

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**PHIL 3110 Environmental Ethics**

**Course Duration**

January 9 – May 1, 2024

**Instructors**

Prof. Dr. Dirk Lanzerath  
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**Office Hours**

Office hours are scheduled after class meetings or by appointment.

Throughout the program, you can contact you instructor to discuss personal questions.

**Course Materials**

Readings and exercises are handed out by the instructor for each class session.

**Course Description**

This is an ethics course which examines various approaches in environmental ethics and their relation to ethical theories. The philosophical debate on environmental ethics concerns human beings' moral and normative relationship with the natural environment and its inhabitants.

**Objectives**

The emergence of philosophical publications in the field of environmental ethics after the 1970s was due to the increasing awareness in the 1960s of the negative side effects that technology, industry, economic expansion and population growth were having on the environment ('Limits of Growth', 'Silent Spring'). But what kind of nature and what kind of environment should be protected? Where are exactly the responsibilities of human beings? Is it the 'natural' nature as a result of an evolutionary process without any human influence such as for example in coral reefs or tropical rainforests; is it the nature cultivated by generations of civilized human beings for example in gardens or parks, or is it the kind of nature human beings need for their survival in future for example specialized crops and farm animals that we want to protect?

Of particular interest is the question of drawing positive and negative limits for the treatment of nature and its diversity with recourse to normatively understood guiding concepts like man, life, suffering or nature, i.e. anthropocentric, biocentric, pathocentric or physiocentric dimensions. Moral consequences and implications arise here for man's dealings with the natural environment.

As part of a typology of paradigmatic approaches in today's ethics of nature, two basic types can at first be distinguished: the exclusive-anthroporelational concepts, on the one hand, and the trans-anthroporelational concepts, on the other. Although the former affirm the existence of ethical limits to human control over nature and nonhuman organisms, they deny that such limits are set by rights and duties of protection towards, or on the side of, the organisms themselves. In other words, the former type would restrict ethical limits exclusively to man himself. On the other hand, the latter type of concepts is characterized precisely by their explicit recognition of direct responsibilities and duties to protect even nonhuman organisms.

This course will touch in particular the relation between nature and culture. This is to involve aspects of wilderness and nature conservation as well as using nature as resources. This leads to a critical analysis of modern concepts like sustainability, ecosystem services and bio economy.

### Learning Outcomes

In class students will learn to analyze those various normative readings and other materials like movies, to identify the included ethical principles and to apply them to different fields and cases. The students will demonstrate the trained skills in various ways. They will have the chance to expose during class discussions, group work and individual presentations that they are able to understand and to analyze the normative debate and that they will develop their capacities to transfer ethical theories into practical judgments and to reflect ethical theories against the background of experiences with practical cases (reflective equilibrium). The students are asked to search for inspiring examples of their own area of work/study program.

### Schedule and Assignments

#### *Introduction into Ethics and Bioethics (lecture)*

#### *Part A: Ethical Theories and Environmental Ethics*

- Aristoteles: Happiness, Virtues and Teleology in Environmental Ethics (lecture, readings, class discussions)
- Kant: Deontology/Rules and Codes in Environmental Ethics (lecture, readings, class discussions)
- Mill: Utilitarianism/Interests and Emotions in Environmental Ethics (lecture, readings, class discussions)

#### *Part B: The Various Approaches in Environmental Ethics and the Protection of Nature – Readings and Cases*

- anthropocentrism
- pathocentrism
- biocentrism
- physiocentrism
- holism
- Readings by Peter Singer, Bonnie Steinbock, Tom Regan, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Paul W. Taylor, Albert Schweitzer, Arne Naess, Robin Attfield, Brian Barry, Michael Boylan, James Baird Callicott, Martha C. Nussbaum
- Review of Part A & B
- Test: Midterm (short questions, short answers)

*Part C: Animal Ethics*

- Wild animals: protection and leaving them alone (role of protected areas/nature/wildlife parks) (group work)  
[presentations/assignments]
- animals in zoos: the ambiguous role of zoos in protection, education and entertainment  
[presentations/assignments]
- farming: aspects of environmental ethics and animal ethics (lectures, presentations with movies, practical group work)
- Review of Part C

*Part D: Wilderness, Environment and Culture*

- Biotechnology, Bioeconomics and Ecosystem services: nature as resource  
[presentations/assignments]
- Climate Change and Environment (lectures, presentations with movies, practical group work)  
[presentations/assignments]
- Loss of biodiversity (presentations and group work)
- excursion to Nees-Institute and Botanical garden in Bonn;  
[assignments]
- Aesthetics and Nature  
[presentation/assignment]
- Wilderness and Culture (aesthetics of nature, Bernie Krauses soundscape ecology) (movies and practical workshops)
- Global governance and international agendas for sustainable development
- Review of Part D

(assignments)

- *Final Research Paper/creative project*

Instructional Methods:

- lecture-discussions
- group work
- presentations

- panels
- excursion
- movies
- research paper
- assignments
- remote meetings/video chats

## Selected References

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- Woodward, James, "The Non-Identity Problem", *Ethics*, 96 (July, 1986): 804-831.
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## Grading

Students are expected to prepare one seminar presentation. In addition, there will be a written mid-term and final exam. At the end of the seminar students can choose between a research paper or a creative project.

## Grade Composition

mid-term exam	= 25 %
assignments	= 20 %
research paper/creative writing project	= 30 %
class attendance and participation	= 10 %
presentation	= 15%

## Grading Scale

Work in a philosophy class cannot be graded in the same manner as in a math or science class. Therefore, rather than give a „scale“, I prefer to describe aspects of different grades, which the students are expected to earn by their contribution in class discussions and written work.

A „C“ grade in this class: reflects a „good“ performance. This implies:

- regular attendance
- good reading of a text
- average participation in discussions (once a week)
- passive grasp of subject matter (student knows what is going on, but does not enter into a dialogue with it)
- written work shows good comprehension

A „B“ grade in this class: reflects „very good“ performance. This implies:

- all of the above, and in addition:
- active participation in class discussion
- awareness of key issues
- evidence of a „struggle“ with the text
- some ability to draw implications or conclusions
- written work shows good insights going beyond the text

An „A“ grade in this class: reflects „excellent“ performance. This implies:

- all of the above, and in addition:
- active engagement in the exercise of doing philosophy
- critical reflection and insights
- some original ideas contributed in class and in writing
- written work shows real evidence of good reflection, discussion of material outside of class

Obviously, a „D“ or „F“ grade would be absence of all the above behaviors. Just coming to class is not worthy of a C. The activity of philosophy is what distinguishes us from other forms of life. Even an average student should be distinct in this regard.

In cases where objective material is tested (i.e. two tests), I follow the regarding scale listed below:

93.0%-100%	A
89.5%-92.9%	A-
88.0%-89.4%	B+
83.0%-87.9%	B
79.5%-82.9%	B-
78.0%-79.4%	C+
73.0%-77.9%	C
69.5%-72.9%	C-
68.0%-69.4%	D+
63.0%-67.9%	D
59.5%-62.9%	D-
0 - 59.4%	F

### Attendance

Students are required to attend class. Any unexcused absence leads to point deduction. You will be asked to complete a substitute assignment for any missed class.

### Academic Integrity

Students at Lafayette and AiB are part of a broader academic community, with a shared set of values and assumptions, and united by the common goals of acquiring and advancing knowledge. Within that community are many smaller, specialized communities, each with its own specific conventions for working and communicating. In general, however, intellectual endeavor involves discussing the ideas that others have already expressed; striving to understand them more deeply; applying those ideas to new and far-reaching problems; and respectfully challenging those ideas and attempting to extend or even replace them in light of new discoveries.

We share the values of the academic community, which (among other things) require us to acknowledge the contributions that others have made and to continue to add to ongoing intellectual conversations. Failure to uphold this value, either intentionally or inadvertently, is a violation of the community's standards. Moreover, certain violations of the community's standards clearly rise to the level of academic dishonesty and can have serious consequences.

### Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Respect

Every member of the AiB community has the right to expect respect in the exchange of ideas and perspectives. In the spirit of shared humanity and concern for our community and the world, we recognize that our learning activities and design solutions can either support, or be biased against, groups of people and individuals. Thus, our international seminar is dedicated to cultivating and maintaining an equitable and culturally inclusive and welcoming environment where difference is valued, respected and celebrated. In this class we will be committed to and accountable for advancing human diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect. This applies to:

- i) our class interactions (each of your voices is vital and legitimate!)
- ii) our engagement and collaborations with Triboro partners and all of its residents (their voices are vital and legitimate!)
- iii) the ideas that are reflected in our work—acknowledging that landscapes and places also play a vital role in inclusion, equity, diversity and civil discourse.

We disavow systemic patterns of prejudice, including speech or actions that attempt to silence, threaten, disadvantage, belittle, or displace groups and individuals. We advocate for social and environmental justice and inclusive communities and places as we work toward an equitable, democratic, and sustainable society.

### **The Student Code of Conduct**

The Student Code of Conduct will be followed. It is important, but since it's quite lengthy, see: <https://conduct.lafayette.edu/student-handbook/student-code-of-conduct/>. Seriously inappropriate behavior may result in being referred to the Office of Student Conduct, with possible sanctions including removal from the program.

### **Disability Accommodation**

We will abide by Lafayette College policy on disability accommodation. We welcome students with disabilities into our educational programs. The Lafayette College Campus has an office for students with disabilities. Accessibility Services website provides contact information here: <https://hub.lafayette.edu/disability-services/>. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with AiB and your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations."

### **COVID 19 Policies and Accommodations**

Lafayette Engineering students must adhere to safety guidelines because, as members of the AiB community, you share a collective responsibility to engage in simple-to-follow practices that protect the safety and health of everyone. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will disrupt the learning experiences.

If you have potential COVID-19 symptoms or have been in contact with someone who has symptoms or tests positive, you should not come to class. Call your Academic Managers or the AiB Emergency Number and ask for next steps. Refusal to comply with AiB policies is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Students who refuse to wear masks appropriately may face disciplinary action for Code of Conduct violations. AiB faculty may end class if a student refuses to wear a mask appropriately.