

REL 3492
Section RVC 1191
Earth Ethics
Spring, 2019

GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. James Huchingson
E-Mail: huchings@fiu.edu

PROFESSOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Huchingson:

Studied engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology; worked for the Boeing Aerospace Company and NASA; did graduate studies in the History of Science at the Case Institute of Technology; earned M. Div and Ph. D degrees from Emory University, 1977; and retired in 2007 after 35 years at FIU as Full Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies and member of the Affiliated Faculty of Environmental Studies. He is the author of three books and 40 articles and the recipient of five university, national, and international teaching awards.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will focus on ways of making moral judgments about important environmental issues. Also included in an exploration of various approaches by environmentalists, philosophers, and religious traditions to the question of what duties humans have to natural systems, including planet Earth, and their inhabitants.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand and employ important ways of making moral judgments;
- Discuss the ideas of relationships between humankind and nature found in select environmentalists, philosophers, and religious traditions;
- Apply these ways of making moral decisions and ideas of humankind and nature to specific environmental issues.

TEXTBOOK

Boundaries: A Casebook in Environmental Ethics
Christine Gudorf and James Huchingson
Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003.
ISBN-978-1-58901-636-1
Second Edition, 2010

COURSE PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE POLICIES

- If you have a serious reason for missing the open dates for the first or second exams (e.g., serious accident, hospitalization, death in the immediate family) contact Dr. Huchingson to arrange a make-up. Quizzes are up for two weeks. Plan to take them early so that if you have technological problems they can be resolved before the quiz period is over. **IMPORTANT: No make-up quizzes will be given for any reason. The lowest grade will be dropped.**
- Computers are available on campus if your computer breaks down. Many home computers using modems cannot receive all the video or audio presentations—leave time enough to get them on campus if your set-up at home does not work.
- University policy allows incompletes only in cases where the student has completed a majority of work in the class and has a passing grade on all the completed work. Please note; university administration discourages incompletes except in the most serious circumstances. You must ask for an incomplete; they are not given automatically. All incompletes expire on the first day the student enrolls in another class.
- No extra credit is given in this course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Quizzes and Examinations:** There will be online quizzes for each unit (seven in all) on all course material and reading assignments.

Each student will have two attempts at quizzes with questions randomly drawn from a large database. The higher of the two grades for each quiz will be counted. **First and Second exams** will be multiple choice and will come from the text assignments, assigned articles, and online presentations. One hour and fifteen minutes is allowed for each exam. Unlike quizzes, each exam is open only for the day it is scheduled. **Exams are not open book. The first exam is MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25. The second exam is THURSDAY, APRIL 25.**

- **Original Case study with Commentary:** Use your considerable untapped creativity to imagine a situation about an environmental issue that involves an ethical conflict or dilemma. The case will consist of a narrative (a minimum of 1000 words) with characters and dialogue, and a commentary explaining the nature of the issue and its possible resolutions (a minimum of 1000 words). **See Guidelines below.** A **proposal**, consisting of a description of your issue naming the two opposing sides to the dilemma (two paragraphs) and the sources you consulted in choosing it (three will do), must be submitted by **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4.** The paper itself is due no later than **TUESDAY, APRIL 23.**

Important: do not choose a topic that is covered by a case study in the course text (Gudorf and Huchingson).

- **IMPORTANT NOTES:** If you submit the proposal, the interview with a religious figure and/or the case study as attachments on the submission page, they must be in the Microsoft Word format. Otherwise, they will be returned without credit. You may find it easier to copy and paste your submissions on the submission page. This is the preferred form of submission.

The case study and commentary must be provided submitted through the Turnitin assignment box.

- **Interview with Religious figure:** Conduct an interview with a full-time or professional representative of a religion (priest, pastor, rabbi, imam, monk, nun, guru, etc.) who is knowledgeable about these matters on the position and views of her/his religion on the following questions:

* How does your faith and philosophy view the relation between humans and the natural world? Where do we fit and why?

* What duties, or obligations, if any, do humans have toward the natural world? How are these justified or explained?

* How is your faith responding through action and practical programs to the environmental crisis, from local issues to global warming?

Write a report summarizing the responses to these questions and assessing their adequacy. Where do you agree and disagree? Why? Use concepts from the course in your responses to these questions. Your reflections on the interview will count more toward your grade than the interview itself. Since this report requires knowledge of the religion whose expert representative you interview, you should prepare yourself through background research and reading. Your report should be no less than 750 words, although it may be longer. **Report due no later than MONDAY, MARCH 18.**

GRADING

Grading will be done on the point system.

| Course Requirement | Total Points Possible |
|---|--|
| Quizzes points/question.) (Lowest grade dropped) | 120 (6 of 7 quizzes x 10 questions/quiz x 2) |
| Midterm | 100 |
| Final | 100 |
| Case Study | 150 |
| Interview | <u>100</u> |
| Total points for course | 570 |

Percentage grades for course determined by the points earned divided by 570.

| Letter Grade | Range | Letter Grade | Range | Letter Grade | Range |
|--------------|--------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| A | 93-100 | B- | 80-82 | D+ | 66-69 |
| A- | 90-92 | C+ | 76-79 | D | 63-65 |
| B+ | 86-89 | C | 73-75 | D- | 60-62 |

B 83-85 C- 70-72 F <60

DISABILITY NOTICE

If you have a disability and need assistance, please contact the Disability Resource Center (University Park: GC 190; 305-348-3532) (Biscayne Bay Campus: WUC 139, 305-919-5345). The Center will review your request and contact your professors or other personnel to make arrangements for assistance.

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

The University's policy on religious holy days as found in the University Catalogue and Student Handbook will be followed in this class.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Every student must respect the right of all to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students must adhere to a standard of academic conduct, demonstrating respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. As a student in the College of Business taking this class:

- I will not represent someone else's work as my own;
- I will not cheat, nor will I aid in another's cheating;
- I will be honest in my academic endeavors; and
- I understand that if I am found responsible for academic misconduct, I will be subject to the academic misconduct procedures and sanctions as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in one of the following:

Expulsion: permanent separation of the student from the University. This sanction shall be recorded in the student's transcript.

Suspension: Temporary suspension of the student from the University for a specific period of time.

By taking this online course, I promise to adhere to FIU's Student Code of Academic Integrity.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE COURSE

This is a fully online course, meaning that all the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in fully online courses are the same as for traditional courses. In fact, fully online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills that can be more demanding than traditional courses for some students. .

GUIDELINES FOR CASE STUDY

The Case (1,000-1,500 words)

- Identify a moral dilemma in environmental ethics.

The dilemma should have two opposing sides, each with its own arguments. The two sides will have competing goods; that is, benefits that will come if their actions are taken or principles they do not want to compromise. Of course, each side will likely also have harms that will result if their preferred actions are taken, a fact that their opponent will use against them. The sharper the conflict between the two sides the easier it will be to write the case. See list of “Sample Topics” in reading assignments for Unit One.

- Create a fictional situation.

The situation may be a crisis to which the major character (the hero/heroine or person caught in the middle) is forced to decide between the two positions in order to resolve the situation. Introduce the situation and the central character and describe his/her problem in the first two paragraphs of the case.

- Create a dialogue between characters.

This character will then debate the issues with one or more additional characters. Perhaps each new character could represent one of the two opposing positions. Most of the case should consist of this debate as dialogue. The characters should debate what ought to be done in this particular situation in concrete terms and give reasons why. The best cases are about specific situations. The characters disagree about what should be done in that local situation and why. Generalities are best left for the commentary.

- Conclude the case.

The best case studies do not resolve the dilemma but to end with the central character(s) forced by circumstances to make a tough decision, one way or the other. You do not say what the character(s) decide. This leaves the reader with the task of figuring out for him/herself what the decision ought to be. Or, if you feel strongly that one side of the dilemma is preferred over the other, your central character(s) may resolve the dilemma and take action. The reader is then left to judge if the decision was correct.

The Commentary (1,000-1,500 words)

The commentary is your evaluation of the case based on your reading and research. You should explain why your characters take their positions on the issue and why they argue the way they do. You can bring in facts or examples from real life cases and refer to the experts who represent each side. Cite your sources with footnotes or endnotes and include a bibliography.

Research

Your case will be no better than the research on which it is based. You should be as fully informed as possible about the issue. The University library carries a number of excellent journals and magazines on the environment, not to mention the fine book collection.

Also, the Internet is a great source for special interest groups or organizations and governmental agencies that advocate one position or another or who provide facts. Take full advantage of it.

Examples of case studies with commentaries

The course text (Gudorf and Huchingson) consists almost entirely of case studies written with these guidelines in mind. Use them as your models.

COURSE CALENDAR

With the exception of Unit One (three weeks) the course is divided into seven units of about two weeks each. Each unit consists of case studies from the text, online articles, and power point lectures. Unit quizzes will be taken from the all of these.

Schedule of Assignments

Unit One: Approaches to Making Moral Judgments JANUARY 7-JANUARY 27

Read:

- Gudorf and Huchingson (henceforth G and H): Chapter 1, “Theory in Environmental Ethics”
- G and H: Chapter 2, “We are all in this...Alone: The Individual and Community”
- G and H: Chapter 9, “River Run or River Ruined: Hydropower or Free-Flowing Rivers?”
- “Sample Topics for Case Studies”

View:

- Huchingson Power Point presentation: “Approaches to Making Moral Judgments”

Unit Two: Anthropocentrism and Biocentrism JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 10

Read:

- National Association of Environmental Professionals: Code of Ethics www.nwaep.org/code%20of%20ethics
- Peter Singer: “Equality for Animals” www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/1979----.htm
- Holmes Rolston III: “Beyond Ethics by Extension”
- Aldo Leopold: “Thinking Like a Mountain” www.eco-action.org/dt/thinking.html
- G and H: Chapter 15, “Understanding Xenotransplants: Cross-Breeding Humans or Advanced Domestication of Animals?”
- G and H: Chapter 14 “Nature Red in Tooth, Claw, and Bullet: Hunting and Human Presence in Nature”

View:

- Peter Singer: Interview with Steven Colbert on the Colbert Report (Google video, “Peter Singer”)
- Huchingson Power Point Presentation: “Varieties of Biocentrism”
- Huchingson Power Point Presentation: “The Ethics of Endangered Species”

Proposal due September 19

Unit Three: Ecocentrism FEBRUARY 11-FEBRUARY 24

Read:

- Aldo Leopold: “The Land Ethic” www.home.btconnect.com/tipiglen/landethic.html
- J. Baird Callicott: “La Nature est Morte, Viva la Nature” www.williamcronon.net/writing/trouble_with_wilderness_main.html
- William Cronon: “The Trouble with Wilderness”
- G and H: Chapter 11. “Rewilding: Restoration of Degraded Ecosystems”
- G and H: Chapter 7, “Water: Economic Commodity and Divine Gift”

View:

- Huchingson Power Point Presentation:” Varieties of Ecocentrism”

First Exam MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 12:01 am-11:55 pm on units one through three.

Unit Four: Deep Ecology, Gaia, and Ecofeminism FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 10

Read:

- Michael Zimmerman; “An Introduction to Deep Ecology” www.context.org/ICIB/IC22/zimmrman.htm
- The Green Fuse: “Ecofeminism” www.thegreenfuse.org/ecofem.htm
- Steven Scharper: “The Gaia Hypothesis” www.crosscurrents.org/gaia.htm
- Huchingson: “Gaia Ma: An Inquiry into the Moral Standing of Planet Earth”
- G and H: Chapter 12, “Planning for climate Change”
- G ad H: Chapter 5, “Must Java have no Forests? Nature Preserves and Population Pressures”

View: Huchingson Power Point Presentation: “The Inclusive Philosophy of Deep Ecology”

Unit Five: Indigenous Peoples MARCH 11-MARCH 24 INTERVIEW WITH A RELIGIOUS FIGURE-MARCH 18

Read:

- John Grim: “Introduction to Indigenous Traditions” www.fore.research.yale.edu (click on “world religions”)
- Joseph Epes Brown, “Relationship and Reciprocity”

- G and H: Chapter 4, “Heart thieves: Preserving Endangered Ecosystems and Endangered Cultures in Madagascar”
- G and H: Chapter 3, “For Ecological Health or Profit? The POPs Elimination Treaty”

View:

RELACED IN ONLINE FALL 2018 SYLLABUS

- Huchingson Power Point Presentation: Native American Spirituality

Unit Six: Abrahamic Religions

MARCH 25-APRIL 7

Read:

- The Bible: Chapters 1 and 2 of the Book of Genesis, The Creation Accounts
www.bibleontheweb.com/bible.asp
- Lynn White, Jr.: The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis
www.zbi.ee/~kalevi/lwhite.htm
- Evangelical Environmental Network: “Declaration on the Care of Creation”
www.creationcare.org/resources/declaration.php
- G and H: Chapter 8, “Guardian Angels of Angel Oak: To Till or Keep”
- G and H: Chapter 13 “Improving on Natural Variation? Genetically Modified Foods”

View:

- 3D Dialogue: “Religion and the Environmental Movement” Google video
“religion environment”
- Bill Moyers: “Is God Green?”
www.pbs.org/moyers/moyersonamerica/green/watch.html#faith
- E.O. Wilson, etc.: “Endangered Species and Christian Evangelicals”
www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1012/profile.html#
- Huchingson Power Point Presentation: “Genesis and Lynn White Jr.”

Interview with a Religious Figure due Monday, November 7

Unit Seven: Islam, Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism

APRIL 8-APRIL 21

Read:

- Marjorie Hope and James Young: “Islam and Ecology”
www.crosscurrents.org/islamecology.htm
- Donald K. Swearer: “Buddhism and Ecology: Challenge and Promise”
www.fore.research.yale.edu (click on “world religions”)

- Kenneth Kraft: “The Greening of Buddhist Practice”
www.crosscurrents.org/greening.htm
- Christopher Key Chapple: “Hinduism, Jainism, and Ecology”
www.fore.research.yale.edu (click on “world religions”)
- G and H: Chapter 6: “Buried Alive: Future Generations and Permanent Underground Disposal of Nuclear Waste”
- G and H: Chapter 10, “Nature Creates Deserts, Too: Addressing Desertification in China”

View:

- Huchingson Power Point Presentation: “Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism on Ecology”

TUESDAY APRIL 23, case study with commentary due.