

**PHIL 287: Environmental Ethics**  
**John Felice Rome Center**  
Spring 2025  
Tuesdays & Thursdays | 3:45-5:00pm  
Dr. Moreno Rocchi  
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Office Hours: Thu., 1:00-3:00pm (by appointment)

### **Course Description**

In this course we will examine environmental issues from an ethical perspective. To be more precise, we will try to clarify the nature of ethical discourse and principles and how they are applied to environmental problems by focusing on the following questions: What is the nature of environmental ethics? What are the foundational readings to this new academic field? What is the nature of a solution to environmental issues, if any? What is ecofeminism? How does environmental ethics relate to other fields such as social justice? How should we take action?

This course is divided into four sections.

The first section has a genealogical approach. Having briefly analyzed the principles of the two most influential paradigms of modern ethics (Kantianism and Utilitarianism) and how those can be applied to environmental issues, we will address the emergence of the idea of a “Land Ethic”, as well as the fundamental distinction between a “shallow” and a “deep” ecology.

In the second section we will focus on two turning points in the history of contemporary environmental ethics: Hans Jonas’ *The Imperative of Responsibility* – a brilliant synthesis of all previous theories – and the birth of ecofeminism.

In the third section we will expand our vision by looking at the intersections between environmental ethics and other fields such as social justice, international law and global history.

The last section will be more participatory. Having explored two case studies of key-importance in today’s world – recycling and food consumption – we will conclude by discussing about how to best take action on today’s environmental issues.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the major philosophical questions in the area of environmental ethics with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions, and be able to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

This course should also enable students to:

- (a) appreciate the profound issues involved in our relationship with other animal species and our planet;
- (b) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision;
- (c) insert their own reflections into the dialogue;
- (d) examine the way different philosophically defended views challenge each other, and how they also challenge unexamined presuppositions in our own culture;
- (e) recognize the need for ethical judgment;
- (f) distinguish alternative courses of action;
- (g) articulate the relevant ethical values, principles, rights, and virtues from the point of view of each stakeholder;
- (h) formulate and support an ethical judgment in respect to environmental issues;
- (i) recognize the premises for a given conclusion or viewpoint, identify unexamined presuppositions, appreciate astute insights, expose vulnerabilities in established positions;
- (j) compare and contrast ethical theories and evaluate them in terms of strengths and weaknesses;
- (k) differentiate among historical and contemporary perspectives about the world with a view to fashioning a humane and just world;

- (l) understand the relationships among cultural, economic, political, and social forces, and their impact on human life on this planet;
- (m) assess how moral principles are conditioned by one's involvement in (and responsibilities toward) the socially organized community in which one lives.

### **Required Texts/Materials**

Ronald Sandler, *Environmental Ethics: Theory in Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2017;

Assigned readings posted on Sakai.

### **Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.
- For all classes meeting twice a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.
- For all classes meeting three times a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.

This course meets twice a week, thus a total of **two unexcused absences** will be permitted. **Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.**

If, however, you are ill, do not attend class (your absence will be excused).

### **Assessment Components**

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|--------------------------------|------|
| • Midterm Exam (in-class test) | 34 % |
| • Final Exam (take-home paper) | 34 % |
| • Presentations*               | 12 % |
| • Participation                | 20 % |

\* Students are required to give two presentations (one individual and one group presentation).

### **Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize; **the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such.**
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.
6. Student may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures:

[https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

### **Late or Missed Assignments**

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor.

### **Accessibility Accommodations (with addendum on classroom recording policy)**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Student Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Professors receive the accommodation notification from SAC via Accommodate. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential.

Please note that in this class, software may be used to record class lectures exclusively in order to provide equal access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester.

For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or [SAC@luc.edu](mailto:SAC@luc.edu).

### **Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners**

As an instructor, I am a Responsible Campus Partner ("RCP") under Loyola's Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation (available at [www.luc.edu/equity](http://www.luc.edu/equity)). While my goal is for you to be able to engage fully and authentically with our course material through class discussions and written work, I also want to be transparent that as a RCP, I am must notify the Office for Equity & Compliance ("OEC")/Title IX Coordinator when I have any information about conduct that reasonably may constitute Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination. Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination includes any of the following conduct, when the conduct was within the University's education program or activity:

- Discrimination or discriminatory harassment on the basis of sex (including sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, gender identity, sexual orientation, and Pregnancy or Related Conditions),
- Sexual harassment (including quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment),
- Sexual assault,
- Dating and/or domestic violence, and/or
- Stalking

As the University's Title IX office, the OEC coordinates the University's response to reports and complaints of sexual misconduct (as well as discrimination of any kind) to ensure students' rights are protected.

The University maintains such reporting requirements to ensure that any student who experiences sexual/gender-based violence receives accurate information about available resources and support. Such reports will not generate a report to law enforcement (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Additionally, the University's resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. If you have any questions about this policy, you are encouraged to contact the OEC at [equity@luc.edu](mailto:equity@luc.edu) or 773-508-7766.

If you ever wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call The Line at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with resources as needed -- without generating a report or record with the OEC. More information about The Line can be found at [www.luc.edu/wellness](http://www.luc.edu/wellness).

### **Course Schedule**

(N.B.: ALL READINGS MUST BE DONE BEFORE CLASS!)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
Tue. 01/21	Introduction to the course	
Thu. 01/23	Why Environmental Ethics?	Sandler, Ch. 1 and 2

Tue. 01/27	Principles of Kantianism	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> , Ch. 1
Thu. 01/29	Utilitarianism and the moral considerability of animals	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (excerpts) Singer, "All Animals are Equal"
Tue. 02/04	Environmental Utilitarianism	Sandler, Ch. 8
Thu. 02/06	Environmental Kantianism	Sandler, Ch. 9
Tue. 02/11	Land Ethic	Sandler, Ch. 11
Thu. 02/13	Deep Ecology	Sandler, Ch. 12
Tue. 02/18	Jonas: The Altered Nature of Human Action	<i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i> , excerpts from Ch. 1 and 2
Thu. 02/20	Jonas: A Theory of Responsibility	<i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i> , Ch. 4
Tue. 02/25	The Ethics of Care	Rachels, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> , Ch. 11 (excerpts); Elshtain, "Antigone's Daughters"
Thu. 02/27	Ecofeminism	Sandler, Ch. 14 (only sections 14.1, 14.2, 14.3); Plumwood, "Nature, Self, and Gender"
Tue. 03/04	Review	
<b>Thu. 03/06</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
[SPRING BREAK]		
Tue. 03/18	Environmental and Global Justice	Sandler, Ch. 15 (+ section 16.4 and box 16.3)
Thu. 03/20	Environmental Ethics and International Law	PowerPoint presentation posted on Sakai
Tue. 03/25	How did we get here? Narratives of the Anthropocene (part I)	Bonneuil&Fressoz, <i>The Shock of the Anthropocene</i> (Preface + excerpts from Ch. 4 and 8)
Thu. 03/27	How did we get here? Narratives of the Anthropocene (part II)	Bonneuil&Fressoz, <i>The Shock of the Anthropocene</i> (excerpts from Ch. 8 and 9 + Conclusion)
Tue. 04/01	Carnivorous Capitalism	PowerPoint presentation posted on Sakai
Thu. 04/03	Movie day	
Tue. 04/08	Group presentations on Recycling	Jones, "The Subject Supposed to Recycle"
Thu. 04/10	Group presentations on Food Consumption	Lappé, "Eat the Sky: Seven Principles of a Climate-Friendly Diet"
Tue. 04/15	How far into the future?	Sandler, section 6.3; Crary, "The Toxic Ideology of Longtermism"

Thu. 04/17	What if we are doomed?	Franzen, "What if We Stopped Pretending the Climate Apocalypse Can Be Stopped?"
Tue. 04/22	Debate class: How to take action?	Thunberg, <i>The Climate Book</i> (excerpts); Malm, <i>Learning to Fight in a World on Fire</i> (excerpts)
Thu. 04/24	Study day	
<b>Tue. 04/29 (TBC)</b>	<b>Final Exam</b> (= take-home paper deadline)	