



**PHIL 2380A
Introduction to Environmental Ethics
Fall 2025**

Instructor: Gloria K. Sánchez-Cuevas, MA, MBA & Ph.D. (Candidate) Ethics & Public Affairs

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Office: N/A

Office Hours: By appointment only

Class Meeting: Monday & Wednesday 14:35 - 15:55

Course Calendar Description:

Major questions in environmental ethics: How should human beings view their relationship to the rest of nature? Is responsible stewardship of the environment compatible with current technology? Must future generations be protected? Do animals, other life forms, endangered species, ecosystems and/or the biosphere have value/rights?

Precludes additional credit for PHIL 1804.

Course Description:

How should we understand our obligations to the more-than-human world and who is entitled to shape those decisions? This course offers a rigorous yet accessible introduction to environmental ethics. We examine foundational debates, such as instrumental vs. intrinsic value, moral considerability, animal ethics, climate justice, and situate them within major approaches: anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and classical moral theories. Throughout, we place these traditions in dialogue with Indigenous ethics and environmental-justice perspectives, linking philosophical analysis to activism and public policy in local and global contexts.

Learning is interactive and application-focused. Each week combines a short lecture, seminar discussion, and a case activity anchored in the readings. Short in-class quizzes assess engagement with the material, and a team project requires students to apply course frameworks to a real-world case, culminating in a presentation. By the end of the term, students will be able to analyze and compare ethical frameworks, defend well-reasoned positions on concrete environmental problems, and communicate their arguments clearly in both oral and written forms.

Course Learning Objectives:

- Differentiate and accurately explain major frameworks in environmental ethics (anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, deep ecology, ecofeminism, animal ethics) and defend how each treats moral considerability of humans, nonhumans, species, and ecosystems.
- Analyze and evaluate arguments from core and critical readings alongside Indigenous and environmental-justice scholarship, identifying assumptions, strengths, and limitations.
- Communicate philosophical analysis effectively in written and oral formats by reconstructing arguments, addressing counterarguments, and reflecting on positionality and lived experience, demonstrating growth in critical reading, reasoning, and professional presentation.

Required Materials:

Readings: All required and supplemental readings will be posted on Brightspace. Students are not required to purchase textbooks for this course.

Final Exam Date: There will be no final examination in this course. Instead, four quizzes will take place during class time throughout the term.

Drop Course Policy: The final day for withdrawal from Fall semester courses is November 15 (academic withdrawal).

Communication with Instructor:

I am available to meet with you in person or online for office hours. However, I do not have a fixed schedule for these meetings. If you need to ask me anything or want to book a consultation, please send me an email. I typically reply within 24–48 hours (business days) and 48 hours on weekends. Please be aware that I usually use Brightspace to make class announcements, so make sure that you regularly check your Carleton email or the Brightspace portal to keep up with any updates. The office hours are intended to help you understand concepts and answer any questions that cannot be answered easily by consulting the course outline or by sending an email. Please do not use your personal email; only use your Carleton email account.

Grading Scheme:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated based on the percentage score assigned to each component. Once a grade has been assigned, you can review the rubric and/or personalized feedback. The sum of the percentage scores for each component will be your final course grade as follows:¹

Quizzes (4)	20%
Team Project	60%
▪ Proposal 5%	
▪ Progress Report 20%	
▪ Final Deliverable 25%	
▪ Presentation 10%	
Class-participation	20%
TOTAL	100%

Team Project (60%)

You will work in teams of 5–6 for the full 12-week term. Your goal is to take the theories we study in class and use them in the real world, while also practicing clear, creative communication. Both options below have the same checkpoints and grading: a Proposal (5%, due Week 3), a Progress Report (20%, due Week 7), a Final Deliverable (25%, due Week 12), and an in-class Presentation (10%, Week 12). More details about the project will be provided in class 1.

Shared expectations for either option: Each team must (a) do hands-on research, (i.e., site visits and conversations with people outside our class, brief interviews, surveys, etc.); (b) apply multiple course frameworks in your analysis (for example: anthropocentric vs. ecocentric views, environmental justice, the land ethic, intergenerational justice); and (c) communicate in more than one mode (written analysis

¹ In case you have a Letter of Accommodation from the PMC, please inform me as soon as possible. This will enable us to review the suggested academic accommodations for any evaluation component(s) and come to an agreement on the most suitable accommodation or replacement.

plus at least two other modes such as visual, oral, performative, audio, or a physical artefact). Follow basic research ethics: get informed consent for interviews, anonymize people, avoid risky settings, and seek permission for recordings or displays. Your public-facing materials should be accessible (legible fonts/contrast, captions/alt text where relevant). No generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, image/audio generators) may be used for ideation, scripting, drafting, analysis, or media creation; everything must be your team's original work.

Option A: Environmental Ethics Awareness Campaign

Pick a specific local issue (for example: waste and recycling on campus, a threatened green space, waterway health, energy use in a building). Go to the place, observe what's happening, talk to the people involved or affected, and collect basic evidence (photos of signage or conditions, simple measurements or counts, short interview quotes). Use our course frameworks to make sense of what you learned: Who benefits? Who bears costs? What duties or rights are at stake? What does a land-ethic or justice lens reveal?

Turn this into a public awareness campaign that makes your ethical analysis clear and useful. Your campaign should be a small set of coordinated pieces (for example: posters and an infographic; a fact sheet and a pop-up table; a short video using your own footage and a workshop handout). Pilot or display your campaign in a real setting prior to your presentation and gather a bit of audience feedback (what people noticed, what changed their mind, what they still question).

Option B: Multi-Modal Environmental Ethics Communication (Art/Media)

Choose an environmental ethics theme (for example: climate justice, animal ethics, overconsumption, indigenous relational ethics) and design an original art or media piece that gets people to think and feel differently about it. Do site/audience research and speak with a few stakeholders or potential audience members to shape your idea. Then create the piece: this could be a public installation made from recovered materials, a photo essay, a short performance, a zine/comic, a podcast mini-episode series, or a short film using only your team's original recordings and artwork (no AI-generated text, images, audio, or video). Share or display it publicly prior your final presentation and gather brief audience reactions.

Deliverables (both options):

- **Proposal (5%, due Week 3, Sep 17):** 600–800 words describing what you plan to do, who you'll talk to, where you'll go, which ethical lenses you expect to use, roles and timeline, and any permissions you'll need.
- **Progress Report (20%, due Week 7, Oct 15):** The Progress Report has two components:
 - *Written report:* 1,200–1,500 words (with appendices) summarizing your fieldwork so far, your early ethical analysis using at least two frameworks, drafts or prototypes of your campaign/creative piece, and your plan for the Week 11 public-facing phase.
 - *Team check-in meeting* (Weeks 6–8): a 10-minute, one-on-one meeting with the instructor attended by the entire team to review progress, get feedback, and confirm next steps. This meeting is required to receive the Progress Report grade. If your team does not complete this meeting in Weeks 6–8, the Progress Report component will receive 0%. Scheduling instructions will be provided in class.
- **Final Deliverable (25%, due Week 12, Dec 5):**
 - *Option A:* the full Campaign Package plus a 1,500–2,000-word report that links your design choices to your findings and ethical reasoning, with an appendix (i.e., field log, consent/permissions, sample data, and audience feedback).

- *Option B:* the Creative Artifact plus a 1,500–2,000-word Analytical Commentary explaining the theory behind your choices and what you learned from audience reception, with an appendix (i.e., field log, consent/permissions, audience feedback).
- **Presentation (10%, Week 12):** A clear, engaging 10–12-minute talk that tells the story of your project, from field insights to ethical analysis to what you shared publicly, followed by Q&A.

Class Participation (20%)

The course will be structured like a seminar, with more emphasis on class discussion of the readings rather than traditional lectures. Therefore, students will need to take a more active role in their learning by completing assigned readings before classes and preparing to discuss them with the instructor and fellow students in class. Regular class attendance and contribution to class discussion are expected, and full presence from start to end of class is required. The only prerequisite is a willingness to think critically about the content while taking alternative views seriously.

Students will be graded on their participation in class discussions. The grade will be based on both the quantity and quality of their contributions. Every time a student makes a quality contribution, they will earn one or more *participation tokens*. The class participation threshold for the maximum grade (20%) will be determined by the mean and standard deviation of tokens earned by the class.

Your participation tokens reflect your engagement and contribution to the class. You lose tokens for:

- Arriving late or leaving early: You'll lose tokens if you're more than 10 minutes late or leave early.
- Missing key classes: Skipping two weeks of class in a row or being absent during your team's presentation will cost you tokens.
- Non-collegial behaviour: Behaviours like aggressively dominating discussions, interrupting others, displaying hostility, overt rudeness, or showing disengaged and disruptive behaviours (e.g., scrolling aimlessly on your phone) will lead to token loss.
- Lack of preparation: Presenting ideas clearly showing you have not done the assigned readings or prepared for class will cost you tokens.
- Disrespecting class time: Using class time to work on other coursework or engage in unrelated activities, including texting or scrolling on your phone, will result in lost tokens.

Being present, prepared, and respectful helps you keep your tokens and get the most out of this course!

Quizzes (20%)

Four quizzes will be administered throughout the term to evaluate your understanding of the course content and critical thinking abilities. You must complete their responses during class and may consult their notes and course materials. Please note that the use of AI generative tools is strictly forbidden, and any violations will be reported as potential academic misconduct.

Bonus: Reading Presentation (+10%)

You can earn up to 10% bonus points by volunteering to present one of the required readings. The aim of this presentation is to promote teamwork and discussion. During the presentation, you will be required to present the main claims of the assigned reading and contrast them with previous material, with a maximum of two authors and/or readings. You will have around 15-20 minutes to present, followed by 15-20 minutes of Q&A from the rest of the group. Although the use of a slide deck is encouraged, it is not mandatory. If you're interested in this opportunity, please send me an email before September 5 with the date and topic you'd like to present.

Late Policy for Coursework

Assignment extensions or new deadlines will only be granted at my discretion and on a case-by-case basis. The only exceptions are verifiable illnesses and emergencies. These must be communicated to me directly within three (3) business days following the due date.

If your personal circumstances are negatively impacting your performance in the course, it is essential that you notify me immediately. I am here to support you in meeting the course requirements, but I can only do so effectively if you reach out sooner rather than later. Contacting me after missing multiple sessions or assignments will severely limit my ability to assist you.

Group presentation: No extensions will be granted for group assignments, as group members are expected to work together to cover for individual students unable to contribute to any team project components.

Late Assignments: To ensure fairness for all students, penalties will be applied to late assignments without medical certificates. Failure to submit an assignment on time will result in an initial penalty of five (5) percentage points, followed by an additional (5) percentage points per day thereafter. For example, an assignment that would normally merit a grade of 20% would receive a grade of 15% if submitted after the deadline on the due date, 10% if submitted the following day, and so on.

Quizzes: Requests for rescheduling quizzes will be considered in cases of illness, family emergency, or other exceptional circumstances.

COURSE SCHEDULE ¹

Week	Topic	Date	Reading	Deliverable/Deadline
1	Course introduction: Why Environmental Ethics?	Sep 3	No assigned reading. Class introduction.	
2	Anthropocentrism	Sep 8	Thompson, Anthropocentrism: Humanity as Peril and Promise	Deadline team formation
		Sep 10	Helen Kopnina, et al., "Anthropocentrism: More than Just a Misunderstood Problem"	
3	Ecocentrism	Sep 15	Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic"	
		Sep 17	M'sit No'kmaq et al., "Awakening the sleeping giant": re-Indigenization principles for transforming biodiversity conservation in Canada and beyond	Team Project: Project Proposal
4	Biocentrism	Sep 22	Taylor, The Ethics of Respect for Nature	
		Sep 24	Palmer, Living Individuals: Biocentrism in Environmental Ethics	
5	Deep Ecology	Sep 29	Næss, The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement	Quiz 1
		Oct 1	McLaughlin, "The Heart of Deep Ecology"	
6	Critique of Deep Ecology	Oct 6	Guha, Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique	
		Oct 8	Plumwood, Deep Ecology, Deep Pockets, and Deep Problems: A Feminist Ecosocialist Analysis	
7	Ecofeminism	Oct 13	No class, Statutory holiday	
		Oct 15	Warren, The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism	Team Project: Progress Update
		Oct 20	No class, Fall break	
		Oct 22	No class, Fall break	
8	The Moral Status of Animals	Nov 3	- Singer: All Animals Are Equal - Nussbaum: Animal Rights: The Need for a Theoretical Basis	Quiz 2
		Nov 5	Gruen (2011) 'Eating Animals' in her Ethics and Animals: An Introduction	
9	The Ethics of Climate Change	Nov 10	Eisenstein, Climate: A New Story (select chapters)	
		Nov 12	Carter, In defence of radical disobedience	

¹ Please note that the schedule may change during the term, and students will receive advanced notice in such cases.

10	Environmental Justice	Nov 17	Kopnina, Environmental Justice and Biospheric Egalitarianism: Reflecting on a Normative-Philosophical View of Human-Nature Relationship	Quiz 3
		Nov 19	Taylor, Toxic Communities (Select chapters)	
11	The Economics of Climate Change	Nov 24	Anderson, Cost-Benefit Analysis, Safety, and Environmental Quality	
		Nov 26	Moyano-Fernández, AI, Sustainability, and Environmental Ethics	Quiz 4
12	Team Presentations	Dec 1	Review other team's materials	
		Dec 3		
		Dec 5		Team Project: Final Deliverable

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2025-26)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. We no longer allow hard copies to be placed in the department's essay box.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EIC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

Sept. 3	Classes start.
Sept. 16	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 13	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 20-24	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 21	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 5	Last day of fall term classes. <i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i> Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 6-7	No classes or examinations take place.
Dec. 8-20	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 20	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 5	Classes begin.
Jan. 16	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 16	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 16-20	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.
Mar. 25	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 3	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 8	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. <i>Classes follow a Friday schedule.</i> Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 9-10	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 11-23	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 23	All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<https://carleton.ca/csas/support/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735