PHI 394: Environmental Ethics, Spring 2022

(T/Th, 213A HBC, 9:30-10:50)

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"You see, you are going to have to become a student again–that universal figure of fun–if you really mean to subject your opinions to honest examination. And you know as well as I do that this assignment can't be completed overnight." –Epictetus

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Course Description: This course addresses a range of questions surrounding environmental ethics. We will begin by examining some of the major ethical theories about moral rightness and wrongness. What makes an action morally right or wrong? What considerations do we need to take into account in making moral decisions? We will then address various ethical questions regarding climate change. Does climate change generate moral obligations for individuals or only for governments? If it generates moral obligations for individuals, how demanding are these obligations? After that, we will discuss questions regarding (non-human) animals. Do we have moral duties towards animals? Do animals morally count less than humans or are they morally equal to us? Is it wrong to consume animal products? We will finish the course by addressing moral questions about non-animal objects in nature such as trees and rivers. Do we have moral duties to them? If yes, what further moral implications follow?

Readings: All readings are posted on Blackboard.

Expectations, Assignments, and Policies:

- **Attendance and Participation**. You're expected to attend the meetings regularly and participate. More than *three unexcused absences* will affect your attendance grade negatively. Bringing up your (reading) questions during class meetings, paying attention to and answering your friends' (reading) questions in the class or in the discussion forum are among the top factors that will positively affect your participation grade.

- **Reading Questions.** You'll submit 1 or 2 questions for ten (10) readings of your choice. Submit your questions on **Blackboard** > **Reading Questions** > [**The Reading of the Day**] > **Create Thread**. Pick one of the readings if there are multiple readings for that day.

    - **Due by 11:59 pm** on the day before the date the reading is assigned.
    - **Find a title for your thread that gives a glimpse at your question.**
    - **What kind of questions?** (**1**)1 or 2 *focused* questions—not randomly listed series of questions. (**2**) They should be *directed at the reading*, and be of a *main concern* in the article. (**3**) You could focus on something you want to *further discuss*, you *don't understand*, or *object to* in the article. (**4**) Don't merely write the question itself! Say a bit about why that question or objection should arise, why it should

be a concern. (**5**) Don't go for easy questions! If it's about something you don't understand, make sure the article doesn't clarify it. (**6**) Last but absolutely not the least: write *clearly*! A college student *who knows nothing of the subject* should be able to understand your question.
  - **Reading questions will be graded** based on the requirements listed above. I won't always have time to respond to your reading questions extensively on the forum. You'll have your chance to bring it up during class meetings. If you miss the chance, feel free to email me for further discussion.
  - **How to read philosophy**. Video: https://youtu.be/XlcrKfaJBRM
  - **Don't be like this lawyer.** The Castle (1997) - "The *vibe*… of the thing." **Video**: https://youtu.be/VqSzIw6EuVc

- **Reading Summaries.** You'll write ***four*** reading summaries, each **1-2 pages** (double-spaced, 12-point font). ***The first*** reading summary is on the following reading: "*It's Not* My *Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations*" by W. Sinnott-Armstrong. ***The other three*** reading summaries are up to you and are to be picked from among the readings that come after the Sinnott-Armstrong reading. Submit your summaries on **Blackboard** > **Reading Summaries** > [**The Reading of the Week**]. Pick one of the readings if there are multiple readings for that week.

  - **Due by 11:59 pm** on (Wednesday) the day before the reading will be discussed in the class.
  - **First reading summary**. If you submit it on time, you'll get full credit for it. I'll give you comments, and tell you whether it's an A-level, or B-level, etc., paper. Take it all into account for your other reading summaries for they will be graded strictly and based on the requirements listed below.
  - **What kind of reading summaries?** (**1**) Focus on *the main concerns* of the paper and try extracting *the main argument* in it. (**2**) Avoid direct quotes (unless *absolutely* necessary)—put things *in your own words*. (**3**) Cite properly. (E.g., "The author says such-and-such (p.256).") (**4**) Focus on the philosophical points and avoid (e.g.) historical, biographical backgrounds. (**5**) In some readings, I left notes like "Skip this part" or "Skim over this part." Omit those parts from your reading summaries. (**6**) Edit your work! Read (and re-read) your paper, cut off excessive words, drop unnecessarily repetitive sentences, re-express or restructure unnecessarily complex sentences, break down long sentences. Last but absolutely not the least: write *clearly*! A college student *who knows nothing of the subject* should be able to have a very good idea about the reading from your summary.
  - **Four criteria for grading writing assignments**. (**1**) **Target**: Your reading summary must be about the reading of the week. (**2**) **Clarity**: Write clearly! (**3**) **Scope**: Cover all the main points. (**4**) **Depth**: Cover it all in sufficient depth.
  - **How to Write a Philosophy Paper**. Video: https://youtu.be/nKdl_VmKNmk.

- **Term Paper. 4-5 pages** (double-spaced, 12-point font). Due on **May 4, 11:59pm ET**. Further instructions **TBA**.

- **Late Assignment Policy**. One point will be taken off your grade *for each late day*.

- **Emails and meetings**. If you find the readings or assignments difficult, meet me in my office hours or talk to me via email. Do not hesitate. I am sincerely happy to help you.

Your grades will breakdown as follows:

- 10 Reading Questions 10 X 3 = 30 pts
- 4 Reading Summaries 4 X 10 = 40 pts
- Term Paper 20 pts
- Attendance (5) + Participation (5) 10 pts
- Total 100 pts

Grading Scale:

A	100-94%
A-	93-90%
B+	89-87%
B	86-84%
B-	83-80%
C+	79-77%
C	76-74%
C-	73-70%
D+	69-67%
D	66-60%
F	59% or less

Covid-19 & Stay Safe Pledge:
Syracuse University's Stay Safe Pledge reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on the well-being of our community members. This pledge defines norms for behavior that will promote community health and wellbeing. Classroom expectations include the following: wearing a mask that covers the nose and mouth at all times, maintaining a distance of six feet from others, and staying away from class if you feel unwell.

Religious Observances:
If you need to miss a class or deadline due to a religious observance, you will be entitled to makeup opportunities. More info: http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious_observance.htm.

Disability-Related Accommodations:
Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498. For more information, see the Office of Disability Services: http://disabilityservices.syr.edu.

Academic Integrity Policy:
The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about the instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort.

- ☐ You must cite all sources apart from your own lecture notes.
- ☐ Feel free to use any acceptable citation format.
- ☐ Your reading summaries and reading questions must be your own work.
- ☐ I encourage you to discuss the class material with your friends. However, if you use their ideas in any of your written work, you must cite it.

- No repetitive questions: The same reading question can't be submitted twice by you at two different times, or by you and a friend of yours at the same time.

Tentative Course Schedule:

I. Introduction

Tue, Jan 18 Introduction to Course Mechanics

Thu, Jan 20 Logic & Arguments

II. Ethical Theories

Tue, Jan 25 *Consequentialism & Utilitarianism*
Reading: John Stuart Mill "*Utilitarianism, Ch. II*" (excerpts)

Thu, Jan 27 *Consequentialism & Utilitarianism (Cont.)*
Reading: Robert Nozick "*The Experience Machine*"
Reading: Ursula K. Le Guin "*The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*"

Tue, Feb 1 *Kantian Ethics: The Formula of Universal Law (FUL)*
Reading: Russ Shaffer-Landau "*The Kantian Perspective*"

Thu, Feb 3 *Kantian Ethics: The Formula of Humanity*
Reading: Onora O'Neill "*A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics*"

Tue, Feb 8 *Ethical Pluralism: Prima Facie Duties*
Reading: Russ Shaffer-Landau "*Ross's Ethic of Prima Facie Duties*"

Thu, Feb 10 *Virtue Ethics*
Reading: Aristotle "*Nicomachean Ethics*" (Books I, II, excerpts)
Reading: Rosalind Hursthouse "*Normative Virtue Ethics*"

III. Climate Change

Tue, Feb 15 *Individual Moral Obligations & The Problem of Inconsequentialism*
Reading: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong "*It's Not* My *Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations*"
Reading: Augustin Fragniere "*Climate Change and Individual Duties*"

Thu, Feb 17 *Discussion*
No New Reading

Tue, Feb 22 *A Solution to The Problem of Inconsequentialism*
Reading: Julia Nefsky "*How You Can Help, Without Making a Difference*"

Thu, Feb 24 *Discussion*
No New Reading

Tue, Mar 1 *How Demanding Is Our Individual Climate Duty?*

Reading: Augustin Fragniere "*How Demanding is Our Climate Duty? An Application of the No-Harm Principle to Individual Emissions*"

Thu, Mar 3 *Discussion*
No New Reading

Tue, Mar 8 *Climate Change vs World's Other Problems*
Reading: Dan Shahar "*Treading Lightly on the Climate in a Problem-Ridden World*"

Thu, Mar 10 *Discussion*
No New Reading

SPRING BREAK

IV. Animals

Tue, Mar 22 *Animal Rights: For and Against*
Reading: Tom Regan "*The Case for Animal Rights*"
Reading: Marry A. Warren "*Difficulties with the Strong Animal Rights Position*"

Thu, Mar 24 *Discussion*
No New Reading

Tue, Mar 29 *Animal Liberation*
Reading: Peter Singer "*All Animals Are Equal*"

Thu, Mar 31 *Discussion*
No New Reading

Tue, Apr 5 *Speciesism*
Reading: Shelly Kagan "*What's Wrong with Speciesism?*"
Reading: François Jaquet "*What's Wrong with Speciesism*"

Thu, Apr 7 *Discussion*
No New Reading

Tue, Apr 12 *Consuming Animal Products*
Reading: Bob Fischer "*Arguments for Consuming Animal Products*"

Thu, Apr 14 *Discussion*
No New Reading

V. Nature

Tue, Apr 19 *Including Inanimate Objects into the Moral Circle*
Reading: J. Baird Callicott "*The Environmental Omnivore's Dilemma*"

Thu, Apr 21 *Discussion*

No New Reading

Tue, Apr 26 *Challenges for Rights of Nature*
Reading: Patrik Baard "*Fundamental Challenges for Rights of Nature*"

TERM PAPER DUE ON MAY 4, 11:59pm ET.