



**PHIL 3530-090 Environmental Ethics**  
Summer Semester 2020  
Online

**Instructors:** Alex Barrientos & Kaitlin Pettit

**Email:** Alex.Barrientos@utah.edu & Kaitlin.Pettit@utah.edu

**Office Hours and Location:** By appointment; Canvas ConexED video chat

**Preferred Method of Contact:** Email

**Prerequisites:** None; 3 Credit Hours

**Required Materials**

All required readings will be posted on Canvas.

**Course Description**

This course examines the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary environmentalism and interrogates human's ethical obligations – if any – to the natural environment, nonhuman animals, and other humans, including within the current context of global environmental change. In this class, we will explore the motivations for environmentalism, the sources of environmental values, and ways in which people disagree about the status, role, and significance of those values. In doing so, we will cover various topics including environmental value, wildlife conservation, climate change, and environmental justice.

This material is designed to prepare students to engage in sophisticated discussions about the ethical dimensions of contemporary environmental debates. While this is an introductory course and no background in science or philosophy is required, students may find certain topics challenging. This is by design. The class is meant to develop student's argumentative skills, including the ability to read and respond to difficult material and the ability to analyze and critique various forms of argumentation.

**Course Outcomes**

The aim of this course is to get you thinking and communicating about a variety of important philosophical and environmental issues in a careful, critical, and creative manner. Successful completion of the course requires that you be able to:

1. Articulate the foundations of the ethical theories covered and their relationship with the environment.
2. Discuss contemporary environmental issues in sophisticated ways.
3. Apply the standard interpretations of ethical theories to contemporary and classic environmental cases.
4. Recognize and critically analyze the ethical and epistemic arguments as applied to a variety of environmental issues.
5. Argue logically and persuasively with your interlocutors, while adhering to the Course Etiquette.
6. Discuss intricate, sometimes contentious social issues in a professional, productive manner.

## **Learner Responsibilities**

As a student in this class, we expect you to:

- Take responsibility for your own learning.
- Be prepared for class and be an enthusiastic participant in class activities.
- Treat others with tolerance and respect.
- Act responsibly and reliably in group work.
- Set high standards for your work.

## **Instructor Responsibilities**

As your instructors, we commit to communicating openly and frequently with you about this class. We will maintain a professional, safe learning environment and will adhere to the policies of the College of Humanities and the University of Utah. You can expect a reply to email inquiries within 24 hours, within the constraints of typical working hours (8a-5p MST, M-F). We will post grades in accordance with the Student Schedule document on Canvas. If we make any changes to the course schedule or readings, we will inform you via Canvas Announcement.

## **Teaching and Learning Methods**

We hope to address various learning styles through the setup of this class. If you feel like your learning style could be better met, please meet with us to discuss ideas of how we can better engage you in this course.

We aim to make our classroom a safe, welcoming environment for you, and require that you do the same for your peers. While disagreement and debate is encouraged, hostility and aggression will not be tolerated. Please read and follow the University's Code of Conduct: <https://www.hr.utah.edu/ethicalstandards/>. We will also follow the norms outlined in the Course Etiquette document on Canvas.

## **Administrative and University Policies**

1. ***The Americans with Disabilities Act.*** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.
2. ***Addressing Sexual Misconduct.*** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the

Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

3. ***Student Names and Personal Pronouns.*** Class rosters are provided to the instructors with students' legal names as well as their "Preferred first name" if previously entered by the student in the Student Profile section of their CIS account. While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, we will do our best to honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you. Please advise us of any name or pronoun changes so that we can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun are respected. Please also recognize that this information might not be readily accessible to your fellow students (and us) if your name on Canvas appears different from your preferred referent when you post in Canvas discussions, and extend to your interlocutor the Principle of Charity. If you need any assistance or support, please reach out to the U's LGBT Resource Center.
4. ***Dropping/Withdrawing.*** The last day to drop classes is May 23<sup>rd</sup>; the last day to withdraw from this class is June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please check the academic calendar for more information pertaining to dropping and withdrawing from a course. Withdrawing from a course and other matters of registration are the student's responsibility.
5. ***Plagiarism.*** It is your responsibility to be familiar with university policy on academic honesty: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>. We have a zero tolerance policy for cheating, and if you are caught you will receive a zero on the offending assignment or test. We may also escalate a report of the violation as appropriate. If you are caught cheating twice, you will receive a zero in the course. If you have any concerns about what behavior counts as cheating, plagiarism, etc., please ask.
6. ***Wellness Statement.*** Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at [www.wellness.utah.edu](http://www.wellness.utah.edu) or 801-581-7776.

Additionally, we understand that student life can be challenging and stressful, and for some of you that will include participating in this course. We encourage you to chat with us if you begin to feel overwhelmed by this course.

## Course Policies

Attendance & Punctuality: According to University policy, “The University expects regular attendance at all class meetings” (PPM, Policy 6-100III-O). Although not required to attend this class in person, discussion largely depends on everyone being present. Your grade will reflect any failure to participate in online group discussions. *If you are going to miss a class assignment, please notify us as soon as possible.* Failure to do so may mean that we cannot help you find an alternate way of participating.

If you have academic accommodations (whether from sports, a physician, the Center for Disability Services office, or other), please notify us as soon as possible and provide us with the proper documentation. Without this information, we cannot know how to help you succeed in this course. Please note that in the interest of fairness, accommodations will only be provided in accordance with the university’s accommodations policy and with the appropriate documentation.

Because this is an applied ethics course, this class centers on group discussions and the idea that no individual should (or will) make an ethical decision of the sort we cover in a vacuum. As such, there are many group assignments. In these assignments, every student depends on other students’ participation to give them feedback and be part of the group process that reaches those ethical decisions. With that in mind, *we will not be able to excuse, extend, or make up Canvas discussions, regardless of accommodations, in accordance with the University’s accommodations policy for reasonable accommodations.* Discussions for this course are available up to a week before their first deadline; students are encouraged to take advantage of this extra time if they are worried about needing accommodations.

Participation: Students are expected to participate in online discussions. Part of your grade will reflect your participation.

Please be respectful of others during online discussions. We will be discussing controversial foundational philosophical issues. You may feel strongly about these, and disagree with your fellow students (or us!). Disagreement is fine, *ad hominem* attacks are not. It is of the highest importance that students are respectful of each other’s opinions and keep an open mind. Carefully considering alternative points of view need not threaten one’s own. In fact, it will enrich your own position to better understand the reasons that people hold the opposite. To maintain a respectful classroom environment, any comments on the discussion boards that are considered by the instructors to be inappropriate will be taken down immediately, and may result in a zero for the assignment. Being professional when discussing incendiary issues is essential to doing well in this class. Refer to the Course Etiquette handout for more concrete expectations.

Please note that online Philosophy courses are not self-paced, largely due to the group nature of the assignments. While students can complete individual assignments at any time during the window they are open, they cannot complete all work at any one point during the semester as is sometimes possible in other online courses. Instructors will post a calendar with due dates to help clarify the course expectations.

*Electronic Devices in Class:* You are allowed to use any devices necessary to complete your own work in this course. You are also allowed to use these devices on any quizzes or other assignments. However, please note that there are time restrictions, and plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. You are not allowed to collaborate with other students on quizzes or exams.

Electronic malfunctions are not an excuse for non-participation in this course; please plan accordingly. If you experience difficulties with your computer or Canvas, please contact the University IT department. Any letters to us from the University IT department documenting the malfunction will be accepted as an academic accommodation.

*Canvas:* Students are expected to check Canvas twice weekly (minimally). Assignments and notifications will be posted on Canvas. It is your responsibility to maintain your computer and related equipment in order to participate in this course. Equipment failures will not be an acceptable excuse for late or absent assignments.

*Email Correspondence:* We are very happy to correspond with you via email, and this is the best way to contact us. We will typically be able to respond within 24 hours within normal business hours (8a-5p M-F). We may request to set up a video meeting with you to go over any content queries. We find that email can lead to misunderstandings, whereas in-person conversations help further our philosophical understanding, which is our goal for this class in the first place.

When contacting us via email, we ask that you follow some minimal guidelines, which are designed to help you practice interacting in a professional setting:

1. Please indicate which class you are writing to me about. We often teach more than one course and it does none of us any good if our reply is simply, "Which class are you writing me about?"
2. Please use a proper greeting. This may be formal (e.g., "Dear Prof. Pettit") or informal ("Hi Alex"). You may address us in whatever way you feel comfortable (so long as it is respectful!), though our preference is that you simply call us "Kaitlin" and "Alex".
3. Please sign your email. All too often we get unsigned emails from students with inscrutable email addresses. Please identify yourself to us. This is also a sign of respect to your interlocutor, as well as letting them know how you would like to be addressed in return.
4. Please adhere to the Course Etiquette norms. Keep in mind that misunderstandings can happen more easily over email, and tone can be hard to read. A sentence showing deference or respect can help alleviate this, instead of just launching into your request. If we feel that your email isn't coming across the way you intend it to, we may respond with that sentiment, and give you a chance to restate your email to better communicate your intentions.

These guidelines (all but #4) may be relaxed in obvious cases (e.g., in a string of email replies). We will use similar guidelines in writing you. As stated above, we are happy to answer student emails, and tend to respond promptly (within a day). If we receive emails

that fail to meet the guidelines above, we reserve the right to not respond. We will extend to all emails the Principle of Charity; if we feel that an email was not intended to come across as harsh as it did, we will return the email to you and allow you the opportunity to edit and resend it.

### **Assignments**

Canvas Discussions: 40% of final grade

Students will be required to participate in online discussions each week to prep their understanding of the material. Students will be asked to further these ideas in in-class discussion. See link on Canvas for Canvas Discussion Description and Expectations.

-Designed to meet Course Outcomes 1-6.

Reading Quizzes: 20% of final grade

Each week students will complete a series of multiple choice/short answer questions as a compliment to the reading (20 questions). Quizzes will be accessible for the entire week, but once begun will need to be completed in 2 hours. Students may use notes, the reading itself, and our posted lectures during the quiz, but should not work together.

The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

-Designed to meet Course Outcomes 1, 3, 4.

Community Engagement Projects: 40% of final grade

Students will have four social engagement projects over the course of the semester. These projects will link the ethical topics we have been discussing in class to pop culture references the students may be familiar with. These assignments are designed to help students recognize how the ethical topics covered relate to the day-to-day world we live in, as well as learn how to effectively communicate those ideas to a broad audience.

-Designed to meet Course Outcomes 1-6.

### **Grading Policy**

We use the standard University of Utah grading scale, though we reserve the right to change this scale if it will be in everyone's favor:

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	0-59

## Course Schedule

Links to all readings can be found on Canvas.

### ***Week 1: Introduction***

Required Readings:

- Lecture Notes Week 1
- Syllabus
- Course Etiquette document
- Writing Tips document
- Canvas Discussion Description and Expectations document
- [“How to Argue – Philosophical Reasoning”](#) – Crash Course Philosophy
  - Watch from minute 3:42
- [“How to Argue – Induction & Abduction”](#) – Crash Course Philosophy
- [“What are Environmental Ethics and What’s Your Role in Saving Nature?”](#)

Supplementary Readings:

- [“Environmental Ethics”](#) – Andrew Brennan and Yeuk-Sze Lo
- [“Environmental Ethics”](#) – Alasdair Cochrane

Due:

- 5/14: Week 1 Quiz
- 5/17: Discussion 2 Question

## **Block 1: Is There a Problem?**

### ***Week 2: Environmental Interaction***

Required Readings:

- Lecture Notes Week 2
- [“Environmental Value Systems”](#) – Science Sauce
- “The Land Ethic” – Aldo Leopold
- “Nature” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Supplementary Readings:

- “Holistic versus individualistic non-anthropocentrism” – Gregory M Mikkelson
- “What if the Crown of Creation is a Dunce’s Cap?” – Chip Ward
- “Walking” – Henry David Thoreau
- [“Nietzsche and Thus Spoke Zarathustra: The Last Man and The Superman”](#) – Academy of Ideas

Due:

- 5/18: Week 2 Quiz
- 5/24: Discussion 3 Question

### ***Week 3: Areas of Concern***

#### Required Readings:

- Lecture Notes Week 3
- [“5 Human Impacts on the Environment”](#) – Crash Course Ecology
- [“Pollution”](#) – Crash Course Ecology
- [“The Environmental Impacts of Overpopulation”](#) – Rick LeBlanc
- [“The Hidden Costs of Hamburgers”](#) – Reveal

#### Supplementary Readings

- [“How long will human impacts last?”](#) – David Biello
- [“Food waste is the world’s dumbest problem”](#) – Vox
- [“Protecting Water Quality for People and the Environment”](#) – UNESCO

#### Due:

- 5/26: Week 3 Quiz
- 5/31: Discussion 4 Question

### ***Week 4: Environmental Rights***

#### Required Readings:

- Lecture Notes Week 4
- [“Fundamentals: Intrinsic vs. Instrumental Value”](#) – Wireless Philosophy
- [“What Are Rights?”](#) – Jason Brennan
- [“Environmental ethics and Sylvan’s “Last Man” argument”](#) – Kane B

#### Supplementary Readings:

- [“All Animals are Equal”](#) – Peter Singer
- [“What might it mean to say nature has ‘intrinsic value’? Do you think it has?”](#) – Colette Sciberras
- [“A Vital-Needs Environmental Ethics: Reconciling Animal Rights and Human Needs”](#) – Angus Taylor
- [“Value in Nature and the Nature of Value”](#) – Holmes Rolston III

#### Due:

- 6/01: Week 4 Quiz
- 6/03: Discussion 4 Response
- 6/07: Discussion 5 Question



### ***Week 5: Responsibility***

#### Required Readings:

- Lecture Notes Week 5
- [“What is the tragedy of the commons?”](#) – Nicholas Amendolare
- [“The Nonidentity Problem #1”](#) – Wireless Philosophy
- [“The Nonidentity Problem #2”](#) – Wireless Philosophy
- [“What Do We Owe the Future?”](#) – Patricia I Vieira and Michael Marder

#### Supplementary Readings:

- “Environmental Rights, Intergenerational Justice, and Reciprocity with the Future” – Richard P. Hiskes

#### Due:

- 6/08: Week 5 Quiz
- 6/10: Discussion 5 Response
- 6/14: Discussion 6/7 Question
- 6/14: Block 1 CEP

## **Block 2: Potential Solutions**

### ***Week 6: Individual Actions***

#### Required Readings:

- Lecture Notes Week 6
- [“The diet that helps fight climate change”](#) – Vox
- [“Is Eating Locally More Sustainable?”](#) – Tufts ENVS
- [“Hunting Is Conservation”](#) – Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- [“Does Recycling Actually Make a Difference?”](#) – Robin Hilmantel
- [“The Big Lie of Conscious Consumerism, and What It Means for You”](#) – Alden Wicker

#### Supplementary Readings:

- [“Why Go Zero Waste?”](#) – Kiri Rowan
- [“Hunters Conserve Wildlife”](#) - Intelligence Squared US

#### Due:

- 6/15: Week 6 Quiz
- 6/17: Discussion 6/7 Response

### ***Week 7: Collective Actions***

Required Readings:

- Lecture Notes Week 7
- [“Why we should rethink Zero Waste”](#) – Our Changing Climate
- “Our National Parks” – John Muir

Supplementary Readings:

- [“Conservation and Restoration Ecology”](#) – Crash Course Ecology
- [“The Environmental Movement Needs to Reckon with Its Racist History”](#) – Julian Brave NoiseCat

Due:

- 6/22: Week 7 Quiz
- 6/23: Discussion 6/7 Critique
- 6/28: Discussion 8/9 Question

### ***Week 8: Governmental Actions***

Required Reading:

- [“We were all right to hate the plastic straw ban. And we need more legislation like it.”](#) – Meredith Haggerty
- [“What is the Paris Agreement?”](#) – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- [“The Green New Deal, explained”](#) - Vox

Supplementary Reading:

- [“Climate Change: The EPA Has Gone Overboard”](#) – Intelligence Squared US
- “Paris Agreement” – United Nations
- “House Resolution 109” – 116<sup>th</sup> Congress
- [“The Destruction of Nature”](#) – Anton Pannekoek

Due:

- 6/29: Week 8 Quiz
- 7/01: Discussion 8/9 Response
- 7/05: Block 2 CEP

## Block 3: Potential Roadblocks

### ***Week 9: Emerging Technologies***

Required Reading:

- “Chapter 2: Our planet and its biosphere” from *Here Be Dragons* by Olle Häggström
  - Start with Section 2.6 if you’re familiar with the climate science; read all of the chapter if you’re not

Supplementary Reading:

- [“Engineering Solar Radiation Is a Crazy Idea”](#) – Intelligence Squared US

Due:

- 7/06: Week 9 Quiz
- 7/07: Discussion 8/9 Critique
- 7/12: Discussion 10/11 Question

### ***Week 10: Societal Inequalities***

Required Reading:

- [“Conservation in an urban world”](#) – Jamie Lorimer
- [“Climate change is not gender neutral”](#) – zentouro
- [“What Is Environmental Racism?”](#) - Al Jazeera+
- [“Is Environmentalism Elitist?”](#) – Caroline Beaton

Supplementary Reading:

- [“The Environmental Movement Has a Classism Problem”](#) – Naomi LeChance
- [“Why Every Environmentalist Should Be Anti-Racist”](#) – Leah Thomas
- [“Environmentalism’s Racist History”](#) – Jediah Purdy
- [“It’s Time for Environmental Studies to Own Up to Erasing Black People”](#) – Wanjiku Gatheru

Due:

- 7/13: Week 10 Quiz
- 7/15: Discussion 10/11 Response

### **Week 11: Environmental Skepticism**

Required Reading:

- [“Why People Don’t Believe in Climate Science”](#) – It’s Okay To Be Smart
- [“Why humans are so bad at thinking about climate change”](#) – Vox
- [“Top 5 Climate Sceptic Arguments & How to Respond to Them”](#) – Danny Chivers
- [“The top ten global warming ‘skeptic’ arguments answered”](#) – Dana Nuccitelli

Supplementary Reading:

- [“97% of Climate Scientists Really Do Agree”](#) – It’s Okay To Be Smart
- [“The REAL Reason We Confuse Weather and Climate”](#) – Hot Mess

Due:

- 7/20: Week 11 Quiz
- 7/21: Discussion 10/11 Critique
- 7/23: Discussion 10/11 Rebuttal
- 7/26: Discussion 12 Question

## **Wrapping Up**

### **Week 12: Environmental Activism**

Required Reading:

- [“The Cracking of Glen Canyon Damn with Edward Abbey and Earth First!”](#) – Sacred Land Film Project
- “Forward!” – Edward Abbey
- [“Activism is Politically Essential to Society”](#) – Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar
- [“Why climate strikes matter.”](#) – Our Changing Climate
- [“So you want to be a climate campaigner? Here’s how”](#) – Maeve Shearlaw

Supplementary Reading:

- [“101 Ways to Fight Climate Change”](#) – Patrick Sisson, Megan Barber, and Alissa Walker
- [“Introducing Earth First!”](#) – Bron Taylor
- [“5 ways to fight climate change – and save money”](#) – Daniel DiClerico
- [“These 2 Companies Will Literally Pay You to Help Fight Climate Change”](#) – The Penny Hoarder Staff
- “What is Social Ecology?” – Murray Bookchin
- [“Facebook creates fact-checking exemption for climate deniers”](#) – Emily Atkin

Due:

- 7/27: Week 12 Quiz
- 7/27: Discussion 12 Response
- 7/29: Discussion 12 Critique
- 7/31: Discussion 12 Rebuttal
- 7/31: Block 3 CEP

*Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that we may modify it with reasonable notice to you. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements. We will do our best to give you at least one week’s notice of any changes.*