



Philosophy & the Environment

Professor Craig Callender

SYLLABUS

Contact

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Topic and Goals

This course explores contemporary environmental issues from the perspective of philosophy, primarily applied ethics, political philosophy, and philosophy of science. This quarter we'll cover some issues in the following areas:

- Ethics, Food and Animals
- Wilderness, Ecology and the Land Ethic
- Biodiversity: What is It? Why Value It?
- Conservation in the Anthropocene
- Climate Ethics, Economics and the Future
- Property, Pollution and Justice

In each section, we'll mix theoretical problems in philosophy with practical problems facing conservation today.



The main goal of the course is that students come to understand the way that ethical values and arguments underlie many of today's debates about the environment. These arguments will have relevance to many decisions you'll make in life, ranging from small personal ones (e.g., what car should I buy? what should I eat?) to your views on major public policy choices (e.g., climate change). By the quarter's end, successful students will be able to identify

PHILOSOPHY 26

the values at stake in environmental decisions and see the strengths and weakness of various positions. Along the way, students will also improve certain skills, such as the ability to critically read and appraise an academic essay, the ability to write such an essay, the ability to create and complete an independent project, and more.

Given the pandemic, the class format will be:

- Asynchronous lecture videos
- Asynchronous documentaries
- Synchronous “live” class Zoom discussion, Wed 5-6pm PT.

Since teaching online is new to me, please be patient with any hiccups along the way.

Course Materials

The only book required is Emma Marris’ The Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World, which can be purchased used for under \$10. All other reading will be available free online or via Canvas. A few of the films may cost money; if any are expensive, we can set up a time to watch it from my computer via Zoom.

Assessment

Five 500-word essays — 60%

Environmental Challenge Project — 15%

Final “Animal Project” — 25%

In the Environmental Challenge Project you will be asked to modify your behavior for 3-5 days in a more environmental way and report on this activity. Examples include living below the poverty line, going vegan, and more. Details about both projects will be found in a separate document on Canvas. If taking the class P/NP, please recall that your grade must be a C- or better to earn a P.

Plagiarism

In your assignments, all sources, including discussions with classmates, must be appropriately acknowledged. All answers given must be in your own wording. Closely paraphrasing or simply copying the work of others (such as authors of books or articles, or classmates, or Wikipedia) is not allowed. Plagiarism, the stealing of an idea or actual text, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be

immediately reported to the Academic Integrity Office. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers, quizzes and homework may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Accommodation for Disability

Students requesting accommodations must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to me and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. The OSD can be contacted via 858.534.4382 (phone), osd@ucsd.edu (email), disabilities.ucsd.edu (web).

Tentative Schedule

The reading should be done before the Wed discussion section. The official reading schedule is determined in class. “Optional” denotes supplemental reading that is either helpful backup or a step further on a topic. Often some of this material makes it into lecture.

Pre-term reading: Jim Robbins, The Ecology of Disease

Weeks 1-2: Lobsters, Octopuses, Puppies and Steer: Animals and Ethics. What should you eat? Is it morally acceptable to use animals the way we do? In this module you will be introduced to some basic ethical concepts and the main rival theories, e.g., utilitarian and deontological theories. We'll apply these theories to questions about what we should eat and the moral status of non-human animals.

Videos:

- Callender videos
- Jeremy Jackson, How We Wrecked the Ocean
- Blackfish

Reading:

- Wallace, Consider the Lobster
- Godfrey-Smith, The Mind of an Octopus
- Norcross, Puppies, Pigs and People

Odie



- Pollan, [Power Steer](#)
- Optional: Gruen, [Ethics and Animals](#), chapters 1-3
- Optional: van Dooren, [Pangolins And Pandemics](#)
- Optional: Greenberg, [The Four Fish We're Overeating—and What to Eat Instead](#)

Week 3: Wilderness and the Land Ethic. Aldo Leopold wrote what many consider to be the finest work in environmental ethics and conservation, *Sand County Almanac*. His thoughts on conservation, ethics, ecology and evolution, expressed in an understated yet beautiful prose, motivate many conservation biologists today. We'll find out why and examine his thought. We'll also examine the idea of wilderness. The Wilderness Act of 1964 enshrines our nation's desire to preserve wilderness areas. What is a wilderness? Should we seek to preserve or conserve wilderness, and why?

Videos:

- Callender videos
- [The Creation of Yosemite National Park Clip: Season 1 | 11m 44s](#)
- [The Dust Bowl](#) Intro 5m09s

Reading:

- Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, selection
- Leopold, [Thinking Like a Mountain](#)
- Millstein, [Debunking Myths About Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic](#)
- Woods, [Federal Wilderness Protection in the US](#)
- Optional: Price, *Flight Maps*
- Optional: Nichols, *Paradise Found*, selection

Week 4: Biodiversity. Recent scientific reports



What's left of the Palisades glacier



One of the last 300 takahe, NZ

about biodiversity loss are alarming. Conservation sciences have biodiversity as their goal. What is it and why is it valuable? Is it a normative or descriptive concept (or both)?

Videos:

- Callender videos
- [Cane Toads: An Unnatural History](#) (the greatest film of all time)

Reading:

- Sober, [Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism](#)
- Russow, [Why Do Species Matter?](#)
- Optional: Santana, [Save the Planet: Eliminate Biodiversity](#)
- Optional: Odenbaugh, [Conservation Biology](#)

Week 5-6: Conservation and the Anthropocene. Once we acknowledge that human beings have affected more or less everything on the planet, that ecosystems have always been in flux, and that many problems are non-point-sourced (e.g., climate change), how “hands on” should conservation be? Using the latest techniques in genetic engineering, it may soon be possible to create close cousins of extinct animals. Should we “rewild” the world, gene drive away invasives, assist migration, resurrect extinct species, introduce exotics, and build novel ecosystems? Or does this turn the world into a “zoo” —and if so, what’s wrong with that?

Videos:

- Callender videos
- Emma Marris @ UCSD: [The Future of Conservation](#)
- Beth Shapiro @ UCSD: [Can We, Should We, and Will We Bring Back Mammoths?](#)
- [Last Wild Places: American Prairie Reserve](#) (if still free)

Reading:

- Marris, *The Rambunctious Garden*, chap



Victoria, SWR, San Diego, first IVF parent

4, 5, 7, 8, 9

- Elliott, [Faking Nature](#)
- Callender, [A New Conservationist Defense of Northern White Rhino Recovery](#)
- Rohwer and Marris, [An Analysis of Potential Ethical Justifications for Mammoth De-extinction and a Call for Empirical Research](#)
- Ron Sandler, Gene drives and species conservation: An ethical analysis.
- Optional: Marris and Aplet, [How to Mend the Conservation Divide](#)
- Optional: [The Gene Drive Dilemma](#)

Weeks 7-8: Climate, Ethics and the Future. Do we have duties to future generations? If so, what are they? What would intergenerational justice look like? Should we “discount” future interests in our evaluations of costs and benefits? Is environmental economics value-laden? How does justice demand we pay for climate change amelioration? Is geoengineering a solution, and what questions does it raise?

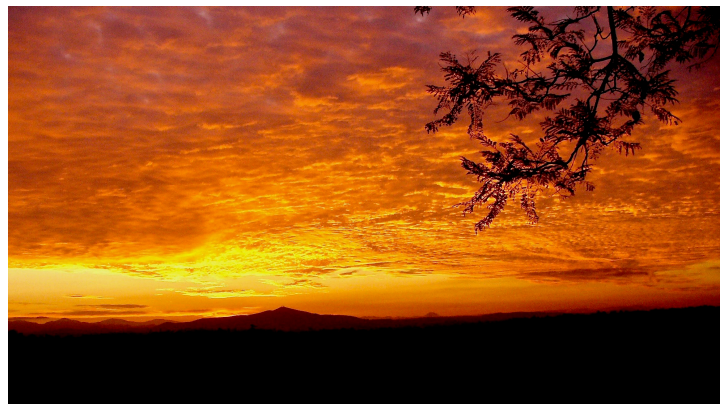
Videos

- Callender videos
- [Merchants of Doubt](#) film
- Optional: *First Reformed*

Reading

- Nicholas Stern, [Economics, Ethics, and Climate Change](#), selection
- Simon Caney, [Climate Change and the Future: Discounting for Time, Wealth and Risk](#)
- Sinnot-Armstrong, [It's Not My Fault](#)
- John Broome, [Against Denialism](#)
- Henry Shue, [Climate Surprises: Risk Transfers, Negative Emissions, and the Pivotal Generation](#)
- Lenzi and Callies, [Technologies for a Stable Future Climate](#)
- Optional: Routley, Nuclear Energy and Obligations to the Future (Canvas)
- Optional: Cowen and Parfit, [Against the Social Discount Rate](#)
- Optional: Eric Winsberg, A Modest Defense of Geoengineering Research

Encinitas, looking east



Weeks 9-10: Property, Pollution and Precaution. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* awakened the country to the dangers of chemical pollution. Pollution raises interesting questions for our understanding of property rights, and (some? most?) environmental battles become clashes between property rights

and environmental public goods. What are property rights? What do they allow you to do? Can you morally pollute your own property? When is compensation owed?

Video:

- Callender lectures
- American Experience: Rachel Carson



Reading

- Oreskes, Science and Public Policy: What's Proof Got to Do with It? *Garibaldi, state fish of CA*
 - Newman, Varner and Linquist, Chapter 3: Precaution (Canvas)
 - Hardin, The Tragedy of the Commons
 - Sagoff, Takings, Just Compensation, and the Environment (Canvas)
 - Optional: Railton, Locke, Stock, and Peril: Natural Property Rights, Pollution, and Risk
 - Optional: Ross and Amter, "The Sorcerer's Apprentices" *The Polluters*
 - Optional: Pauly, Beyond Duplicity and Ignorance in Global Fisheries.
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