



**BIO 527/SOS 527**

## **Environmental Ethics & Policy Goals**

**Spring 2017**

TH: 3:00-5:30

Room: LSC (Life Sciences-C Wing) 260

Instructor: Ben A. Minter  
Office: Life Sciences A-wing (LSA) 262  
Email: [Ben.minter@asu.edu](mailto:Ben.minter@asu.edu)  
Phone: 480-965-4632  
Office hours: M 1:30-3:00PM, Th 2:00-3:00PM

### **Seminar Description**

A discussion-driven seminar in applied environmental ethics. We will start the semester by surveying some of the most influential and policy-relevant approaches in the field of environmental ethics, focusing on the debate over whether the justification for environmental protection should appeal to human-centered or nature-centered ethical principles. We will then examine the environmental ethical thought of two of the most significant figures in the tradition, Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson. From there we will engage a series of topics and issues that bridge environmental ethics and societal action, including the debate over strategies and tactics in contemporary environmentalism, economic and ethical valuation of species and ecosystems, the environmentalist implications of the "Anthropocene" and of rethinking wilderness and nature protection on a human-dominated planet, the ethical dimensions of climate change, energy development, and sustainability, among other topics.

## Seminar Themes/Core Questions

The following questions will drive much of our discussion over the course of the semester:

- How should we value the environment? Do wild species and/or ecological systems have a “good of their own” that must be respected regardless of their instrumental value to humans?
- Do “enlightened” anthropocentric and nonanthropocentric moral arguments lead to similar or different environmental policy agendas?
- What is the value of the work of canonical environmental thinkers such as Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson for our understanding of environmental responsibility in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- What ethical and political vision – and what tactics – should define the environmental movement in the coming decades?
- Is there a fundamental conflict between economic/prudential environmental policy arguments and “moral” ones when it comes to valuing biodiversity and ecosystems?
- How does climate change (and global change more generally) raise significant and novel ethical and strategic concerns for conservation, broader notions of ethical responsibility, and environmental decision making?
- How should we balance the normative and ethical dimensions of energy development and sustainability agendas alongside more traditional preservationist values and goals?
- What ethical issues and concerns are raised by the application of genetic engineering and synthetic biology technologies to the creation and conservation of animal species?

## Seminar Requirements

### 1) WEEKLY READING (AND PREPARATION OF READING RESPONSES), REGULAR ATTENDANCE, AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SEMINAR DISCUSSIONS.

- Each week you will prepare a 1.5-2 page (single spaced) “response” to the readings for that week. Responses should not just be a summary of the reading but rather a *concise analysis of/reaction to the material* [in many cases you’ll want to briefly summarize each paper’s main argument/goal, state whether or not you found it compelling, why it was/wasn’t, etc.; other times you may want to characterize a set of readings and compare/contrast ideas and arguments. *The point is to demonstrate your understanding of the readings and your own reflection and critical reaction to them.*] At the end of your responses please list 3-4 questions for further discussion. These will be useful for each week’s session leader as they structure our discussion. You should cover all of the readings assigned for that week, though you may at times choose to emphasize a particular reading or two in your responses. Reading responses should be posted to the BB site by 12:00 PM on Wednesdays beginning the second week of class.

### 2) READING DISCUSSION FACILITATIONS.

- Organize and lead seminar discussion (~75 minutes) of assigned readings for that week. We will develop a semester reading discussion schedule the first week of classes after we finalize the seminar enrollment. *A good strategy for the discussion leaders is to review the reading responses and questions from your colleagues before running the discussion each week.* \*\*You do not need to submit response pieces the weeks that you lead discussion of the material.

### 3) ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN THE MEDIA/CURRENT EVENTS AND CONTROVERSIES PRESENTATION

- Present and lead discussion of an environmental policy, conservation, or management issue covered in the media, broadly construed (e.g., an online newspaper or magazine article, documentary video excerpt, Ted Talk, a podcast, etc.). **\*\*Select and post material to be discussed by 5:00 PM the Monday before class that week and send an email to the group letting everyone know the material is available (with any instructions/points to consider).** You'll lead a roughly a 45-60 min. discussion of the issue, *focusing on how the material raises specific considerations of environmental ethics* (e.g., moral responsibility to nature or to future generations, environmental justice, values and science in environmental decision making, evaluation of environmental harms and benefits of proposed societal actions, technologies, or policies, etc.). Media discussions will take place during the second half of the seminar period when they are scheduled. [Also, note that media discussions do not (and in most cases should not) have to match the topic of the readings for that week. The idea is to introduce additional topical or thematic material for discussion and analysis.]

### 4) SEMINAR PROJECT (PAPER & PRESENTATION).

- A research project that develops an in-depth ethical analysis of an environmental policy, conservation, or environmental management issue/problem. Projects include the following components:
  - Paper proposals due 2/2 (incl. title, 250-300 word synopsis; 4-5 preliminary references)
  - First drafts due 3/23
  - Project presentations (last two weeks of the semester; 15 minutes in length with 5 additional minutes of group discussion).
  - Final papers (20-25pp, double-spaced) due 5/1

### **Final Grade Distribution**

- *Seminar participation* (1-3 above, i.e., attendance & overall effort, reading & media facilitations/presentations, weekly reading responses) ~50%
- *Seminar project (paper/presentation)* ~50% (paper 40% (10% first draft; 30% final); presentation 10%)

### **Grading Scale**

This is a graduate seminar, so the expectation is that you will put in the effort throughout the semester in your weekly reading responses, your reading and media presentations, and your seminar papers and final presentations. Basically, if you work hard, are engaged, and consistently produce good work, you should perform very well in the course. But here's a more formal breakdown of the grading scale:

A+ = 97%-100%	B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	E = <65%
A = 94-96%	B = 84-86%	C = 70-76%	
A- = 90-93%	B- = 80-83%	D = 65-69%	

## Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

## Readings

BOOKS (available in the ASU bookstore and via Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc.):

- B. Minter and S. Pyne (eds) *After Preservation: Saving American Nature in the Age of Humans (AP)*
- T. Nordhaus and M. Shellenberger, *Break Through: Why We Can't Leave Saving the Planet to Environmentalists (BT)*

ARTICLES (the articles below are available on the Blackboard site in the "Readings" folder).

## Seminar Topics and Schedule

### 1: INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND POLICY

#### (1/12/17) Debating the Ethical Foundations of Environmental Action

Readings:

- B. Minter, "Unity Among Environmentalists? Debating the Values-Policy Link in Environmental Ethics" **[First six pages only]**
- M. Sagoff, "Zuckerman's Dilemma: A Plea for Environmental Ethics"
- A. Weisman, "Obligation to Posterity?"

### 2: BIOGRAPHICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: ALDO LEOPOLD & RACHEL CARSON

#### (1/19/17) Aldo Leopold, Conservation, & *The Land Ethic*

Readings:

- A. Leopold, "Some Fundamentals of Conservation in the Southwest," "Marshland Elegy," "Thinking Like a Mountain," "The Land Ethic"
- B. Norton, "Leopold as a Practical Moralizer and Policy Analyst"
- F. Berkes et al., "Aldo Leopold's Land Health from a Resilience Point of View: Self-renewal Capacity of Social-Ecological Systems"

## (1/26/17) Rachel Carson & the Legacy of *Silent Spring*

### Readings:

- R. Carson, excerpts from *Silent Spring*
- P. Cafaro, "Rachel Carson's Environmental Ethics"
- K. Mangu-Ward, "Suffering in Silence"
- *After Preservation (AP)*:
  - J. Rappaport Clark, "Endangered Species Conservation, Then and Now"
  - A. Seidl, "Resembling the Cosmic Rhythms"

## 3: ENVIRONMENTALISM: RADICAL, DEAD, & RESURRECTED

## (2/2/17) Radical Environmentalism: History, Ethics, Politics

### Readings:

- E. Abbey, "Forward!" (Foreword to *Ecodefense*)
- B. Taylor, "The Tributaries of Radical Environmentalism"
- D. Jensen, "What Goes Up Must Come Down"
- S. Vanderheiden, "Radical Environmentalism in an Age of Antiterrorism"

**\*Paper proposals due**

## (2/9/17) The Death of Environmentalism? Revival Strategies

### Readings:

- Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *Break Through (BT)*: Introduction, ch.'s 1, 6
- P. Kingsnorth, "Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist"
- M. Nijhuis, "Is the 'Ecomodernist Manifesto' the Future of Environmentalism?"

## 4: ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

## (2/16/17) Ethical Convergence on Environmental Policy?

### Readings:

- B. Minter, "Unity Among Environmentalists? Debating the Values-Policy Link in Environmental Ethics" [Read only section: "Norton's Toward Unity among Environmentalists and the 'Convergence Hypothesis'"]
- D. Sarewitz, "Who is Converging With Whom? An Open Letter to Professor Bryan Norton from a Policy Wonk."
- K. McShane, "Anthropocentrism vs. Nonanthropocentrism: Why Should We Care?"
- B. Norton, "Convergence, Noninstrumental Value and the Semantics of 'Love': Comment on McShane"

## (2/23/17) Valuing Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services: Conflict & Congruence

### Readings:

- Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *BT*: ch. 2
- J. Justus et al., "Buying Into Conservation: Intrinsic versus Instrumental Value"
- M. Sagoff, "Intrinsic value: a reply to Justus et al."
- D. McCauley, "Selling out on Nature"
- Luck et al., "Ethical Considerations in On-Ground Applications of the Ecosystem Services Concept"

## (3/2/17) Climate Change: Ethics, Justice & Politics

### Readings:

- S. Gardiner and L. Hartzell-Nichols, "Ethics and Global Climate Change"
- P. Singer, "One Atmosphere"
- Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *BT*: ch.'s 5, 9
- B. Minter, "Geoengineering and Ecological Ethics in the Anthropocene"

## (3/9/17) SPRING BREAK

## (3/16/17) Flashpoints in Energy Ethics

### Readings:

- D. Jamieson, "Energy, Ethics, and the Transformation of Nature"
- I. de Melo-Martin et al., "The Role of Ethics in Shale Gas Policies"
- B. Taebi et al., "The Ethics of Nuclear Power: Social Experiments, Intergenerational Justice, and Emotions"
- Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *BT*: ch. 4

## (3/23/17) Sustainability (For & Against)

### Readings:

- R. Solow, "Sustainability: An Economist's Perspective"
- P. Thompson, "Sustainability: Ethical Foundations"
- J. Newton and E. Freyfogle, "Sustainability: A Dissent"
- J. Vucetich and M. Nelson, "Sustainability: Virtuous or Vulgar?"

**\*Seminar papers (first drafts) due**

## (3/30/17) Debating the Anthropocene

### Readings:

- *After Preservation (AP)*:
  - J. McNeill, "Nature and Political Power in the Anthropocene"
  - E. Ellis, "Too Big for Nature"
  - H. Rolston, "After Preservation? Dynamic Nature in the Anthropocene"
  - E. Marris, "Humility in the Anthropocene"
  - D. Foreman, "The Anthropocene and Ozymandias"
  - J. Vucetich et al., "The Anthropocene: Disturbing Name, Limited Insight"

## (4/6/17) Wilderness Preservation, Restoration & Conservation on a Changing Planet

### Readings:

- AP:
  - A. Revkin, "Restoring the Nature of America"
  - D. Worster, "The Higher Altruism"
  - C. Meine, "A Letter to the Editors: In Defense of the Relative Wild"
  - S. Pyne, "Green Fire Meets Red Fire"
  - J. W. Thomas, "After Preservation—The Case of the Northern Spotted Owl"
  - M. Marvier and H. Wong, "Move Over Grizzly Adams—Conservation for the Rest of Us"

## (4/13/17) How Far should we go to Bring Back Lost Species? Debating the Ethics of De-Extinction & Re-Wilding

### Readings:

#### *De-Extinction:*

- J. Sherkow and H. Greely, "What if Extinction is Not Forever?"
- S. Brand, "The Case for De-Extinction: Why We Should Bring Back the Woolly Mammoth"
- *After Preservation (AP)*: B. Minter, "When Extinction is a Virtue"

#### *Pleistocene Rewilding:*

- J. Donlan et al., "Re-Wilding North America"
- *After Preservation (AP)*: H. Greene, "Pleistocene Rewilding and the Future of Biodiversity"

## 5: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

(4/20/17) Project Presentations

(4/27/17) Project Presentations

**\*\*Final seminar papers due electronically by 5PM on May 1\*\***