

**Bergen Community College**  
Division of Humanities  
Department of Philosophy & Religion  
**Course Syllabus**  
**PHR-114 Environmental Ethics**

**Basic Information about Course and Instructor**

Semester and year: Course and Section Number: Meeting Times and Locations: Instructor: Office Location: Phone: Departmental Secretary: [optional] Office Hours: Email Address:
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**Course Description**

Environmental Ethics explores our moral obligations with respect to the natural world. While focused on ethical discourse and principles, and how they are applied to environmental problems, the course may also discuss epistemological, metaphysical and aesthetic issues as they pertain to environmental ethics. Topics include: the moral standing of both nonhuman species and nonliving entities, consumption, climate change, food ethics, the Anthropocene, environmental justice, sustainability, land ethic, deep ecology, and ecofeminism.

3 credits

(Proposed) General Education Course – Humanities Elective

**Student Learning Outcomes:** As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will:

1. Identify the basic problems of environmental ethics;
2. Interpret and summarize the views of philosophers whose writings are studied in the course;
3. Research, evaluate, and organize information on environmental ethics;
4. Use logical and critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate the ways in which philosophers approach ethical issues pertaining to the natural world, the climate and the environment;
5. State and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on the ethical or philosophical issues addressed in the course;
6. Participate actively and constructively in discussion of these issues by listening to others on controversial ethical issues related to the environment.

In pursuit of the foregoing goals, the course is based on the reading and discussion of philosophical writings (i.e., primary sources, not merely secondary) in the fields of metaphysics, value theory (moral, aesthetic and political), and epistemology as they pertain to environmental ethics and to our relationship to the natural world; the basic principles and methods of logical reasoning are introduced; the techniques of philosophical research and writing are reviewed; students are given the opportunity and are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

### Learning Assessment

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Philosophy Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through various means of assessment, such as the "Suggested Means of Assessment" listed below.

Student Learning Outcomes	Suggested means of Assessment
1. Identify the basic problems environmental ethics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Essay examinations</li> <li>● Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>● Writing Assignments*</li> <li>● Graded class presentations**</li> </ul>
2. Interpret and summarize the views of philosophers whose writings are studied in the course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Essay examinations</li> <li>● Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>● Writing Assignments</li> <li>● Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
3. Evaluate, and organize information on environmental ethics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Writing Assignments</li> <li>● Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
4. Analyze and evaluate the ways in which philosophers approach ethical issues pertaining to the natural world, the climate and the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Writing Assignments</li> <li>● Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
5. Construct clear, logical, and concise writing on the ethical or philosophical issues addressed in the course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Writing Assignments</li> <li>● Graded class presentations</li> </ul>

\*Writing assignments for the purpose of assessing students will include research, reflection or argumentative projects, possibly including term papers, in which a student identifies an information need, accesses and evaluates appropriate resources, and uses the information effectively and ethically for a specific purpose.

\*\*In online asynchronous courses, graded class presentations and in-class discussions shall be substituted by online discussion forums, or similar instructional modality. Online synchronous courses shall maintain appropriate contact hours in online lectures.

### Course Content

The course is intended to introduce students to environmental ethics and related non-ethical issues in environmental philosophy. Therefore, the course includes the following (mandatory) components:

1. Treatment of some influential normative ethical theories, e.g., consequentialism, deontology, natural law or feminist theories, etc.
2. Treatment of issues in animal ethics, e.g., the moral status of non-human animals, etc.
3. Treatment of issues in climate ethics, e.g., global warming/climate change. resource and burden sharing, intergenerational justice or water ethics.

Furthermore, major works in normative ethics, political philosophy or environmental aesthetics should be kept to a minimum in PHR-1XX Environmental Ethics, since the course should not overlap substantially

with PHR-110 Introduction to Ethics, PHR-102 Contemporary Moral Issues, PHR 111 Social and Political Philosophy nor PHR 107 The Philosophy of Art. Issues in general normative ethics and metaethics are considered in depth in PHR-110; and major contemporary controversies in applied ethics are covered in PHR-102. The primary emphasis in PHR-1XX should be issues in environmental ethics. Discussion of important normative ethical theories, social/political philosophy or aesthetics (*tout court*) should comprise no more than approximately 25% of the course.

### **Outline of Possible Course Topics**

- I. What is ethics/moral philosophy
  - A. Definitions of ethics/moral philosophy
  - B. Subfields of ethics
  - C. Basic moral vocabulary and concepts
  - D. Normative Ethics: moral theories
    - 1. What is a moral theory?
    - 2. Categories of moral theories
- II. Value and nature
  - A. Brief history of environmental ethics
  - B. What Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson did
  - C. Basic environmental science vocabulary and concepts
  - D. Basic environmental ethics vocabulary and concepts
    - 1. Example: Intrinsic and/or inherent value of nature, wilderness?
    - 2. Example: Instrumental and/or contributory values of nature, wilderness?
- III. Moral theories and the environment
  - A. Traditional moral theories
    - 1. Deontological theory
    - 2. Consequentialist/utilitarian theory
    - 3. Agent-based/virtue theory
    - 4. Natural law theory
    - 5. Contractarian theory
    - 6. Feminist theory (including ethics of care)
  - B. Other approaches
    - 1. Anthropocentrism
    - 2. Ecocentrism
    - 3. Eco-fascism?
    - 4. Ethics of ecofeminism
    - 5. Ethics of deep ecology theory
  - C. Moral evaluation of strategies, tactics
    - 1. Eco-terrorism, limits of resistance, activism, protest, sabotage, non-compliance, insubordination, killcap, culture jamming, de-arresting
    - 2. Radical environmentalism (as ethical/political movements)
    - 3. Andreas Malm's theory
    - 4. Monkeywrenching
    - 5. Green Party, Greenpeace, Extinction Rebellion approaches
    - 6. Scientist Rebellion
    - 7. Non-violent approaches
    - 8. Ethics of propaganda, denialism, anti-science, manufactured ignorance/doubt
    - 9. Ethics of restoration, preservation, conservation, rewilding, eco-recovery
    - 10. Ethics of environmental optimism and pessimism

- 11. Ethics of Romanticism, Arcadianism, slow movements, localism
- IV. Social and Political Philosophy and the environment
  - A. Political theory and the environment
  - B. Political economy and the environment
  - C. Policy-making and decision-making
    - 1. Problems of scale
    - 2. Philosophy of risk
    - 3. Precautionary principles, inductive risk
    - 4. Cost-Benefit analysis approaches (is this utilitarianism?)
    - 5. Evidence-based?
  - D. Corporate environmental responsibility
  - E. Environmental justice (Ecojustice)
    - 1. Global and local: globalization, localism, nationalism, borders
    - 2. Environmental racism
    - 3. Slow violence, colonialism, postcolonialism
    - 4. The “resource curse”
      - a. Example: Nigeria
      - b. Example: Ecuador
    - 5. Enclosure and the Commons, privacy, territoriality
    - 6. Global warming/climate change
    - 7. Resource sharing and burden sharing
    - 8. Historical responsibility and climate colonialism
    - 9. Capitalism and the environment
      - a. Capitalist “logic” and profit
      - b. Externalities, pollution, damage
      - c. Private property, earth as resource (incl. dominion theory)
      - d. Consumption, materialism, consumerism
      - e. Degrowth, post-growth, accelerationism
      - f. “Green” capitalism
      - g. Extractive economies
      - h. Developmental economics
  - F. Intergenerational justice, future generations
  - G. Human and non-human animal health
  - G. Ethics of built environments and hybrids
    - 1. Ethics of planning, development
    - 2. Building, healthy buildings
    - 3. Urban, suburban, and rural ethics
- V. (Non-human) animal ethics
  - A. Moral status/standing of non-human animals
  - B. Moral theories and animals
    - 1. Deontological theory (animals rights)
    - 2. Consequentialist/utilitarian theory
    - 3. Agent-based/virtue theory
    - 4. Natural law theory
    - 5. Contractarian theory
    - 6. Feminist theory (including ethics of care)
  - C. Speciesism
  - D. Abolitionism
  - E. Animal husbandry, pastoralism, free-range
  - F. Vegetarianism, veganism, and the spectrum

- G. Legal theory and non-human animals
- H. Constructive co-habitation (human and non-human animals)
- I. Blood sports and hobbies, zoos, bestiality
- VI. Food ethics and the environment
- VII. Agricultural ethics (Agroecology)
- VIII. Water ethics and other resource ethics
- IX. Environmental aesthetics and ethics
  - A. Relationship between aesthetics and ethics
  - B. Ethics of landscape architecture
    - Example: the case of lawns
  - C. Ethics of preferences
  - D. Aesthetic appreciation of nature (especially wilderness) and its value
- X. Religion and environmental ethics
  - A. Religious theories of nature
  - B. Religious ethical theories and nature and non-human animals
    - 1. Judaism
    - 2. Christianity
    - 3. Islam
    - 4. Orthodox Hindu schools
    - 5. Buddhism
    - 6. Jainism
    - 7. Other theories/views: new ageism, wiccans, druids, animistic views, totemistic views, pantheism, panentheism

**Special Features of the Course** (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, web enhancement via a parallel course website, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy learning in the course; etc.

**Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials**

Some preferred texts:

- Benson, John. *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction with Readings*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Boylan, Michael. *Environmental Ethics*. Third Edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2022.
- Des Jardins, Joseph R. *Environmental Ethics*. Fifth Edition. Boston: Cengage, 2013.
- Gardiner, Stephen M., and Arthur Obst. *Dialogues on Climate Justice*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Lee, Wendy Lynne, and Steven D. Hales. *This is Environmental Ethics: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2022.
- Pojman, Louis P., and James Fieser. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Seventh Edition. Boston: Cengage, 2017.
- Sandler, Ronald. *Environmental Ethics: Theory in Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Schmidt, David, and Dan C. Shaha. *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*. Third Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

**Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)**

Because PHR-1XX is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals,

research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

### Grading Policy

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade. A student's research and writing work will count at least fifty percent (50%) of the final grade.

### BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend on time every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

### Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified in the course syllabus.

### Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements [optional but recommended]

Examples:

- Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty.
- ADA statement.
- Sexual Harassment statement.
- Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology.
- Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.

### Student Support Services

Service	Contact Information
<b>IT Help Desk</b> – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses or Self-Service.	201-879-7109, <a href="mailto:helpdesk@bergen.edu">helpdesk@bergen.edu</a> .
<b>The Center for Health, Wellness and Personal Counseling</b> —for assistance with mental health.	contact information here: <a href="https://bergen.edu/health-wellness-and-personal-counseling/">https://bergen.edu/health-wellness-and-personal-counseling/</a> .
<b>The Cerullo Learning Assistance Center (CLAC)</b> —FREE academic support including one-on-one appointments, walk-in services, study groups, in-class <u>tutoring</u> , supplemental instruction, and online tutoring.	Information at <a href="https://bergen.edu/tutoring/">https://bergen.edu/tutoring/</a> .
<b>The Bergen Cares Center Pantry</b> —Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat, stable housing, or meeting other basic needs, and believes this may affect performance in this	The Bergen Cares Center Pantry is located in room C-111A on the Paramus Campus at Bergen Community College. For more information contact the BCC Coordinator at <a href="mailto:rsloma@bergen.edu">rsloma@bergen.edu</a> or call 201-447-7191.

<p>course, is urged to contact your professor or the Bergen Cares Center for support.</p>	
<p><b>The Office of Specialized Services</b>—promotes an inclusive environment for students with disabilities through the provision of accommodations and auxiliary support services. Students are strongly encouraged to contact OSS before the semester begins or during the first week or class to request accommodations. Faculty and staff are available to meet with students via phone, in-person, and WebEx (online meeting app).</p>	<p>Physical Location: Pitkin Education Center: L-115                  Phone: 201-612-5269                  Email: email: <a href="mailto:ossinfo@bergen.edu">ossinfo@bergen.edu</a>                  Website: <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/oss">http://www.bergen.edu/oss</a></p>
<p><b>BCC Library Guide to the Study of Philosophy and Religion</b></p>	<p><a href="https://bergen.libguides.com/sb.php?subject_id=27815">https://bergen.libguides.com/sb.php?subject_id=27815</a>.</p>
<p><b>Information on majoring in Philosophy or Religion at BCC</b>—get guidance about courses, the value of the degree, transfer opportunities and more. Anyone interested in our degrees should reach out to the chair of the department or department secretary Shailly Mahajan, <a href="mailto:smahajan@bergen.edu">smahajan@bergen.edu</a>.</p>	<p>Visit the department website and get contact information for the chair of the department at <a href="https://bergen.edu/academics/academic-divisions-departments/philosophy-and-religion-department/">https://bergen.edu/academics/academic-divisions-departments/philosophy-and-religion-department/</a>.</p> <p>Also, see the American Philosophical Association’s Resources for Undergraduates here: <a href="https://www.apaonline.org/page/undergrad_resources">https://www.apaonline.org/page/undergrad_resources</a>.</p>

**The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club**

The club is a student-driven club devoted to hosting events and having meetings related to topics of philosophical and religious significance. Meetings are determined by the scheduling needs of its current e-board, but typical meetings are 12:30 – 1:20 1x/weekly. All BCC students are welcome and encouraged to attend meetings. For further club information contact club advisor professor Kevin Olbrys (201-201-1179, [kolbrys@bergen.edu](mailto:kolbrys@bergen.edu)).

See next page for sample course outline and calendar.

**Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar**

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week	Date	Topics and Assignments	Learning Objectives
1-2		<p>Introduction: What is Ethics? What is the “environment?”</p> <p>Basic moral vocabulary, moral theories</p> <p>Readings:                      Excerpts from Aldo Leopold, <i>The Land Ethic</i>                      Excerpts from Rachel Carson, <i>Silent Spring</i>                      Holmes Rolston III, "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value"                      J. Baird Callicott, "Holistic Environmental Ethics and the Problem of Ecofascism"                      Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop, "Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness"                      Paul Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature"</p>	1-6
3-4		<p>Moral Theories, Value, and the Environment</p> <p>Readings:                      Elliott Sober, "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism"                      Bryan G. Norton, "Toward Unity among Environmentalists"                      Katie McShane, "Anthropocentrism vs. Nonanthropocentrism: Why Should We Care?"</p> <p>Thomas E. Hill, Jr., "Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments"                      Philip Cafaro, "Thoreau, Leopold, and Carson: Toward an Environmental Virtue Ethics"                      Thomas E. Hill, Jr., "Finding Value in Nature"</p> <p>Lynn Scarlett, "Choices, Consequences, and Cooperative"                      J.H. Dales, "Simple Problems, Simple Solutions"                      Steven Kelman, "Cost-Benefit Analysis: An Ethical Critique"                      Kristin Shrader-Frechette, "Environmental Justice"                      David Schmitz, "A Place for Cost-Benefit Analysis"                      Conservation: A New Environmentalism?"</p> <p>Essay # 1 Due</p>	1-6
5-6		<p>Global Warming/Climate Change</p> <p>Readings:</p>	1-6



	<p>Dale Jamieson, "Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming"  Philip Kitcher, "The Climate Challenge"  Darrel Moellendorf, "Justice in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Policies"  John Broome, "The Most Important Thing about Climate Change"  Bjorn Lomborg, "Cool It"  Dan C. Shahr, "Treading Lightly on the Climate in a Problem-Ridden World"</p> <p>Midterm Examination Study Guide</p>	
7-8	<p>Other Moral Theories</p> <p>Readings:  Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary"  Bill Devall and George Sessions, "Deep Ecology"  Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology"</p> <p>Midterm Examination</p>	1-6
9-10	<p>Feminist Approaches, Justice, Colonialism, Etc.</p> <p>Readings:  Daniel Silvermint, "Three Models of Oppression"  V. Rukmini Rao, "Women Farmers of India's Deccan Plateau: Ecofeminists Challenge World Elites"  Kristen Hessler and Elizabeth Willott, "Feminism and Ecofeminism"  Karen J. Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism"  Val Plumwood, "Being Prey"</p> <p>Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique"  David Schmidtz, "When Preservationism Doesn't Preserve"  Ian John Whyte, "The Elephant Management Dilemma"  Ramachandra Guha, "Deep Ecology Revisited"  David Schmidtz, "Natural Enemies: An Anatomy of Environmental Conflict"  Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger, "The Forest for the Trees"  Henry Shue, "Global Environment and International Inequality"  Gary Varner, "Biocentric Individualism"</p>	1-6
11 – 12	<p>(Non-human) Animal Ethics, Food Ethics, Agricultural Ethics</p>	1-6

	<p>Readings:                  Thomas Aquinas, "Whether It Is Unlawful to Kill Any Living Thing"                  Immanuel Kant, "Duties towards Animals"                  Jeremy Bentham, "Can They Suffer?"                  Peter Singer, "All Animals are Equal"                  Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights"                  Bonnie Steinbock, "Speciesism and the Idea of Equality"                  Mark Sagoff, "Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce"                  David Schmidtz, "Are All Species Equal?"                  Gary L. Francione and Anna E. Charlton, "Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach"                  Mark Bryant Budolfson, "Is It Wrong to Eat Meat from Factory Farms? If So, Why?"                  Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People"                  Michael Pollan, "The (Agri)Cultural Contradictions of Obesity"                  Paul Schwenneesen, "On the Ethics of Ranching"</p> <p>Essay # 2 Due</p>	
13 – 14	<p>Activism, Tactics, and Strategies</p> <p>Readings:                  J. Baird Callicott, "Environmental Philosophy Is Environmental Activism": The Most Radical and Effective Kind                  Andrew Light, "Taking Environmental Ethics Public"                  Ty Raterman, "Bearing the Weight of the World: On the Extent of an Individual's Environmental Responsibility"                  J. Baird Callicott, "Holistic Environmental Ethics and the Problem of Ecofascism"                  Ned Hettinger &amp; Bill Throop, "Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness"                  Holmes Rolston III, "Feeding People versus Saving Nature?"</p> <p>Final Examination Study Guide</p>	1-6
15	<p>Summary and What next?</p> <p>Student discussion and journal review on what students learned and how the course will affect behaviors and views.</p> <p>Final Examination Review                  Final Examination on last class session</p>	1-6

\*All page references to "Course Text" are to David Schmidtz and Dan C. Shaha, eds., *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).