My goals in the course are to provide a basic understanding of the major issues in environmental ethics, to sharpen your ability to think critically about them, and to appreciate multiple and sometimes opposing sides on them. In particular I hope that you will develop your own views about the moral standing of the environment, the human population problem, animal rights, and the unequal distribution of environmental ills, for example, and take seriously the question about what you should do about them both in everyday actions, and at a larger political level. In short we will struggle with what are arguably the most important problems facing humans today.

Requirements:

Midterm paper: 4-5 pp.:  20%
3/4 term exam: 20%
Final paper: 4-5 pp.:  20%
Short papers, abstracts, occasional exercises: 30%
Attendance, preparation and participation:  10%

Late work will be graded down except if late in the direst of circumstances. I am generous with extensions on papers and the bigger assignments - not small homework assignments - but you must ask for the extension in advance of the assignment’s date.

In the papers, you will develop and defend your own views on the assigned topics. Your views need not be original, but this will be your opportunity to develop criticisms of the authors we have read. No outside research will be required, though it may be helpful. Paper topics will be provided well in advance of the due dates for the papers. You make up your own paper topics and discuss them with me.

Everyone in this class is expected to contribute to class discussion. Class involves substantial discussion, the practice of doing philosophy. If you have more than three absences (for any reason except hospitalization, the Rapture, and the like), your grade will be affected accordingly. The quality of this discussion will be determined in large part by how prepared you are. The readings will not be very long, but some of them will be dense. Your preparation for class should include careful studying of the assigned readings, taking notes about key concepts, and writing out questions you have about the positions or arguments under discussion.

I encourage you to discuss your written work with others, and to get help from friends and critics. But be sure to acknowledge the help (see Writing Center guidelines) and do formal citation for anything you’ve taken from books, articles or websites, whether they are literal quotes or your paraphrases. Please familiarize yourself with the writing center’s helpful information on plagiarism. Plagiarism is usually pretty easy for the professor to spot. Don’t risk it!

Texts:

Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application 3rd edition (EE), Pojman, L. (ed.)(Jones and Bartlett
Tentative Course Schedule

Multiple dates indicate that we will be discussing the readings during more than one class. Where there are multiple dates, read all of the assigned materials by the first date in the list.

January 20  Introduction

January 22  "On Ethics and Environmental Concerns," EE, 1
            "What is Ethics?" EE, 3

January 27  Visiting speaker: Riverkeeper director Alex Mattiessen
            "We All Live in Bhopal" EE
            Lecture: Alex Mattiessen, “The Truth about our Nuclear Neighbor: Indian Point and the Hudson River; “7:30

Human Population Growth and Its Impact on the Environment

January 29  "Faking Nature," Robert Elliot, EE 229
            EE, pp. 302 - 310; W, pp. 31-44

February 3  EE, pp. 311 - 318;  341 - 347

February 5  Interlude: What is a Person?

February 10  EE, pp. 331 – 340
           Lecture: Ralph Nader, “Politics and the Environment: Winners and Losers,” Chapel, 8:00

February 12  EE, pp. 356 - 367

February 17  EE, pp. 367 - 373;  3 – 7

February 19  EE, pp. 391 – 394;  492 – 498

February 24  EE, pp. 506 - 515

February 26  EE, pp. 13 - 23

March 2  EE, pp.
           Lecture: Sandra Harding, “Science and Technology Studies in a Postcolonial World,” 8:00

Animal Rights?: the Moral Standing of Sentient Animals

March 4  EE, pp. 31 – 32 and 404 – 408

March 9  EE, pp. 33 - 39 and Singer (Blackboard)

The Land Ethic

March 11  EE, pp. 40 - 51
SPRING BREAK

March 30 EE, pp. 51 - 6

April 6 EE, pp. 119 - 126 First day of Passover

April 8 EE, pp. 136 - 146

The Moral Standing of Non-Sentient Beings

April 13 EE, pp. 95 - 100; (157 - 161) EE, pp. 112 -118; (162 - 167)

April 15 EE, Moral Conflicts and Priority Principles (readings on reserve); (one page position paper due.)

April 20

More Ethical Dimensions of Environmental Problems

April 22 Private Property and Takings W, pp. 164 - 97

April 27 Biotechnology: “Patenting Life: Biotechnology, Intellectual Property and Environmental Ethics” (Blackboard)

April 29 Exotic Species – What is wrong with them?

May 4 Logging and Endangered Species W, pp. 72 - 97

May 6 The Value of Biodiversity EE, pp. 208 -218

The class will decide which sections of the texts to read after April. Possible topics include environmental justice, ecofeminism, non-western approaches to the environment, hazardous waste, wilderness preservation and any other issue that becomes hot during the term. Read around in both texts to help you decide what looks interesting.