

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (GEOL 1055)**

**Class Day & Time:** Tuesday 6:00-8:30 in SRCC 113

**Office Hours:** Fridays from 11:00 to 12:00 or by appointment. To make use of the scheduled office hour, please send me an email and we will set up a zoom meeting.

**Instructor:** Tim Fitchett, Esq. (he/his)  
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**Course Description:** This course asks students to evaluate environmental decision-making, land management, treatment of animals, plants and humans, and the use of natural resources by investigating the underlying assumptions of what is right and what is good through the lens of normative and descriptive ethics, science, management, economics, justice, religion, and public policy on the environment. Throughout the semester, we will discuss our historical and current day evolution toward a land ethic by using the principles of environmental ethics.

**Required Text:** Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works, 4th Ed., David Schmitz & Dan C. Shahr, eds. (2018, Oxford University Press)

Only available electronically at:

[https://redshelf.com/  
vitalsource.com](https://redshelf.com/vitalsource.com)

### **Grading:**

- ***Class Participation (10%)*** – A note on attendance and participation: I do not intend to take attendance in class, but you should attend class and participate in discussions if you hope to do well. This course involves a significant amount of in class discussion and you will be expected to be a part of it. Therefore, 10% of your grade will be based on class participation. Also, much of the analysis that we perform in class will inform your graded assignments. Missing lectures and the corresponding discussions will likely lead to low quality papers and missed quizzes.
- ***Quizzes on Reading Material (30%)*** – Reading and understanding class materials and being prepared for discussion is essential to getting the most out of

this class. To ensure that you do the reading and are prepared, there will be quizzes given at the beginning of six classes. The quizzes will evaluate your understanding of key concepts from the reading assigned for that day. Each quiz will be 5% of your final grade.

- **Expository Essay (20%)** – You will draft an essay that articulates two competing perspectives on a controversial environmental issue.

In the past, students have written about topics such as:

- Commercial fishing
- GMO crops
- Exotic pet trade
- Electric cars
- Fast fashion

You are welcome to choose any topic that you wish, but the essay should present, critique, and assess *both* perspectives on the issue in a structured and neutral way. The idea is to present both sides of the issue fairly and completely without advocating for either side.

The essay must reference relevant principles from the reading material and any outside factual material relied upon to present both perspectives on the controversial issue. The importance is the application of the in class materials to the controversy that you choose. Citations to the text and outside materials are required – the citation format used should be APA.

Your submission should be at least 1000 words.

- **Argumentative Essay (30%)** – Your second paper will build on the earlier writing assignment by turning it from an description of two perspectives on a controversial environmental issue into an argument supporting one of the perspectives.

In the essay, you should briefly contextualize the two rival positions on the issue, corresponding to the perspectives you laid out in the first writing assignment, identify the perspective most compelling to you, and then defend that perspective. Your chosen position should be articulated in a thesis statement based on the ethical issues covered in the readings and class discussions. The defense of that thesis should rely primarily on ethical arguments and be supported by facts. Concepts from the text and referenced outside materials should be cited using the APA format.

The focus of both essays is on the philosophical and ethical principles that we are discussing in class.

Your submission should be at least 1500 words in length.

- ***In-Class Presentation of Argumentative Essay (10%)*** – In your presentation, you will succinctly describe the factual background of the controversial issue, the various perspectives on the controversy, the perspective that you support, why you support that perspective, and your argument for why others should also support that perspective. Your presentation should be 4 to 5 minutes long. You will be graded on content and delivery.

**Late work policy:** I understand that things come up and am willing to grant a minor extension for good reason and without penalty. However, if you do not reach out to me to request an extension and/or I do not grant your extension, then I will dock 10% of your grade per week late for up to 4 weeks. Thus, for example, if the Expository Essay is due on October 7th by midnight and you turn it in October 14th before midnight, I will grade your paper, then take off 10%. Turn it in anytime before October 21st and you lose 20%, and so on. After 4 weeks, I will not accept your late assignment under any circumstances.

**Academic Integrity:** Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands- on practice, complete the [Academic Integrity Modules](#).

**Disability Services:** If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, [drsrecep@pitt.edu](mailto:drsrecep@pitt.edu), (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

**Diversity Statement:** Students, faculty, and guests represent diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences which enrich our research and educational environment. Individuals of all races, colors, ancestries, genders, marital status, familial status, ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, national origins, religious or political affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities, and other visible and nonvisible differences are absolutely welcomed in this class. I urge all to be mindful in this classroom and to feel responsible for creating a space that is intellectually rigorous and is a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for everyone. No demeaning or discriminatory behavior will be permitted. If you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to approach me during or after class to discuss the situation.

In this class, we will all have the chance to indicate the name that we prefer to be called and, if we choose, to identify pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. Please approach me if you have such preferences and I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well. I will endeavor to use gender-inclusive and nondiscriminatory language in all course communication and materials. Your suggestions for how to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or other student groups are encouraged and appreciated. Our faculty is committed to communication from students without judgment. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so arrangements can be made.

SNAP Benefits: SNAP provides monthly benefits to help eligible students afford groceries, supporting academic focus and overall well-being. If you're interested in learning more or seeing if you qualify, visit the [Pennsylvania Department of Human Services website](#), or contact Pitt's Care and Resource Support Office for resources and application guidance.

## Schedule

Date	Discussion Topics	Assignment
<b>Aug 26</b>	Introduction to the Course  What is good? What is right? What kind of	Read the Syllabus; Text pages 2-16: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• What Really Matters?</li> <li>• What Really Works?</li> </ul>

	person do you want to be?	
<b>Sep 2</b>	The Soul of Environmentalism And Contested Foundations	Text pages 19-31: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pinchot</i>: “The Fight for Conservation”</li> <li>• <i>Muir</i>: “The Hetch Hetchy Valley”</li> <li>• <i>Pinchot</i>: “The Hetch Hetchy Dam Site: Hearing before the House Committee on the Public Lands”</li> <li>• <i>Leopold</i>: “The Land Ethic”</li> <li>• <i>Naess</i>: “The Shallow and Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement”</li> </ul>
<b>Sep 9</b>	Humane Environmentalism	Text pages 33-51: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Singer</i>: “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”</li> <li>• <i>Rolston</i>: “Feeding People versus Saving Nature”</li> </ul>
<b>Sep 16</b>	Humanity and Ecology	Text pages 52-70: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Hardin</i>: “The Tragedy of the Commons”</li> <li>• <i>Schmidtz</i>: “The Institution of Property”</li> </ul>
<b>Sep 23</b>	Environmental Conflict	Text pages 72-87: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Guha</i>: “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique”</li> <li>• <i>Schmidtz</i>: “Natural Enemies”</li> </ul>

<b>Sep 30</b>	Our Place in Nature	Text pages 89- 101 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>White Jr.</i>: “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”</li> <li>• <i>Asafu-Adjaye</i>: “An Ecomodernist Manifesto”</li> </ul>
<b>Sep 30</b>	<b>Expository Essay Due by 11:59pm</b>	
<b>Oct 7</b>	Expanding the Moral Circle	Text pages: 104-117 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Singer</i>: “All Animals are Equal”</li> <li>• <i>Steinbock</i>: “Speciesism and the Idea of Equality”</li> </ul>
<b>Oct 14</b>	Eating Animals	Text pages: 141-173 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shahar</i>: “Is it OK to Eat Meat?”</li> <li>• <i>Budolfson</i>: “Is It Wrong to Eat Meat from Factory Farms? If So, Why?”</li> <li>• <i>Diamond</i>: “Eating Meat and Eating People”</li> </ul>
<b>Oct 21</b>	Ecologies versus Animals	Text pages: 175-200 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Aldo Leopold</i>, “<i>Thinking Like a Mountain</i>”</li> <li>• <i>Mark Sagoff</i>, “<i>Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce</i>”</li> <li>• <i>J. Baird Callicott</i>, “<i>Holistic Environmental Ethics and the Problem of Ecofascism</i>”</li> <li>• <i>Whyte</i>: “<i>The Elephant Management Dilemma</i>”</li> </ul>
<b>Practical Implications of Applying Those Values</b>		

<b>Oct 28</b>	Global Justice	Text pages: 282-305 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shue</i>: "Global Environment and International Inequality"</li> <li>• <i>Sagoff</i>: "Do We Consume Too Much?"</li> </ul>
<b>Nov 4</b>	Environmental Justice	Text pages: 307-320 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Foreman Jr.</i>: "Environmental Justice and Risk Assessment"</li> <li>• <i>Shrader-Frechette</i>: "Unjust, Human-Caused Pollution Drives Most Premature Health Harm and Death"</li> </ul>
<b>Nov 11</b>	<b>Argumentative Essay Due by 11:59pm</b>	
<b>Nov 11</b>	Climate Change	Text Pages: 364 - 388 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nordhaus</i>: "The Climate Casino"</li> <li>• <i>Gardiner</i>: "A Perfect Moral Storm"</li> </ul>
<b>Nov 18</b>	Urban Ecology	Text Pages: 342 - 362 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lash</i>: "The Green and the Gray of Urban Renewal"</li> <li>• <i>Zuniga-Teran</i>: "Urban Ecology"</li> <li>• <i>Mathews</i>: "Letting the World Grow Old"</li> </ul>
<b>Dec 2</b>	<b>In-Class Presentations</b>	