

# Phil 3530-001

## Environmental Ethics

### CSC 205

T,Th / 9:10-10:30

INSTRUCTOR: Carlos Santana  
OFFICE HOURS: by appointment  
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#### Course Description

In this course, we examine the philosophical underpinnings of environmentalism by considering important cases such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and non-human animal welfare. We will focus chiefly on questions related to environmental values:

What sorts of values motivate environmentalism? Who or what is the source of those values? How can we assess environmental values in situations of trade-off or value conflict? We will look for answers to the questions in traditional ethical theories such as utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics as well as from environment-specific theoretical frameworks, such as conservation biology, eco-feminism, eco-theology, and environmental economics. Students should leave the course prepared to engage in sophisticated and rigorous reasoning and discussion about environmental issues. No prior experience with philosophy is assumed.

#### Objectives

This course is introductory and does not assume any background in science, philosophy, or formal methods. It is, however, meant to be challenging and students will learn to read, discuss, and respond to material that is often difficult to understand.

This means that in addition to giving you familiarity with the the methods and issues of environmental ethics, this course will help you develop broadly useful communicative, argumentative, and analytic skills.

#### Texts

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be posted to Canvas.

## Evaluation:

Grade breakdown will run as follows:

Assignment 1—20%

Assignment 2—20%

Assignment 3—30%

Quizzes—15%

Participation—15%

The final grades will roughly be curved with most grades lying between A- and B-.

Any unexcused late or missing assignments will receive no credit

## Participation:

This course is a mixed modality course with both online and in-person components. In-person attendance will be rotating, by assignment. Students with reason not to attend in person will be able to participate remotely.

Active, frequent participation in online course components is crucial to making online learning successful, and so comprise a significant part of the grade.

We encourage you to reach out to us if you are having difficulty engaging with the course material.

## Assignments:

Full details on each assignment will be given well in advance.

There are short Canvas quizzes on each reading, to be taken prior to the beginning of class. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that everyone is prepared to contribute to intellectually-stimulating discussion of the readings. Missed quizzes cannot be made up, but I will drop the two lowest quizzes from your final grade calculations.

Assignment 1—Letter to the editor (Due October 5th)

Write a letter to the editor on a local environmental issue, translating some of the ethical theory you have learned to layperson's terminology.

Assignment 2—Mock legislature (In stages, throughout November)

Develop, debate, and vote on a proposed environmental law

Assignment 3—Take home final (Due December 12th)

Respond to short essay prompts, chosen from a larger set.

A good response to each will be approximately two pages (double-spaced).

## Honesty:

It is your responsibility to be familiar with university policy on academic honesty: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>

## Environment:

I 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.

Student life can be challenging and stressful, and for some of you that will include participating in this course. I encourage you to chat with me if you begin to feel overwhelmed by this course.

## Support:

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

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. The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)

I. Masks are mandatory. No exceptions.

II. University response to the pandemic is dynamic, responding rapidly to local conditions. The details of this course must be correspondingly flexible and dynamic. All material on this syllabus is subject to change in response to changing policy and local pandemic conditions.

III. Assignment due dates will not be any sooner than listed above, though I will consider due date extensions if necessary.

IV. We will attempt to cover all the course topics listed below, in roughly the order listed below, but **the most up-to-date course schedule is on the Course Canvas website.**

V. As we experiment together in how to conduct an effective hybrid course, we will update Canvas with readings, quizzes, and online activities no later than a week in advance.

VI. We will be soliciting feedback on on the course at several points during the semester. Please give thoughtful responses to our solitations. The current situation is unprecedented, and we need your perspective on what's working and what isn't.

VII. All of us are facing unusual stressors. If anything about your situation is impeding your ability to get your academic work done well, please reach out to us, in advance if possible. We'll do anything reasonable to find fair accommodations to allow you to flourish in this class despite the challenges you face, no questions asked.

# Tentative Schedule

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## Unit 1: Sources of value

### **The expanding circle**

Leopold, "The Land Ethic" (Optional reading)

### **Issues in Utah**

### **Intrinsic value / Deep ecology**

Naess, "Deep Ecology"

### **Against intrinsic value**

Maguire and Justus, "Why intrinsic value is a poor basis for conservation decisions"

### **Deontology / Respect for nature**

Rolston, "Respect for life"

# Schedule

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## **Aristotelean virtue**

Hill, "Ideals of human excellence and preserving natural environments"

## **Stewardship / Humean virtue**

Welchman, "The virtues of stewardship"

## **Care / Indigenous ethics**

Whyte and Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics"

## **Utilitarianism / Hedonism**

Harman, "The moral significance of animal pain and animal death"

# Schedule

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## **Preference consequentialism**

Sarkar, “Transformative value”

## Unit 2: Measuring value

### **Sustainability**

Callicott and Mumford, “Ecological Sustainability as a Conservation Concept”

### **Biodiversity**

Sarkar, “Defining Biodiversity”

### **Problems with biodiversity**

Santana—Save the planet, eliminate biodiversity

# Schedule

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## **Economic valuation**

“Contingent valuation”

## **Problems for economic valuation**

Hausman, “Contingent valuation, from dubious to hopeless”

## Unit 3: Securing value

## **Conservation priorities**

Miller, Minter, Malan, “The new conservation debate”

## **Restoration**

Higgs, “What is good ecological restoration?”

# Schedule

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## **Problems in restoration**

Katz, "The Big Lie"

## **Extant law**

"U.S. Environmental Law"

## **Law: possibilities**

Tarlock, "Environmental Law"

## **Ecofeminism**

Merchant, "Ecofeminism"

# Schedule

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## **Feminist environmentalism**

Agarwal, "Environmental Action, Gender Equity, and Women's Participation"

## **Religion**

White, "The historical roots of our ecologic crisis"

## **Eco-theology**

Davary, "Islam and ecology"

## **Aesthetics / Theology**

Handley, "The desert blossoms as a rose"

## **Aesthetics**

Carlson, "Nature, aesthetic judgment, and objectivity"

# Schedule

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## **Aesthetics / What about ugly nature?**

Saito, "The Role of Imperfection in Everyday Aesthetics"

## **Mock legislature**

## **Science communication**

Kahan, "The science of science communication"

# Schedule

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## **Science communication**

Ranney, "Climate change"

## **Ecotage**

Vanderheiden, "Eco-terrorism or justified resistance"

## **Population ethics**

Rulli, "Ethics of procreation and adoption"

## Unit 4: Application

## **Utilitarianism and animals**

Singer, selection from *Animal Liberation*

## **Is animal liberation environmentalist?**

Callicott, "Animal liberation, a triangular affair"

# Schedule

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## **Ecofeminist take on animals**

Kheel, "The killing game"

## **Eating meat**

Boey, "Eating Animals And Personal Guilt: The Individualization Of Responsibility For Factory Farming"

## **Corporate environmental responsibility**

Reading TBD