



Photo: Mark Klett, "Trails of Weekend Explorers, Near Hanksville"

BIO 527/SOS 527
Environmental Ethics & Policy Goals

Spring 2018

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
Phone: 480-965-4632
Office hours: Tu 1:30-2:30PM, Th 1:30-3:00PM

Course Description

A discussion-driven seminar in applied environmental ethics. We'll 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'll 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,” the ethical dimensions of climate change and sustainability, and a number of 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?
- 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 21st century?
- What ethical and political vision – and what tactics – should define the environmental movement in the coming decades?
- Should environmentalism as a social and political movement jettison its moralism and close association with wilderness and endangered species preservation in favor of a more “pragmatic,” growth- and technologically-oriented agenda?
- Do “enlightened” anthropocentric and nonanthropocentric moral arguments lead to similar or different environmental policy agendas?
- 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 sustainability agendas alongside more traditional preservationist values and goals?
- What is the significance of the “Anthropocene” for understanding the values and goals of environmentalism, particularly regarding nature preservation?
- What ethical issues and concerns are raised 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’ll 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. 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'll 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., online newspaper and/or magazine articles, documentary video excerpts, TED Talks, podcasts, 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/bullet 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, 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 semester-long research project that develops an in-depth ethical analysis of an environmental policy, conservation, design, or environmental management issue/problem. The following components:
 - Paper proposals **due 2/1** (incl. title, a 250-300-word synopsis that includes the main question or theme your paper will take up, as well as the primary topics/issues/problems you plan to engage; and a preliminary reference list of 5-6 sources)
 - First drafts **due 3/22**
 - Project presentations (last weeks of the semester; ~15 minutes in length with 5 additional minutes for questions and discussion).
 - Final papers (20-25pp, double-spaced) **due 4/30** (electronic submission).

Final Grade Distribution

- Seminar participation (1-3 above, i.e., attendance & overall effort, reading & media facilitations/presentations, weekly reading responses) ~ 45%
- Seminar project (paper/presentation) ~ 55% (paper 45% (~ 15% 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 consistently engaged, and produce solid work, you should do 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 listed on the seminar schedule below are available on the Blackboard site in the "Readings" folder. Many weeks also include elective/optional reading, which you are free to explore if you're interested in diving into a topic more deeply.)

Seminar Topics and Schedule

1: INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND POLICY

(1/11/18) Debating the Ethical Foundations of Ecology and Environmental Action

Readings:

- M. Sagoff, "Zuckerman's Dilemma: A Plea for Environmental Ethics"
- J. B. Callicott, "Ecology: An Ethical Perspective"
- A. Weisman, "Obligation to Posterity?"

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

(1/18/18) Aldo Leopold, Conservation, & *The Land Ethic*

Readings:

- A. Leopold, "Conservation as a Moral Issue," "Thinking Like a Mountain," "The Land Ethic"
- M. Nelson, "Aldo Leopold, Environmental Ethics, and the Land Ethic"
- B. Norton, "Leopold as a Practical Moralist 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"

(1/25/18) Rachel Carson & the Legacy of *Silent Spring*

Readings:

- R. Carson, excerpts from *Silent Spring*
- P. Cafaro, "Rachel Carson's Environmental Ethics"
- P. Offit, "How Rachel Carson Cost Millions of People Their Lives"
- R. Conniff, "Rachel Carson's Critics Keep On, But She Told Truth About DDT"
- *After Preservation (AP)*:
 - J. Rappaport Clark, "Endangered Species Conservation, Then and Now"
 - A. Seidl, "Resembling the Cosmic Rhythms"

3: ENVIRONMENTALISM: RADICAL, DEAD, & RESURRECTED

(2/1/18) Radical Environmentalism: Philosophical Roots, Ethical Imperatives

Readings:

- B. Taylor, "The Tributaries of Radical Environmentalism"
- E. Abbey, "Freedom and Wilderness, Wilderness and Freedom"
- A. Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects"
- D. Jensen, "You Choose"

****Paper proposals due***

(2/8/18) The Death of Environmentalism? Revival Strategies

Readings:

- T. Nordhaus and M. Shellenberger, *Break Through (BT)*: Introduction, ch.'s 1, 6
- Breakthrough Institute, "An Ecomodernist Manifesto"
- C. Hamilton, "The Technofix is in"

4: ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

(2/15/18) Ethical Convergence and Divergence in 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'"]
- H. Rolston, "Converging vs. Reconstituting Environmental Ethics"
- K. McShane, "Anthropocentrism vs. Nonanthropocentrism: Why Should We Care?"
- D. Sarewitz, "Who is Converging with Whom? An Open Letter to Professor Bryan Norton from a Policy Wonk."

(2/22/18) Valuing Biodiversity & Ecosystems

Readings:

- D. Ehrenfeld, "Hard Times for Biodiversity"
- 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."
- K.M.A. Chan et al. "Why Protect Nature? Rethinking Values and the Environment"

(3/1/18) Energy, Ethics, & Climate Change

Readings:

- D. Jamieson, "Energy, Ethics, and the Transformation of Nature"
- Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *BT*: ch.'s 4, 5, 9
- J. Garvey, "Climate Change and Moral Outrage"

(3/8/18) SPRING BREAK

(3/15/18) Sustainability (For & Against)

Readings:

- R. Solow, "Sustainability: An Economist's Perspective"
- B. Norton, "The Ignorance Argument: What Must We Know to be Fair to the Future?"
- J. Vucetich and M. Nelson, "Sustainability: Virtuous or Vulgar?"
- P. Kingsnorth, "Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist"

(3/22/18) Debating the Anthropocene

Readings:

- *After Preservation (AP)*:
 - B. Minter and S. Pyne, "Writing on Stone, Writing in the Wind"
 - 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"

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

(3/29/18) 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"

(4/5/18) How Far should we go to Bring Back Lost Species? De-Extinction & Re-Wilding

Readings:

Pleistocene Rewilding:

- J. Donlan et al., "Re-Wilding North America"
- *After Preservation (AP)*: H. Greene, "Pleistocene Rewilding and the Future of Biodiversity"
- D. Nogués-Bravo, "Rewilding is the New Pandora's Box in Conservation"

De-Extinction:

- 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"

5: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

(4/12/18) Project Presentations

(4/19/18) NO CLASS

(4/26/18) Project Presentations

****Final seminar papers due electronically by 5PM on Monday, April 30****