REL 3492

Earth Ethics

Section: RVC

Internet/Fully Online

Spring Term 2027

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Professor Information

James Huchingson

Roles: Primary Instructor

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Office Hours: By appointment

Office Location: N/A

Department or Academic Unit: Department of Religious

Studes

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

This course will focus on ways of making moral judgments about important environmental issues. Also included is 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.

This is a discipline-specific global learning course that counts toward your global learning graduation requirement.

Textbook and Course Materials

Boundaries: A Casebook in Environmental Ethics

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Christine E. Gudorf James E. Huchingson

Publisher: Georgetown University Press

Publication Date: 2010

Copyright Date: 2010

ISBN 10: 978-1-58901-636-1

ISBN 13: 978-1-58901-636-1

Chapters/Pages: 315

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for $22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- Recognize 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
- Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, and systems

- Students will be able to demonstrate the relationship between religious ideas and the ways we interact with other animals and the rest of the natural world
- Students will be able to construct a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems
- Students will be able to address specific environmental challenges from multiple perspectives
- Students will demonstrate willingness to engage in local, global, international and intercultural problem solving

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the coursework will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **review the getting started page** located in the course modules
- **take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is

compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;

- **interact** online with instructor and peers;
- **review** and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines.

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 a week. Plan to take them early so that if you have technological problems they can be resolved before the quiz period is over**.**
- 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. Indeed, they are sometimes refused by the administration.
- No extra credit is given in this course.
- **IMPORTANT**: **Policy on use of AI bots such as ChatGPT**:

Use of AI is discouraged except as a research tool. You may use it to identify sources and for insights or facts relevant to your case study topic. Lifting material directly from a chatbot for your case study and commentary without attribution is plagiarism. Instances will receive appropriate penalties. Any quote from the AI system should be no longer than 25 words. Remember, these language systems are themselves instances of plagiarism and often contain false and distorted material and biases. Submissions that use AI without attribution are more easily detected than most people think.

- Submitting an essay assignment written by machine intelligence is simple lying. it shows disrespect for the dignity of your instructor who, if deceived, will grade your submission believing it is your own, Using AI to compose an assignment in a course in ethics seems especially serious as a violation of conscience. Of course, we all labor under the considerable stresses and demands of daily life. Sometimes courage is required not to cut corners, especially when doing so requires violations of one's principles. Cheating and lying are not strategies that make life easier, and they undercut the very fabric of society while seriously compromising the moral character and integrity of the one who lies and cheats. So, if you are thinking of using AI to write an assignment or take an exam, think again.

Assignments & Assessments

Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the Practice Quiz from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. For quiz duration, grading criteria and feedback response time, please review the important information about quizzes page.

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

Each student will have one attempt at quizzes with questions randomly drawn from a large database. **First and Second exams** will be multiple choice and will come from the text assignments, assigned articles, and online presentations. sixty minutes are 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 22. The second exam is Friday, April 22 (Earth Day!).**

Assignments

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 the Guidelines below. The case is due no later than Monday, April 19.**

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 **.** The paper itself is due no later than **Wednesday, March 3,**.

Important Notes

- Do not choose a topic that is covered by a case study in the course text (Gudorf and Huchingson)
- The case study and commentary will be submitted through the Turnitin assignment box**.**

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 the list of “Sample Topics” in reading assignments for Unit One. Remember, this assignment is primarily an ethical and/or social and cultural issue having to do with justice, rights, and values and not a technical or scientific problem about the environment. Of course, facts about the issue are very important, but the issue itself is an ethical one. See the course text for good examples.

- 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. Or it may be a dialogue between characters. Introduce the situation and the central characters and describe the problem in the first two paragraphs of the case.

- Create a dialogue between the characters.

This characters will then debate the issues with additional characters introduced if necessary. 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.

To be successful, your case must make numerous references to your characters and to the real life situation they are facing. This is not a term paper or report assignment, but a case that is rooted in the concrete facts of the situation.

Guidelines and required format for 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. **Refer to important concepts taken from course lectures and readings**. Cite your sources with footnotes or end notes and include a bibliography.

RQUIRED FORMAT. EACH ITEM IS SEPARATE.

In your own words:

Describe the local situation or setting in your case. Include the geographical location if relevant.

Name and describe the characters in the case. what is their relationship to the setting? What is their relationship, if any, with one another?

Give the ethical dilemma involved in your case. What are the opposing sides? Why is it important? Who or what is at risk of harm? Include plants, animals, geographic settings such as rivers and ecosystems.

What human populations or communities, if any have stakes in the outcome of your dilemma?

Briefly, what are the weaknesses and strengths of each side? Who benefits or who is harmed? Do concerns for justice enter in?

Can your dilemma be resolved to the benefit of all parties? Or is it a winner-take-all issue, a "zero sum game?" Do you have a preference for the outcome? If so, what is it?

IMPORTANT. You are obligated to follow this format. Failure to do so will result in no credit being given for the commentary section of the assignment.

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.

Review the How to submit a Turnitin Assignment page for submission information on this assignment.

Grading

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available
Quizzes	7	10	70
Midterm Exam	1	100	100
Final Exam	1	100	100
Total	**11**	**N/A**	**370**

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available
Case Study with Commentary	1	100	100
Total	**11**	**N/A**	**370**

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A	95 to 100
A-	90 to 94.99
B+	87 to 89.99
B	83 to 86.99
B-	80 to 82.99
C+	77 to 79.99
C	70 to 76.99
D	60 to 69.99
F	0 to 59.99

Proctored Exams

Please note that the information contained in this section applies only if your course requires a proctored exam.

Through a careful examination of this syllabus, it is the student's responsibility to determine whether this online course requires proctored exams. Please visit our Student Proctored Exam Instructions webpage for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.

Schedule of Topics

Follow Modules

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via **the Canvas Inbox**. Check out the Canvas Conversations Tutorial or Canvas Guide to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.

I will respond to all correspondence within **2 days.**

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies, such as:

- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Zoom Video Conference

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities.

Zoom meetings can be accessed via the Zoom link in the course navigation menu. Once you click on the Zoom link, it will route you to join the meeting for the respective class

session. You will also be able to view upcoming meetings, previous meetings that you have already joined, and meeting recordings. Before joining an actual class session:

- Reference the Zoom Student Tutorials to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.

- Access the Zoom Test Meeting Room to test out the software before joining an actual session.

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact the FIU Canvas Help Team. Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights (OCR)** is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the OCR team through report.fiu.edu.