

PHIL1101: Introduction to Environmental Ethics
Spring 2024

Instructor:	Dr. Minji Jang (<i>she/her</i>) minji.jang@georgetown.edu
Class Schedule:	Healy Hall 201 (Ethics Lab) Tues/Thurs 11:00 am – 12:15 pm
Office Hours:	Tues/Thurs 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm, and by appointment (sign up here!)

(*This syllabus is subject to change—last updated: **April 18, 2024.**)

Content Warning. Some of the materials that we will read and discuss in this course might be difficult for students from a variety of backgrounds. If you have any concerns about any elements of the course, or if there is any way that we can make things easier for you, please contact me by email, by Zoom, or in person.

1. Course Description

The overarching theme of this course will be “living well in an unwell world.” We will discuss the importance of maintaining responsible hope and searching for life’s meaning in times of impending global environmental crisis. We will further explore the value of philosophy and translational ethics in addressing complex ethical challenges that have a direct impact on our lives and our community.

This course is a foundational ethics course in the [Joint Environment and Sustainability Program \(JESP\)](#) offered by the [Earth Commons Institute](#) and the [College of Arts & Science](#).

Target Audience. This is an introductory course which does not presume any prior background or coursework in philosophy and/or environmental science.

2. Learning Objectives

This course has **four** learning objectives.

- (1) **Content:** You will be introduced to key concepts, topics, and debates in contemporary environmental ethics, and engage in the sociopolitical, technological, and legal issues arising from these topics.
- (2) **Skills:** You will practice key philosophical skills, including: identifying and evaluating different perspectives on a complicated issue, forming your own views based on such evaluations, effectively defending your views in writing and in speech, and engaging in a respectful dialogue with interlocutors with different opinions and experiences.
- (3) **Ethical Competency:** You will explore the value of ethical inquiries and interdisciplinary collaboration in confronting local and global environmental problems. Instead of separating theory from practice, you will engage in the task of translating ethical principles and concepts to better understand and address complex real-world challenges.
- (4) **Reflection:** You will reflect on how the topics discussed in class relate to your life outside the classroom and what it means for you to live a meaningful and responsible life amidst times of crisis. In doing so, you will gain a deeper understanding of your own relationship with the world and your individual agency in the face of systematic problems that require collective and collaborative responses.

3. Course Requirements

The course assignments and weights are as follows.

Assignments	Weight
Participation	10%
Reading Reactions	10%
Design Engagements	12%
Reflection Journals	8%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	20%
Final Project	30%

Below are brief descriptions of each assignment. For most assignments, detailed guidelines with prompts will be posted on Canvas.

Participation (10%)

Participation will be graded *holistically*, including your alertness and attentiveness during class meetings, active contributions to in-class discussions and activities, as well as thoughtful exchanges during office hours and over emails. I understand that in-class participation is harder for some of you than for others. If it is a struggle for you, please come chat with me during office hours or by appointment, and we will discuss ways to make things easier for you or alternative ways for you to make contributions.

Free Absence Days. You have **four** “free absence days” throughout the semester, which means you can miss up to four classes for any reason or no reason at all, no questions asked. No need to tell me in advance that you will be using one or why. For those of you participating in athletic clubs or other university-sponsored commitments (with proper documentation), these days are added to classes that you have to miss for those commitments. Absences beyond those four days will incur deductions in your participation grade unless you notify me in advance of extenuating circumstances in which you need extended or additional absences.

Cold Calling. In class, I will occasionally cold call you and ask you to share your thoughts. The goal is to give you a nudge to participate and to give your peers a chance to benefit from fresh perspectives. If you do not wish to be cold-called, you can simply “**opt-out**” at any point during the semester for a particular class, a week, or the rest of the semester. You can also simply “**skip**” a question at any point, no questions asked.

Mid-semester Estimate. In the mid-semester, I will release an “estimate” of your participation grade—this does not count toward your overall grade and only serves to give you a sense of how you’ve been doing so far. If what you see is not the number you expected or wanted, come talk to me, and we will discuss ways to boost your grade or match our expectations!

Reading Reactions (10%)

On a week where there is a new reading, you will submit a brief reaction to a reading of your choice (roughly 150-200 words) by **5 pm** the day before the class when we will discuss that reading. In ordinary circumstances, you can submit a maximum **one** reaction per week.

Your reaction will: (i) briefly explain **one** of the main ideas, concepts, claims, or arguments in the reading and (ii) present a question or a comment about it. For instance, for (ii), you can:

- pose a **clarificatory question** and explain why such clarification might be helpful for understanding/evaluating the idea/concept/claim/argument;

- suggest an **interpretation** of the idea/concept/claim/argument and explain why your interpretation might be plausible;
- consider an **objection** or a **counterexample** to the claim/argument and explain how it might challenge it;
- offer an **aiding argument** or an **example** that will strengthen the claim/argument and explain how it might help it; or
- add a question or a comment that is not meant to achieve these particular goals, but you think is still **directly responding** to the reading and explain why you think it is relevant.

You will pass the reading reaction if it clearly shows that you have carefully done the reading and made a serious attempt to engage with it. You will fail the reading reaction if it does not clearly show this attempt. Each passed reading reaction will be worth **1%** of your grade.

Design Engagements (12%)

Design Engagements are interactive in-class activities designed to help you creatively engage with course topics, themes, or questions. Each session will take up a whole class meeting and include two mini homework assignments to be completed before and after the session. Your participation in the sessions and corresponding homework assignments are together worth **12%** of your grade.

Reflection Journals (8%)

In this course, we will strive to build a better understanding of what it means for *you* to live a meaningful life in a world under the influence of imminent environmental changes and crisis.

Throughout the semester, you will submit **four** journal entries (roughly 2 pages per entry), tracking your progress toward living what you envision to be a meaningful life to you. What does it look like? What can you do, and what have you done to work toward your envisioned goal? You are expected to modify and update your answer to these questions, as you encounter new ideas and engage in new discussions in this course.

Each journal will have specific prompts that will guide you through your reflection. Each satisfactory entry is worth **2%** of your grade.

Paper I (10%) and Paper II (20%)

You will write **two** short papers designed to help you practice key philosophical skills. For each of these papers, there will be an in-class paper writing workshop, during which you will share your paper idea with your peers and exchange feedback. You will bring a **1-page** outline of your paper to these workshops.

Completion of a Paper I outline and participation in a Paper Writing Workshop I are together worth **1%** of your grade. Paper I draft should be **2-3 pages** in length and is worth **9%** of your grade. Completion of a Paper II outline and participation in a Paper Writing Workshop II are together worth **1%** of your grade. Paper II draft should be **4-5 pages** in length and is worth **19%** of your grade. (If you cannot attend these workshops, you can choose to complete a make-up assignment of submitting written reviews of your peers' outlines.)

Final Project: Creating an Embedded Ethics Module (30%)

For your final project, you will craft a proposal for integrating ethical and scientific discourse within a textbook module designed for an environmental science and sustainability course. The goal is to construct a shared resource for an interdisciplinary audience of various backgrounds, including philosophy, design, and science, to foster a more holistic, integrated conversation on this topic.

In creating this proposal, you will articulate *what* ethical questions, issues, and concepts that you propose to include in this interdisciplinary conversation, *how* you propose to make a connection between ethics and science, as well as *why* you think this is an important and relevant connection to be made. Successfully answering these *what*, *how*, and *why* questions will require a culmination of different skill sets that you have practiced throughout the semester.

This project will include a **poster presentation** and a **written report** for your module. There will be a couple of mini homework assignments in preparation for these steps. Your poster presentation, written report, and mini homework assignments are together worth **30%** of your grade.

4. Grading and Course Policies

Commitment to Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment

Together as a class, we are committed to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for everyone involved, irrespective of their ability, age, economic status, ethnicity, first language, gender expression and identity, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexuality. Offensive speech or discriminatory remarks on any of these bases, explicit or implicit, will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Climate Surveys and Mailbox. We will have anonymous climate surveys to ensure that everyone feels welcomed and respected during class discussions and lectures. In addition to these surveys, if you have any climate-related concerns or suggestions that you would like to share with me, please email me or drop an anonymous note to my mailbox (located on the 4th floor of Healy Hall) at any time during the semester.

Grade Scales

Each assignment will be marked out of the number of percentage points that it contributes to your overall grade. This will give you a total score of 100, which I'll convert to your final letter grade:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
94	90	87	84	80	77	74	70	67	60	0-59

For papers, there will be separate guidelines that specify the grading criteria and expectations.

Anonymous Grading

Paper I, Paper II, and Final Project Written Report will be graded *anonymously*. This means that you should not put any identifying information on your files, other than your UID number. Your file name must be and *only* be your UID number. You will also use a *standardized formatting*, for a distinct style may threaten anonymity: 12pt font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins.

I will dock 1/3 of a letter grade (3 points) for a submission that contains an identifying information or has a non-standardized formatting.

Page Limit Policy

Paper I, Paper II, and Final Project Written Report are subject to strict page limit policy. To standardize length, all submissions should use a *standardized formatting*: 12pt font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. If you have a nonstandard formatting, I will convert it to standard formatting to check for length.

I will dock 1/3 of a letter grade (3 points) for each half of a page you are over or under the required page range. (Bibliography is not included in the page range.)

Late Policy and Extension

All paper assignments and journal entries are due at **11:59 pm** sharp on the dates indicated in the course schedule.

Late Days. Setting your own priorities and deadlines is an essential skill in college and beyond. In practicing this skill, you will be given **five** "late days" that you can freely use on any paper assignments (see exceptions below). You are in charge of responsibly distributing these late days; you can use all five days on a single assignment or spread them out on several assignments. For instance, you may turn in Paper I five days late or turn in Paper I an hour late and Paper II four days late without getting a late penalty. Turning in an assignment an hour late will use up a whole late day.

No need to tell me in advance that you will be using late days, or why you need them. If you submit a paper late, I will simply deduct the day(s) from the remaining late days that you have. **Once you**

use up the late days, late assignments will be docked a full letter grade (10%) for each calendar day (or part of a day) that they are late. For instance, a paper due on a Friday that is turned in on Saturday by 11:59 pm will be docked a full letter grade. So, use your late days wisely!

Exceptions. You **cannot** use late days or get an extension for Reading Reactions and pre-class Design Engagement and Final Project homeworks, as these assignments need be completed *before* class meetings. If you do not submit these assignments on time, you will get zero points. In cases of emergency or other genuinely unforeseen events, you may ask for alternative make-up work for these assignments. You can use **maximum two** late days for the Final Project Written Report, as a lengthier extension may hinder my ability to submit your final course grade on time.

You need not tell me how or why you are using late days. That said, if you are experiencing any personal or academic difficulties hindering your ability to participate in class, I am available to listen and support in any ways that I can.

Electronics

Electronics—laptops and tablets, but no phones—are allowed in class **only** for tasks directly related to course participation, such as notetaking and accessing electronic copies of the readings. Using electronic devices for **any other purposes** (e.g., checking email or calendar, online shopping, social media, messaging, working on homework, etc.) will negatively impact your participation grade.

I reserve the right to rescind this permission if they become of a distraction. Whether you bring a laptop to class or not, you should bring paper and a pen to all class meetings to complete in-class exercises and activities.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

All Georgetown students agree to sign the [Honor Pledge](#) and refrain from any kind of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism. Georgetown’s Honor Council defines [plagiarism](#) as “the act of passing off as one’s own the ideas or writings of another.” This includes **unintentionally** stealing someone else’s idea or **accidentally** failing to give proper credit to someone else’s idea.

Just as you are bound by the Honor Pledge, I am bound by it to report *any* suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the Honor Council. Please review the following university policies on the [honor council system](#) and [plagiarism](#). If you are ever in doubt as to whether something counts as plagiarism, check with me first.

5. Student Resources

Writing Center

Georgetown's [Writing Center](#) provides one-on-one support to Georgetown students at all levels. You can set up an appointment with one of the tutors who can help you improve your paper at any stages of writing—from brainstorming ideas to editing a full draft. You can schedule a session on their [website](#). You can also walk into the center on the 2nd floor of Lauinger Library (Lauinger 217A) to check if there is a tutor available. The center encourages you to meet with a tutor *at least 24 hours before* a paper is due.

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

Georgetown's [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#) offers a wide range of free, confidential services to aid the mental health needs of Georgetown students, including short-term individual counseling, group therapy, drop-in workshops, and referral services.

If you'd like to speak to a CAPS clinician about any of the above, call them at 202-687-6985, or visit their Main Campus office in Darnall Hall (exterior entrance on the 2nd floor up the stairs from Epicurean) or one of their satellite offices with the Department of Athletics (McDonough Arena E114), Law Center (Gewirz Hall, Suite 110), or School of Medicine (Med-Dent SE104).

If you are experiencing a [mental health emergency](#), call the CAPS phone line at 202-687-6985. You will be directed to their 24-hour emergency consultation line. Additionally, you can reach the Georgetown Emergency Response Medical Services (GERMS) at 202-687-4352 and the Georgetown University Police Department (GUPD) at 202-687-4343.

Academic Resource Center

The [Academic Resource Center](#) is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that accommodates the needs of students with different abilities. If you need accommodations for class participation or assignments, please register with the Academic Resource Center by submitting a form and documentations [here](#). If you are unsure whether your documentation meets the University Guidelines, please email the ARC (arc@georgetown.edu) to schedule a consultation with a disability advisor. Once I receive a request from the ARC office, I'd be happy to make the arrangements!

6. Course Schedule (*This schedule is subject to change.)

Wks	Dates	Readings	Due Dates
Unit 1: What is Environmental Ethics? (What Does It Do? Why Do We Need It?)			
Wk 1	Class 1 Thu, Jan 10	None!	
Wk 2	Tue, Jan 16	<i>Class canceled due to snow day</i>	
	Class 2 Thu, Jan 18	Excerpts from Genesis Aristotle, excerpts from <i>Politics</i> Aldo Leopold, excerpts from “The Land Ethic” John Stuart Mill, excerpts from “On Nature” Vandana Shiva, excerpts from <i>Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development</i>	
Wk 3	Class 3 Tues, Jan 23	William Cronon (1996), excerpts from “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” Ramachandra Guha (1989), excerpts from “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique” <i>Optional:</i> Jack Turner (1996), excerpts from <i>The Abstract Wild</i>	RJ 1 due Mon, Jan 22
	Class 4 Thu, Jan 25	bell hooks (1991), “Theory as Liberatory Practice” Charlotte Bunch (1979), “Not be Degrees: Feminist Theory and Education”	

Wk 4	Class 5 Tue, Jan 30	Design Engagement #1 (Ecological Belonging)	EH 1-1 due Mon, Jan 29
Unit 2. Expanding Circle of Concern			
	Class 6 Thu, Feb 1	Kenneth Goodpaster, excerpts from “On Being Morally Considerable” Jeff Sebo (ms), “Moral Circle Explosion”	EH 1-2 due Fri, Feb 2
Wk 5	Class 7 Tue, Feb 6	Cora Diamond (1978), “Eating Meat and Eating People” Alastair Norcross (2004), excerpts from “Puppies, Pigs, and People”	
	Class 8 Thu, Feb 8	Holmes Rolston III (2001), excerpts from “Biodiversity” <i>Video:</i> Introduced species and biodiversity	Journal 2 due Fri, Feb 9
Wk 6	Class 9 Tue, Feb 13	Carol Adams (1990), excerpts from Ch 3. in <i>Sexual Politics of Meat</i> Paper Writing Workshop #1	Paper 1 Outline due Mon, Feb 12 EH 2-1 due Wed, Feb 14
	Class 10 Thu, Feb 15	Design Engagement #2 (Web of Life)	
Unit 3. Urban Environmental (In)Justice			
Wk 7	Tue, Feb 20	<i>No Class!</i>	EH 2-2 due Wed, Feb 21
	Class 11 Thu, Feb 22	Shima Hamidi (2020), “Urban sprawl and the emergence of food deserts in the USA” DC Policy Center: Food access in D.C is deeply connected to poverty and transportation	Paper 1 due Fri, Feb 23

Wk 8	Class 12 Tue, Feb 27	<p><i>Video:</i> Bad doors are everywhere</p> <p>Guest Lecture (Prof. Akshaya Narayanan) “Design Justice and Participatory Justice”</p>	
	Class 13 Thu, Feb 29	<p>Quill Kukla (2021), excerpts from Ch 3. Living with Gentrification in <i>City Living</i></p> <p>Mid-semester Review</p>	
Spring Break —Tues, Mar 5 & Thurs, Mar 7			
Unit 4. Climate and Global Environmental (In)Justice			
Wk 9	Class 14 Tue, Mar 12	Stephen Gardiner (2013), Ch 1. A Perfect Moral Storm in <i>A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change</i>	
	Class 15 Thu, Mar 14	Edward Page (2006), “Three Problems of Intergenerational Justice”	Journal 3 due Fri, Mar 15
Wk 10	Class 16 Tue, Mar 19	Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (2013), “It’s Not <i>My</i> Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations”	
	Class 17 Thu, Mar 21	Paper Writing Workshop #2	Paper 2 Outline due <u>before</u> class
Wk 11	Class 18 Tue, Mar 26	Olúfẹ̀mi O. Táíwò (2022), “The Fight for Reparations Cannot Ignore Climate Change” (Boston Review)	
Unit 5. Living Well in an Unwell World			
Wk 12	Class 19 Tue, Apr 2	Final Project Workshop #1	FP HW due <u>before</u> class

	Class 20 Thu, Apr 4	Dale Jamieson (2014), “Living with Climate Change,” in <i>Reason in a Dark Time</i>	Paper 2 due Fri, Apr 5
Wk 13	Class 21 Tues, Apr 9	Final Project Workshop #2	
	Class 22 Thu, Apr 11	Guest Lecture (Dr. Barwendé Médard Sané) “The Contribution of Afrocentric Ecological Wisdom in Addressing the Climate Crisis”	
Wk 14	Class 23 Tue, Apr 16	Design Engagement #3 (Paper or Plastic?)	
	Class 24 Thu, Apr 18	Confucius, excerpts from <i>The Analects</i> Susan Wolf (2010), excerpts from <i>Meaning in Life and Why It Matters</i>	Final Project Check-in with Poster Draft due Fri, Apr 19
Wk 15	Class 25 Tue, Apr 23	Final Project Workshop #3	
	Class 26 Thu, Apr 25	Final Project Presentation Day	Journal 4 due Fri, Apr 26
Wk 16	Class 27 Tue, Apr 30	<i>Wrap-up Discussion & Reflection</i>	
Final Project Written Report due Fri, May 3			