

Phil 178M: Intro to Environmental Ethics

Term: Winter 2023

Instructor: Michael Ball-Blakely

Class Meeting: Tu/Th 10:30-11:50

Class Location: ULC 210

Units: 4-5

Email: mballblakely@utep.edu

Office Hours: Thursday 1:00-3:00

Office Location: Worrell Hall 301

Course Description:

Environmental ethics forces us to reconsider the scope of our values, the limits of moral status, and our responsibility for global structural problems. Given the breadth of environmental ethics, no single course can investigate more than a subset of the discipline. In this class we will begin with a brief primer on philosophical and environmental ethics before orienting ourselves around three broad questions. Our focus in section 1a will be on the understanding and applying the distinction between moral principles and intuitions—a distinction that is particularly important when dealing with environmental ethics, an area where we often have plenty of intuitions and few well-reasoned principles! This will provide the normative resources needed to carefully consider questions in environmental ethics, and we will revisit and apply these tools through the term. Section 1b will include a brief overview of the debates in environmental ethics and one of the most important hypotheticals in environmental ethics: Richard Sylvan’s “Last Man” thought experiment. While this course will develop and apply normative tools from applied ethics and political philosophy, no prior experience in either will be required.

Second, in sections 2 and 3, we will consider whether and to what extent our obligations extend beyond sentient life to non-animal nature. If they do, then what grounds these obligations? Are rights held by nature? Or do we merely have indirect duties to nature, duties grounded in obligations to fellow humans? And what kinds of non-animal life—e.g., plants, species, or ecosystems—generate obligations in us by virtue of their intrinsic moral status?

Third, in sections 4a and 4b we will shift our attention to nonhuman animals, analyzing if (and why) animals have rights as well as whether animal rights are compatible with environmentalism. And fourth, in section 5 we will look at an applied environmental issue that has been central in many of our minds: climate change. Section 5a will look into whether responsibility for climate change lies with individuals or with background structures and what this distinction means for climate action. In section 5b we then analyze two questions in climate migration. How do the rights of would-be immigrants fit in with duties to the environment? And how should we understand the nature of climate refugees, including how to define them and who has duties to admit them? Finally, in section 5c we end the course by considering the role and nature of climate activism.

Course Requirements and Grading:

We will use an additive model of grading. Rather than having a set list of assignments that you have to complete, you will be able to choose which assignments best fit your goals for the course. Each “track” has different options, each worth a set number of points. You can only complete 100 points worth of assignments, and you can mix and

match between tracks. This is determined prior to your grade, so if you complete 4 25-point assignments, then you cannot complete any other assignments for credit, even if you receive less than full credit.

Below is a list of tracks and assignments, with a point breakdown. A fuller explanation will be available on Blackboard.

Knowledge Track:

- Cumulative Final Exam: 40 points [May 10 @ 11:59 am]
- Take Home Exam 1: 20 points [Mar. 1 @ 11:59 pm]
- Take Home Exam 2: 20 points [May 3 @ 11:59 pm]

Communication Track:

- 15-minute presentation: 25 points [Sign up on BB]
- On-call discussant: 5 points [Sign up on BB]
- Discussion board posts: 1 point each (up to 10)
- Submitting 2 questions and 1 criticism for class: 5 points (can submit up to two) [Due at noon the day before class]

Research Track:

- 10-page research paper: 30 points [May 8 @ noon]
- 5-page research paper: 15 points (can submit up to two) [Apr 12 @ noon & May 2 @ noon]
- 2-page critical commentary on readings: 5 points (can submit up to two) [Due at 5pm the day before class]

Community Engagement Track:

- Community research project: 40 points [Submit proposal by Mar 3 @ 5 pm]
- Community engagement project: 20 points [Submit proposal by Mar 3 @ 5 pm]
- Attend a relevant event outside of UTEP & submit a 1-page summary: 10 points

Grading Scale: Final grades are calculated using the UTEP grading scale: A = 4.0 B = 3.0 C = 2.0 D = 1.0 F = 0.0

Required Texts: None. All readings will be available on Canvas.

Reading List

The tentative schedule is listed below. If we have to modify the schedule—due to adverse weather, illness, or if we just need to spend more time with a reading—I will give notice and modify the writing topics to accommodate the new reading list. All readings are required.

Date	Topic	Reading 1	Reading 2
1/16	(1a) Intro to Philosophical Reasoning No class; online lecture	Barbara MacKinnon: Ethics and Ethical Reasoning (13)	
1/18	(1a) Intro to Philosophical Reasoning	John Rawls: Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics (21)	
1/23	(1b) Intro to Environmental Ethics	Clare Palmer, McShane, and Sandler: Environmental Ethics (16)	
1/25	(1b) Intro to Environmental Ethics	Richard Sylvan: Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic? (6)	Schmidtz and Willott: Respect for Nature (6)
1/30	(1b) Intro to Environmental Ethics	Jason Kawall: A History of Environmental Ethics (11)	
2/1	(2) The Extrinsic Value of Nature	Janna Thompson: A Refutation of Environmental Ethics (14)	
2/6	(2) The Extrinsic Value of Nature	Allen Thomson: Anthropocentrism - Humanity as Peril and Promise (11)	Katie McShane: Anthropocentrism vs Non-Anthropocentrism (11)
2/8	(2) The Extrinsic Value of Nature	Sheila Watt-Cloutier: The Inuit Right to Culture (5)	Kyle Powys Whyte: Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Justice (17)
2/13	(2) The Extrinsic Value of Nature	Kristin Schrader-Frechette: Environmental Justice (19)	
2/15	(3) The Intrinsic Value of Nature	Aldo Leopold: The Land Ethic (14)	
2/20	(3) The Intrinsic Value of Nature	Ronald Sandler: Ecocentrism (27)	
2/22	(3) The Intrinsic Value of Nature	Bernard Williams: Must a Concern for the Environment be Centered on Human Beings? (8)	
2/27	(3) The Intrinsic Value of Nature	Katie McShane: Individualist Biocentrism vs Holism Revisited (13)	
2/29	(4a) Animal Moral Status	Peter Singer: All Animals are Equal (10)	
3/5	Spring Break		
3/7	Spring Break		
3/12	(4a) Animal Moral Status	Mary Ann Warren: Human Rights and Animal Rights (6)	
3/14	(4a) Animal Moral Status	Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka: Universal Basic Rights for Animals (31)	
3/19	(4b) Animals and the Environment	Baird Callicott: Animal Liberation - A Triangular Affair (28)	
3/21	(4b) Animals and the Environment	Carol Adams: Ecofeminism and the Eating of Animals (16) No class (Conference travel)	
3/26	(4b) Animals and the Environment	Karen Warren: The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism (22)	

3/28	(5a) Climate Change and Blame	Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: It's Not My Fault (20)	
4/2	(5a) Climate Change and Blame	Monica Aufrecht: Climate Change and Structural Emissions (18)	
4/4	(5a) Climate Change and Blame	CJ Cuomo: Climate Change, Vulnerability, Responsibility...(19)	Kyle Powys Whyte: Ways Beyond the Lifeboat (9)
4/9	(5b) Climate Change and Migration	Cara Nine: Ecological Refugees & the Lockean Proviso (15)	
4/11	(5b) Climate Change and Migration	Simona Capisani: Territorial Instability and the Right to a Livable Locality (19)	
4/16	(5b) Climate Change and Migration	Philip Cafaro and Winthrop Staples III: The Environmental Argument for Reducing Immigration to the US (14)	
4/18	(5b) Climate Change and Migration	Ball-Blakely: Climate Change & Green Borders	
4/23	(5c) Climate Activism	Martin Luther King Jr. – Letter from a Birmingham Jail (10)	Baird Callicott: Environmental Philosophy as Activism (6)
4/25	(5c) Climate Activism	Andreas Malm – How to Blow up a Pipeline	
4/30	(5c) Climate Activism	Andreas Malm – How to Blow up a Pipeline	
5/2	Summary & Catch-up Day	No Reading	

Course Policies

Extensions: Extensions should be negotiated with me. No extensions will be granted within 4 hours of a when an assignment is due. With the end-of-term grading crunch, no extensions will be possible for the final paper.

Late penalties: All late assignments (without a written extension) will be penalized at 5% every 12 hours with the exception of the final paper, which will not be accepted more than 6 hours after the deadline.

Missed Class: Participation is a major part of a successful philosophy course. Please attend class whenever possible—your grade will benefit, you will gain much more from the course, and it will provide a better learning environment for your peers. You do not need to contact me if you are going to miss a lecture.

Technology in class: Feel free to use whatever note-taking devices you find most conducive to learning. However, do be aware that laptops can be a distraction both to you and those around you. If you choose to use one for taking notes, please keep all non-academic tabs closed in class sessions.

Academic accommodations: Please make sure to get academic accommodation letters in as early as possible. We are committed to making sure that every student has equal educational opportunities, so please let us know if anything is posing a barrier to your academic success.

Changes to the syllabus: The syllabus—in particular, the reading list and assignments—is subject to change. However, there will not be any changes that increase your workload. They will be limited to equally or less burdensome replacement readings, removing readings, and equally or less burdensome assignments. Any changes will be announced on Canvas and in class.

Academic Misconduct: See the Stanford Honor Code for information. The Tas and I will take academic misconduct very seriously. If you have any questions or concerns about what this entails, please feel free to reach out.

Participation and Preparation: Philosophy courses require that students come prepared and ready to discuss the material. This is even true of large lecture hall courses! This class will be a collaborative effort, one where each of us will benefit greatly from the knowledge, lived experiences, expertise, and insights of one another.

- Read each required text at least once (ideally twice) prior to class. Look for main themes, how it advances our knowledge, and how one might critically engage with the text. Read critically but sympathetically. Your goal is not to reject what the author says out of hand, nor is it to accept it without question. Treat them like an interlocutor who might have much to teach you, but who is also fallible. approaching the issue with limited knowledge and perhaps a limited perspective.
 - Try to identify the thesis, how it fits with our course readings, what evidence the author offers, what the implications for the view might be, whether it requires a radical shift in our values, and whether and why a reasonable person might disagree.
- Treat your fellow classmates in the same way. Regardless of their philosophical background, each of your classmates will have insights and understandings that can be of use to you and to your peers. Be respectful. Critically engage with their claims, but in the spirit of a healthy dialogue rather than a debate or argument.
 - Any student that disrespects their fellow classmates will be asked to leave.
- Aim to participate as much as your comfort level permits—in fact, try testing this comfort level. Recognize that just as your classmates have much to offer, and that their perspective and background can add to your own, so too can you bring to the discussion something unique and valuable.

- Remember, though, not to monopolize the discussion. Make sure that each member of the seminar has a chance to engage equally. If you find yourself talking more than others, pause and reflect. Ask why you are engaging more, and why they are engaging less. Ask yourself if you can engage in a way that gives them the space to participate more. And, perhaps, pause and take a few breaths before answering or asking a question, giving others a chance to talk.
- I recognize that not everybody is equally comfortable participating in person. If so, there are a variety of opportunities available to you:
 - Post on the Blackboard discussion forum.
 - Speak with me before or after the class.
 - Send me an email with your questions, thoughts, or criticisms.
 - Come to office hours and speak privately.

Technology

Requirements: Each student needs access to Blackboard where I will post readings, the syllabus, and occasional announcements. Please let me know if you have access issues.

Classroom Use: While I believe that students learn best without electronic devices, I recognize that some students learn best—or are most comfortable—with a computer or tablet. And so while I suggest that you come only with a pen, paper, and copies of the text, I am perfectly fine with you using other devices.

- However, please leave cellphones in your pockets or backpacks.
- Do not use your electronic devices for anything other than class-related activities. It can distract your classmates and will diminish your attention and learning.

Accommodations: The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747- 5148, or email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

Illness and Covid: Illness, injury, and other life traumas happen. While they are regrettable, they cannot be avoided. Please let me know if you are unable to make a deadline or otherwise complete a project on time and we will find accommodations.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Title IX and Mandatory Reporting: Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain support from the Counseling and Psychological Services [(915) 747-5302] and Student Health and Wellness Center [(915) 747-5624]. Title IX violations should be reported. For more information, contact the Dean of Students Office [(915) 747-5648], the Title IX Office [(915) 747-8358], or UTEP Police Department [(915) 747-5611].

Disclosure to University faculty or instructors of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University's Title IX officer.

Technology and Academic Resources

Help Desk (Library, Rm. 300, helpdesk@utep.edu, (915) 747-4357 (HELP), utep.edu/technologysupport/): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software) can submit a work ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for help. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

UTEP Library (ask@utep.libanswers.com, (915) 747-5643, utep.edu/library/): Access a wide range of resources, including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.

University Writing Center (UWC) (Library, Main Floor, uwctutors@utep.edu, (915) 747-5112, utep.edu/uwc/): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.

History Tutoring Center (HTC) (Liberal Arts Building, Rm. 320, history@utep.edu, (915) 747-5508): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.

Individual Resources

Military Student Success Center (Mike Loya Academic Services Bldg., Rm. 130, mssc@utep.edu, (915) 747-5342, utep.edu/student-affairs/mssc/): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.

Center for Accommodations and Support Services (Union East, Rm. 106, cass@utep.edu, (915) 747-5148, utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.

Counseling and Psychological Services (Union West, Rm. 202, caps@utep.edu, (915) 747-5302, utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

Student Health and Wellness Center (Union East, Ste. 100, studenthealth@utep.edu, (915) 747-5624, utep.edu/chs/shc/): Addresses health care needs of all UTEP students.

Dean of Students Office (Union West, Rm. 102, DOS@utep.edu, (915) 747-5648, utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/): Creates a culture of care for students by providing exemplary programs and services designed to enhance success.

Division of Student Affairs (Union East, Rm. 301, studentaffairs@utep.edu, (915) 747-5076, utep.edu/student-affairs/): Supports student success inside and outside the classroom.

Office of Student Fellowships and Awards (utep.edu/student-affairs/student-fellowships-awards/index.html)

Title IX Office (Kelly Hall, Rm. 312, TitleIX@utep.edu, (915) 747-8358, utep.edu/titleix/): Protects students, employees, applicants for admission and employment, and other persons from all forms of sex discrimination including sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and acts of sexual violence.