

LGST 299: Environmental Ethics and Business
The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
Spring Semester 2017

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Course Description

In this course, we will examine a range of ethical issues arising as a result of the environmental impacts of business activities and practices, with a particular emphasis on issues arising due to the threat of climate change. Among the questions that we will ask are: Is the natural world intrinsically valuable? If so, are businesses obligated to take this value into account when deciding whether to adopt potentially environmentally destructive practices? What are the implications of libertarian, free-market moral principles for the ethics of pollution-causing business activities? How should we understand the basis of our obligations to preserve the environment for future generations, and what are the implications for the practice of business? Are businesses that have contributed significantly to the threat of climate change (e.g. oil companies) obligated to contribute to mitigation efforts in proportion to their "historical emissions"? Should we endorse an emissions trading scheme whereby companies can buy the right to pollute, or are there principles moral objections to such a scheme? Should companies be engaging in research on geoengineering as a potential way of combating climate change?

Course Requirements

Class Participation: 20%

- Robust class discussions are essential to the success of the course. You'll be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading. This portion of your grade will be determined primarily by the quality rather than the quantity of your participation, although participating regularly is expected.

Discussion Forum: 10%

- You will be required to contribute to discussion forums that will be set up on Canvas 10 times over the course of the semester. The forums provide an opportunity to extend discussion and debate beyond what we'll have time for in class. Each course topic will have a forum, which will be opened shortly before the first reading on the topic is due. This portion of your grade will be determined primarily by the quality of your contributions.

Paper #1 (1400-1600 words): 25% (**due February 26th**)

Paper #2 (2300-2700 words): 45% (**due May 2nd**)

Readings

Jan. 11th: Introduction (no reading)

I. Environmental Ethics

Jan. 18th: Katie McShane, “Environmental Ethics: An Overview”

Jan. 23rd: J. Baird Callicott, “Non-Anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics”
Case: Corporate Sponsorship and Branding in National Parks
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/why-you-might-start-seeing-disney-other-brands-in-national-parks-180959106/?no-ist>

Jan. 25th: Elliot Sober, “Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism”

II. Business Ethics

Jan. 30th: Jeffrey Moriarty, “Business Ethics: An Overview”
Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits”

Feb. 1st: R. Edward Freeman, “A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation”

III. Business Ethics and the Environment

A. Stakeholder Theory

Feb. 6th: Mark Starik, “Should Trees Have Managerial Standing? Toward Stakeholder Status for Non-Human Nature”
Robert A. Phillips and Joel Reichart, “The Environment as a Stakeholder? A Fairness-Based Approach”

Feb. 8th: Eric W. Orts and Alan Strudler, “The Ethical and Environmental Limits of Stakeholder Theory”

B. Bowie and Libertarianism

Feb. 13th: Norman Bowie, “Money, Morality, and Motor Cars”
Denis G. Arnold and Keith Bustos, “Business, Ethics, and Global Climate Change”

Feb. 15th: Matt Zwolinski, “Libertarianism and Pollution”
Case: Volkswagen Scandal
<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-34324772>

<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2015/dec/09/the-difficulty-of-calculating-deaths-caused-by-the-volkswagen-scandal>

IV. Climate Change I: Obligations to Future Generations

- Feb. 20th: Derek Parfit, “The Non-Identity Problem”
- Feb. 22nd: Simon Caney, “Climate Change, Human Rights, and Moral Thresholds”
- Feb. 27th: Elizabeth Harman, “Can We Harm and Benefit in Creating?”
Case: Duke Energy
<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article83496887.html>
- March 1st: Brian Berkey, “Human Rights, Harm, and Climate Change Mitigation”

V. Climate Change II: Historical Emissions

- March 13th: Eric Neumayer, “In Defense of Historical Accountability for Greenhouse Gas Emissions”
Megan Blomfeld, “Historical Use of the Climate Sink”
- March 15th: Simon Caney, “Climate Change and the Duties of the Advantaged”
- March 20th: Nico Cornell and Sarah E. Light, “Arctic Drilling and Wrongful Benefit”
Case: Shell’s Arctic Drilling Plan
<http://www.ft.com/content/19de519e-65a8-11e5-a28b-50226830d644>
- March 22nd: Brian Berkey, “Benefiting from Unjust Acts and Benefitting from Injustice: Historical Emissions and the Beneficiary Pays Principle”

VI. Climate Change III: Emissions Trading

- March 27th: Debra Satz, “Noxious Markets: Why Should Some Things Not be For Sale?”
Michael Sandel, “Should We Buy the Right to Pollute?”
- March 29th: Simon Caney, “Markets, Morality, and Climate Change: What, if Anything, is Wrong with Emissions Trading?”
Case: Oil Companies Supporting Emissions Trading
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/big-oil-companies-want-a-price-on-carbon-heres-why/446637/>

VII. Climate Change IV: Collective Action, Rationality, and Making a Difference

- April 3rd: Chrisoula Andreou, “Environmental Damage and the Puzzle of the Self-Torturer”
Chrisoula Andreou, “Environmental Preservation and Second-Order Procrastination”

- April 5th: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s Not *My* Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations”
 John Nolt, “How Harmful are the Average American’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions?”
 Ronald Sandler, “Beware of Averages: A Response to John Nolt’s ‘How Harmful are the Average American’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions?’”
- April 10th: Benjamin Hale, “Nonrenewable Resources and the Inevitability of Outcomes”
 Denis G. Arnold, “Corporate Responsibility, Democracy, and Climate Change”
- April 12th: Catriona McKinnon, “Should We Tolerate Climate Change Denial?”
Case: Exxon-Mobil Funding Climate Change Denial
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/15/exxon-mobil-gave-millions-climate-denying-lawmakers>
<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/11/05/exxon-mobil-under-investigation-for-climate-change-denial>

Climate Change V: Geoengineering

- April 17th: Stephen Gardiner, “Is Arming the Future with Geoengineering Really the Lesser Evil? Some Doubts about the Ethics of Intentionally Manipulating the Climate System”
- April 19th: Dale Jamieson, “Some Whats, Whys, and Worries of Geoengineering”
Case: Business and Geoengineering
<https://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2011/10/11/companies-will-make-business-out-geoengineering>
<http://fortune.com/2011/10/07/the-business-of-cooling-the-planet/>

Climate Change VI: Climate Policy and Global Poverty

- April 24th: Darrel Moellendorf, *The Moral Challenge of Dangerous Climate Change*, Ch. 1
- April 26th: Brian Berkey, “Climate Change, Moral Intuitions, and Moral Demandingness”

Course Policies and Information

1. Class Discussion: Philosophical inquiry is a cooperative enterprise. We can best arrive at well-justified views by working together to think through the arguments that might be made for different, competing views. The ethical issues that we’ll discuss are difficult and complex, and there will be disagreements. That’s a good thing, since it will help all of us think more carefully about the range of plausible views about the complex questions that we’ll be grappling with. For discussion to be productive in this way, it’s essential that we all participate in a spirit of mutual respect. Respecting others is consistent with vigorously challenging their views and the arguments that they offer for them. What matters is that criticisms are presented in a way that

interprets the arguments being challenged charitably, and that properly appreciates the status of those being challenged as cooperators in a joint intellectual endeavor.

2. *No Bullshit*: You'll need to do the readings in order to participate productively in class discussions. Philosophy is often challenging to read, and you may need to read things more than once in order to understand them. And sometimes there will be things that you don't understand even after multiple readings. That's OK – part of the purpose of discussion is to clarify issues that may be unclear in the readings, and I'll always be happy to answer questions about aspects of the reading that you found difficult. But if you haven't done the reading, attempting to participate will be counterproductive, and I'll probably be able to tell.

3. *Laptops/Tablets/etc.*: Electronic devices are not permitted in class. Your attention should be focused on the discussion, and devices offer too many distractions. Remember that there are no exams in the course, so there's no need to take extensive notes. It's much more important to be engaged in the discussion than to take down everything that I say. That said, I recommend having a pen and paper so that you can write down anything that strikes you as particularly important.

4. *Don't Plagiarize!*: Punishment for plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be severe. Any time you draw on someone else's work, you need to cite it, even if you're not quoting directly.

5. *Late Papers and Extensions*: Late papers will be penalized 1/3 grade for each day late (so an A- paper turned in one day late would get a B+), with weekends counting for one day. Extensions will be granted for medical or other emergencies, and in some cases for other *serious* conflicts. If you need to request an extension, you should do so as early as possible.

6. *Office Hours*: I strongly encourage you to come to office hours. Discussing philosophical issues one-on-one or in a small group setting is an extremely valuable supplement to in-class discussion, and should help you to write better papers. You don't need to have specific questions prepared in order to come, and you're welcome to come in a group. If you can't make it during scheduled office hour times, I'll be happy to arrange to meet at another time.

7. *Lunches*: I also encourage you to sign up on Canvas for a lunch sponsored by the Wharton Meals Program. Lunches are free for students.

8. *Grading*: I don't grade on a curve. If everyone does A-quality work, then everyone gets an A. Course grades will be calculated using a 4-point scale. For example, an A for participation would count for $4 \cdot .2 = .8$; an A- for discussion forum postings would count for $3.7 \cdot .1 = .37$; a B+ for the first paper would count for $3.3 \cdot .25 = .825$; and an A- for the second paper would count for $3.7 \cdot .45 = 1.665$. The total for those grades would be 3.66 (A-). Here are the ranges for each letter grade in the A-C range:

3.85 – 4 = A 3.15 – 3.5 = B+ 2.5 – 2.85 = B- 1.85 – 2.15 = C

3.5 – 3.85 = A- 2.85 – 3.15 = B 2.15 – 2.5 = C+ 1.5 – 1.85 = C-

Note: I may give a grade of A+ for *truly exceptional performance*. This requires more than getting A's for all components of the course grade. Primarily, it will require writing papers that are of significantly higher quality than even typical A papers in an undergraduate course. This is extremely difficult to do, so it's very unusual for an A+ to be awarded.