

PHIL 2380 – Introduction to Environmental Ethics
Department of Philosophy, Carleton University
Summer 2025
0.5 credit
Online Asynchronous Course

Professor: Manvitha Singamsetty

Contact Hours: By Appointment

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Calendar Course 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?

Course Description:

This course addresses a series of questions relevant to the evaluation of environmental issues from a philosophical perspective. Why is the natural environment valuable? Does it possess value only insofar as it provides us with some instrumental good or does it have inherent worth independent of that which human beings derive from it? Should we preserve and protect the natural world for its own sake or simply for our own? How might the answers we give to these questions inform our environmental activism and our public policies? In an attempt to address these questions, the course will look at various arguments philosophers have offered regarding the natural world's value, and assess various strategies that have been proposed and pursued in the name of respecting and/or preserving our natural environment. Material for this course draws from historical and contemporary philosophy across various schools and traditions, as well as current global events and narratives. While the course will be accessible to students with non-philosophical backgrounds, its methods of evaluation will prepare students to succeed in upper level courses in ethics and social and political philosophy.

The aim of this course is to provide students with a comprehensive introduction to various global strands of environmental ethics. The course begins with an introduction to the key concepts and debates in environmental ethics including but not limited to instrumental versus intrinsic worth of nonhuman life, the use of nonhuman life, human-nonhuman binary, rights of nature, and the political conceptualisations of nature in global agreements.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course students will

- gain a comprehensive understanding of important concepts, methods, assumptions and ambiguities of classical, contemporary, mainstream, and “marginal” debates in environmental ethics
- learn how to apply classical moral paradigms to contemporary ethical issues in environmental ethics
- be able to present written work on key critical perspectives, in both descriptive and evaluative ways, on various topics in environmental ethics
- be introduced to and learn more about philosophical methods through argumentation in moral philosophy in relation to debates on the environment

Teaching Philosophy:

This course has been designed to enhance student-centered learning. Critical analysis and self-reflection are key to the learning mechanisms in this course. Learning involves not only gaining new information but also a critical and ethical application of this newly gained knowledge. In this course we will focus on both these aspects of learning.

Assignments:

1. Quizzes – 30%

There will be a total of 12 quizzes, and each quiz will be worth 2.5%. Questions will be based on the readings and lectures. All quizzes will be conducted online, the link can be accessed under the ‘Assignments’ tab on the course website. A detailed quiz schedule is available on pp. 3-4 of this syllabus. All quizzes are open throughout the course, and will close on 17 June 2025.

2. Midterms - 20% each, total 40%

Midterm 1 – 16 May 2025

Midterm 2 – 04 June 2025

All midterms will be conducted online. Midterms will consist of MCQs, short and long answers. Midterm review documents, detailing the syllabus, questions format etc., and the link to the assignment are available on Brightspace.

3. Final Exam – 30%

This will be a scheduled online exam consisting of MCQs, short and long answer questions. A Final Exam Review document containing the syllabus, format, and scope of the final exam is available on Brightspace. The final exam is not cumulative.

Note - Absence from any examination must be justified by valid documentation (e.g. letter from a doctor, self-declaration form etc.). Only students with valid documentation will be permitted to write a make-up test/exam.

Cost of educational materials - \$0. There is no separate or additional cost incurred by students in this course. Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course. All readings and course materials are made available to students on Brightspace.

Reading Schedule:

- Textbook – *Environmental Ethics Theory in Practice* by Ronald Sandler, OUP, 2017 The textbook can be purchased [here](#). Detailed instructions on how to purchase and store the e-textbook are provided in the introductory lecture.
- Electronic versions of all other readings are available on the course website
- All recorded lectures are available on Brightspace

PHIL 2380 - Class Schedule	
Introduction to the course	PPT available on Brightspace
	Textbook pp. 2-12, 18-21, 26-30
Environmental Ethics: Scope and Method	Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace
	Quiz – link on Brightspace

Natural Value	Textbook pp. 66-77 Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
Anthropocentrism and Indirect Duties	Textbook pp. 95-102, 109-110 Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
The Wild Unknown - Video	Link to video on Brightspace
The Wild Unknown	Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz - link on Brightspace
Midterm 1	Online - Link on Brightspace
Moana - Film	Link in ARES
Moana - Polynesian Environmental Ethics	Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace
Seeking Minobimaatisiwiin - An Indigenous Environmental Ethic	PDF on Brightspace, read pp. 91-99 Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
‘We are the Land’ - Annie L Booth	PDF on Brightspace, read pp. 329-335 Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on course website
Angry Inuk - Documentary	Link in ARES.
Angry Inuk	Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
Utilitarianism	Textbook pp. 168-192
Utilitarianism Contd.	Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
Midterm 2	Online - Link on Brightspace
Deontology	Textbook pp. 198-221
Deontology Contd.	Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
Animal Rights	Textbook pp. 206-216 Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
Rights of Nature: ‘Do Trees Have Standing?’ - Christopher D Stone	PDF on Brightspace Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
Anthropocene - Documentary	Link in ARES.
Anthropocene	Recorded lecture uploaded on Brightspace Quiz – link on Brightspace
Final Exam review	Review document on Brightspace.

Tips for doing well:

1. Students are expected to do the readings before listening to the recorded lectures.
2. On average, you will spend about nine hours on this class every week – 6 hours in lectures and 3 hours in preparation and reading for class. In addition, you will spend about 4 hours each studying for the midterms and about 8 hours studying for the final exam.
3. All course related announcements and communication will be channeled through Brightspace
4. Please make sure to peruse the midterm review documents and final exam review documents posted on Brightspace.

Class resources and policies:

1. You are encouraged to approach the academic writing help center in case you need any assistance with learning how to write essays etc. CSAS holds regular workshops on writing, taking notes etc. that you may find helpful. You can learn more about these workshops and services [here](#)
2. If you feel stressed or overwhelmed you are encouraged to access the resources on campus to manage your time, stress levels, seek mentors etc. More information can be found [here](#)
3. Communication: Please allow a minimum of 24 hours to receive a response to your email/query. For tech related issues please contact [ITS](#) as they will be able to guide you most effectively.
4. You are expected to be respectful of your colleagues, the teaching assistant, and the professor during all discussions and interactions.
5. Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the *Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances*, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).
6. As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>

If I can ensure your full access to this course in any way not already addressed in this syllabus/course outline please do not hesitate to contact me with your queries/requests.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Summer 2025)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically.

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:* 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. For more details, visit the [Equity Services website](#).
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the [Paul Menton Centre website](#).
- *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. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/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:

May 5	Classes start.	July 1	Statutory holiday, University closed.
May 9	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>early</u> summer courses.	July 2	Late summer courses begin and full summer courses resume.
May 16	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>full</u> summer courses.	July 8	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>late</u> summer courses.
May 16	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from <u>early</u> summer courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.	July 15	Last day to withdraw from <u>late</u> summer courses with a full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
May 19	Statutory holiday. University closed.	Aug. 1	Last day for academic withdrawal from full and late summer courses.
May 31	Last day to withdraw from full summer courses with a full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.	Aug. 4	Civic holiday, University closed.
June 10	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade for <u>early</u> summer courses before the official examination period.	Aug. 7	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade for <u>late</u> summer and <u>full</u> summer courses before the official examination period.
June 17	Last day for <u>early</u> summer classes. Last day for handing in term work, subject to any earlier course deadline.	Aug. 14	Last day of <u>late</u> and <u>full</u> summer term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule.
June 18-19	No classes or examinations take place.	Aug. 15-16	Last day for handing in term work, subject to any earlier course deadline.
June 20-26	Final examinations.	Aug. 17-23	No classes or examinations take place.
June 26	Take-home examinations for <u>early</u> summer courses are due.	Aug. 23	Final examinations.
			Take-home examinations for <u>late</u> or <u>full</u> summer courses 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:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

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