsic vs. instrumental value;  
The dilemmas of ethical reasoning: the rhetorical power of moral  
discourse.

**Readings**

Frederick A. Kaufman. Ch. 1. "Moral Philosophy and the Natural World." In:  
*Foundations of Environmental Philosophy*. McGraw Hill, 2003, pp. 1-21. **[B]**

Joseph R. Des Jardins. Ch. 1 "Science ethics and the environment." pp. 1-14; Ch. 2.  
Ethical theory and the environment, pp. 14-36.. In: *Environmental Ethics*. **[B]**

John McPhee. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Part 1, A Mountain, pp. 1-75

James Garvey, Ch. 2. "Right and Wrong," pp.33-55/

**Jan. 29. Sacred Lands vs. Natural Resources: Conservation, Preservation  
Development**

Sess 3

How we value natural resources; land ethic; dams and river diversions;  
managing forests. Competing values in conflict: preservation vs.  
development. Distinction between the built and natural environment; why  
humans are considered outside of nature.

**Readings**

John McPhee. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Part 2, An Island. Part 3 A River, pp 79-  
245.

Aldo Leopold. "The Land Ethic." *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 237-279. **[B]**

Debate Analysis: Does wilderness have intrinsic value? In: *Taking Sides*, T.D. Goldfarb,  
ed. Pp. 2-23. **[B]**

Louis P. Pojman. Ecocentric holism: the land ethic. In: *Global Environmental Ethics*, pp. 154-175.

World Commission on Dams. Executive Summary. *Dams and Development*, November 16, 2000, pp. 1-11. [B]

Robert S. Devine. "The Trouble with Dams" *Atlantic Monthly* 276:64-74 (1995). [B]

**Feb. 5. Biodiversity, Biopiracy and Globalization**

Sess. 4 Biodiversity convention; genetic colonialism; patents on plant; rights of indigenous farmers; biophilia hypothesis; responsibility for global resources; cross-cultural and transgenerational equity.

**Readings**

Vandana Shiva. *BioPiracy*. South End Pres.

Vandana Shiva. Ch. 5. The biodiversity convention: an evaluation from the Third World Perspective. In: *Monocultures of the Mind*, pp. 151-159.

E.O Wilson. Conservation ethic. *Biophilia*, pp. 119-140. [B]

Beth Baker. "Happy by Nature. Fondness for Plants and Animals may be Hard-wired, Health" *Washington Post* June 4, 2002. [B]

Louis Pojman. Ch. 16. Preservation of wilderness and species. *Global Environmental Ethics*, pp. 300-326.

Jems Garvey. Ch. 3. "Responsibility," pp. 57-87.

**Feb. 12 Ecological Ethics: Transgenic Food Crops**

Sess 5 Historical background of genetically altered crops; biopollution; GMOs vs chemical pesticides; labeling; GMOs and world hunger.

**Readings**

Sheldon Krimsky. Ethical issues involving the production, planting, and distribution of genetically modified crops. In: *Engineering the Farm*, B. Bailey and M. Lappé, eds. Pp. 11-26. Island Press, 2002. [B]

Sheldon Krimsky and Roger Wrubel. The cultural and symbolic dimensions of agricultural biotechnology. In: *Agricultural Biotechnology and the Environment*. University of Illinois Press, pp. 212-231. [B]

Peter Rosset. Taking seriously the claim that genetic engineering could end hunger: a critical analysis. In: *Engineering the Farm*, pp. 81-93. [B]

Paul B. Thompson. Why food biotechnology needs an opt out. In: *Engineering the Farm*,