

**Humanities 3330-004**  
**Environmental Ethics**  
SPRING 2021

**Instructor:** Daniel Skibra

**Time and Location:** Thursday; 1:30 - 4:30 PM, online (we meet 1:30 - 3:00 PM)

**Contact:** email: dskibra@saic.edu

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays; 12:30 – 1:30 PM

## Course Description

This course explores ethical questions pertaining to the environment. Do we have any obligations to the environment; if so, what kinds of obligations are these and to what exactly are they owed? Can traditional ethical theory appropriately account for these obligations, or is some new kind of ethic called for due to these questions? We will look at different attempts at posing these questions and the various answers philosophers have offered. We will also be spending some time studying two difficult topics related to the environment; population ethics and climate change. Readings include work by Dale Jamieson and John Broome, is likely to include essays by Peter Singer, J Baird Callicott, Lori Gruen, Elizabeth Anderson, and more. Assignments are varied, but will include weekly reading responses, two short (5 page) essay assignments, in-class mid-term and final exams, and a class presentation leading discussion on an assigned essay.

## Course Objectives

Students will:

- learn to understand philosophical arguments
- develop their own informed views on the topics of study
- present the arguments of the philosophers and theorists as well their own views in clear prose
- subject both the views studied as well as their own to critical scrutiny.

Humanities Student Learning Goal

- Students will study and inquire into how crucial ideas about human and non-human nature, knowledge, experience, and value have been developed, supported, and/or expressed in philosophy, religion, literature (including poetry and the dramatic arts), and music, in various cultures and time periods.

## Humanities Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will demonstrate understanding of the methods used in the humanities, such as argumentation and interpretation.
- Students will demonstrate understanding of the crucial ideas of the humanities as they have been explored in different cultures and times, and/or in connection to issues that currently affect individuals and societies across the globe.
- Students will be able to evaluate claims and the evidence and/or reasons given in support of these claims, as found in primary and/or secondary sources.
- Students will be able to construct their own claims and defend them in written and/or oral forms, and using proper methods of documentation (e.g., citation and bibliography).

## Course Requirements

### Assignments

Assignment 1 (due by Feb 21):	20 points
Assignment 2 (due by March 27):	25 points
Assignment 3 (due by April 30):	25 points
Assignment 4 (due by May 13):	20 points
Mid Term Exam (March 12):	30 points
Final Exam (May 16):	30 points
Presentation:	10 points
Asynchronous Discussion:	40 points (10 weeks; 4 points each)

total possible = 200 points

**You need at least a 70% to earn credit for this course.**

There are no extra credit opportunities associated with this course. All assignments for course credit are required as stated in this syllabus, and students should fully utilize all these assignments in order to successfully complete the course. Students requesting individual extra credit opportunities will be referred back to their copy of the syllabus and this course policy.

### Notes on assignments

Resources for writing a philosophy paper:

- <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- <http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>
- [https://prezi.com/z4h1\\_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/](https://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/)

# Course Policies

## What to Expect

Here is what a typical week would look like when you are taking this class. This class will be hybrid, meaning it will be a combination of synchronous and asynchronous components. Once a week, during our scheduled class time, we will meet online via teleconference for live discussions and activities for an hour and a half. The remaining work for the week will be asynchronous. You will access and complete it at your own pace (respecting schedules and deadlines, of course). All of the lectures will be pre-recorded and uploaded to Canvas ahead of time.

The course material will all be accessible on Canvas. The course material will be organized by week, so simply navigate to the appropriate week, where all you have to do for the week is laid out in the weekly module. Each module will contain a breakdown of the week's work, reproducing the information on the syllabus, but with more detail and instructions. You can expect having to watch about 45 minutes to an hour of such lectures every week, in conjunction with the week's reading assignment, in preparation for the discussion. A typically week will include readings (pdfs of readings not from the Jamieson or Broome books will be available on Canvas), videos of lectures, and links to any assignments for the week.

To do well in this course, you have to be committed to putting the work in every week. I aim to make it a manageable amount, but if you let it slide for a week or two, you run the real risk of falling behind. If you encounter any trouble in the course (with the material, with assignments, or with the technology), send me an email. I am happy to help, discuss, and meet with you (virtually) as necessary.

## Attendance

In face-to-face classes, I take attendance. Since we are not meeting in a classroom, I obviously won't be passing around a sign-in sheet. Nonetheless, your attendance is required in this course. There are two ways that I will manage attendance for the course. First of all, I will take attendance during our live meetings. You are required to be in attendance for those. Second, I will monitor that you are indeed watching the lectures. (The application that hosts the videos on Canvas, Panopto, allows me to track viewership, and I will be monitoring this.)

If you miss more than three live Zoom meetings over the course of the term, your final grade will drop by 5 points, and another 5 points for each additional missed Zoom meeting. If you expect to miss a Zoom meeting, but have a valid excuse for this which you can provide documentation of (doctor's note, etc.), I will excuse the absence.

For the lectures, if your viewership drops below 75% (so, you watch less than 75% of the lectures), your final grade will drop by 5 points. For every additional 5% below that benchmark, your final grade will drop another 5 points. Since you can watch the lectures at your own leisure, the only way you can be excused from this is if you become really sick at some point, and can provide a doctor's note.

## **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

SAIC is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with known or suspected disabilities, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health condition who think they would benefit from assistance or accommodations should first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) to schedule an appointment. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you with a letter outlining the approved accommodations for you to deliver to your instructors. This letter must be presented before any accommodations will be implemented. You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible. The DLRC is located within the Wellness Center on the 13th floor of 116 S Michigan Ave. and can be reached via phone at 312.499.4278 or email at [dlrc@saic.edu](mailto:dlrc@saic.edu).

## **Writing Center Resources**

### **Writing Center**

Lakeview Building, 116 S. Michigan Ave., 10th Floor

[writingcenter@saic.edu](mailto:writingcenter@saic.edu)

312.499.4138

<http://www.saic.edu/academics/academicresources/writingcenter/>

### **Appointments**

Schedule in advance: <https://www.supersaas.com/schedule/saic/WritingCenter>

Short-notice: Call 312.499.4138 to see if there are any openings

### **Hours**

Monday - Thursday: 9:00 AM - 7:15 PM

Friday: 9:00 AM - 5:15 PM

Walk-in hours: Monday - Thursday: 4:15 - 7:15 PM

## **Auditing (Non-Credit Enrollment) Policy**

All students participating in this course must be enrolled as credit-seeking students. Given the nature of the course, requests to enroll in the course as a non-credit (audit) student will not be approved. Participation in class activities by non-enrolled students is prohibited without advance, specific consent from the instructor.

## **Email/ Communication**

The best way to reach me outside class is via email. However, give me 24 hours to respond during the week. If you email me after 5pm on Friday, don't expect a response until Monday morning. Most of the time, I will be able to respond to you sooner than this. When there is a paper due, get all of your questions to be 48 hours before the due date.

I will answer *simple, specific* questions over email pertaining to the course material or the logistics of the course. I can also address simple interpretive questions you have with the material, or arguments you are trying out for your papers. To address anything more involved, you'll need to meet with me in (virtual) office hours. (I highly encourage you to take advantage of office hours in any event.)

## Participation

In our discussions, you will be expected to attend class having done the readings and thought about them enough to discuss the arguments they make, to ask informed questions about them, and to engage with the other members of the class on these matters. Two expectations in service of these aims are worth making explicit. First, you'll need to be well-prepared, having read and thought about the assigned readings before class. Secondly, we will all need to foster a respectful, open environment where we can clarify, interpret and critically engage the philosophical issues dealt with in readings. Maintaining a respectful classroom atmosphere is crucial, and part of your responsibility.

## Academic Misconduct

From the SAIC Student Handbook: "Academic misconduct includes both plagiarism and cheating, and may consist of: the submission of the work of another as one's own; unauthorized assistance on a test or assignment; submission of the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all instructors; or the failure to properly cite texts or ideas from other sources. Academic misconduct extends to all spaces on campus, including satellite locations and online education. Academic integrity is expected in all coursework, including online learning. It is assumed that the person receiving the credit for the course is the person completing the work. SAIC has processes in place that protect student privacy and uses LDAP authentication to verify student identity."

Specific procedures for faculty to follow in the case of academic misconduct are detailed in the Student Handbook.

Additional resources for students:

- Read "Plagiarism: How to Recognize It and Avoid It" - a short guide prepared by the Faculty Senate Student Life Subcommittee in 2004.
- Read the Flaxman Library's quick guide titled "AVOID PLAGIARISM."

## Required Texts

There are two required books for this course:

- Dale Jamieson - *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, 2008 (ISBN:9780521682848)

- John Broome - *Climate Matters*, Norton, 2012 (ISBN:9780393937961)

All other readings will be posted on the course's Canvas site as pdf files.

## Course Outline

Date	Reading Assignment	Length
<b>Course Introduction</b>		
<b>Jan 28</b>	Jamieson - <i>the Environment as an Ethical Question</i> ( <b>EATE</b> , Chapter 1)	21 pages
	Broome - <i>Introduction</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 1)	15 pages
<b>Ethical Foundations</b>		
<b>Feb 1</b>	Jamieson - <i>Foundational Issues</i> ( <b>EATE</b> , Ch. 4)	25 pages
	Garett Hardin - <i>Lifeboat Ethics</i>	6 pages
<b>Climate Change</b>		
<b>Feb 8</b>	Amartya Sen - <i>Property and Hunger</i>	6 pages
	Broome - <i>Science</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 2)	21 pages
	Broome - <i>Economics</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 3)	12 pages
<b>Feb 15</b>	Broome - <i>Justice and Fairness</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 4)	24 pages
	Gregory Kavka - <i>the Paradox of Future Individuals</i>	20 pages
<b>Feb 22</b>	Broome - <i>Private Morality</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 5)	24 pages
	Broome - <i>Goodness</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 6)	20 pages
	David Leonhardt - <i>A Battle Over the Costs of Climate Change</i> (NYT editorial)	4 pages
	Naomi Oreskes and Nicholas Stern - <i>Climate Change Will Cost Us Even More Than We Think</i> (NYT editorial)	2 pages
	<b>In class: Film Screening: <i>Six Degrees Could Change the World</i></b> <b>*Assignment 1 due Feb 21</b>	
<b>March 1</b>	Broome - <i>Uncertainty</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 7)	16 pages
	Walter Sinnott-Armstrong - <i>It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations</i>	15 pages
	Bjorn Lomborg - <i>Let's Keep Our Cool About Global Warming</i>	7 pages
<b>March 8</b>	<b>Mid Term assigned</b> <b>No Zoom Meeting this week</b>	
<b>March 15</b>	Broome - <i>the Future versus the Present</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 8)	23 pages
	Broome - <i>Lives</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 9)	13 pages
<b>March 22</b>	Broome - <i>Population</i> ( <b>CM</b> , Ch. 10)	18 pages
	Derek Parfit - <i>the Repugnant Conclusion</i>	10 pages
<b>The Future</b>		
<b>March 29</b>	Jamieson - <i>Nature's Future</i> ( <b>EATE</b> , Ch. 7)	23 pages
	S. Matthew Liao et al. - <i>Human Engineering and Climate Change</i>	16 pages
	Clive Hamilton - <i>Ethical Anxieties About Geoengineering*</i> (recommended, not required)	18 pages
	<b>*Assignment 2 due March 27</b>	

Date	Reading Assignment	Length
<b>Going Beyond Human-centered Values</b>		
<b>April 5</b>	Elizabeth Anderson - <i>Cost-Benefit Analysis</i> *Starting thinking about Assignment 4	27 pages
<b>April 12</b>	Jamieson - <i>Humans and Other Animals</i> - sections 5.1 and 5.2 ( <b>EATE</b> , Ch. 5) Peter Singer - <i>Animals</i> Carl Cohen - <i>Do Animals Have Rights?</i> *Start your entries for Assignment 4 this week	19 pages  10 pages 8 pages
<b>April 19</b>	Jamieson - <i>Humans and Other Animals</i> - sections 5.3 and 5.4 ( <b>EATE</b> , Ch. 5) Alasdair Norcross - <i>Puppies, Pigs, and People</i>	24 pages  17 pages
<b>April 26</b>	Jamieson - <i>the Value of Nature</i> ( <b>EATE</b> , Ch. 6) Richard Routley - <i>Is There Need for a New, An Environmental, Ethic?</i> Lori Gruen - <i>Refocusing Environmental Ethics: From Intrinsic Value to Endorsable Valuations</i> <b>*Assignment 3 due April 30</b>	23 pages 6 pages 13 pages
<b>May 3</b>	No Class – Critique Week	
<b>May 10</b>	<b>No class:</b> classes end on Wed., May 12th <b>*Assignment 4 due May 13</b> <b>*Final Exam due May 16</b>	