

Seminar in Environmental Ethics: Climate Change

This seminar will focus on the ethics of climate change. We will explore how moral concepts like responsibility, justice, and equality are involved in the ways we think about the crisis today. We will read *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* by Stephen Gardiner in order to understand why climate change is such a difficult ethical issue. We will use this foundation to consider other contemporary philosophical problems involved in understanding climate change ethics, including intergenerational ethics, international law, anthropocentrism, human rights, non-human animal rights, climate change denial, etc. Furthermore, we will discuss how we should refer to the phenomenon; we will discuss whether we should refer to the phenomenon as climate change, global warming or the climate crisis and how this affects our understanding and action. Overall, we will discover that ethical theories of climate change are important for understanding the issue today. We will also discover that philosophy can be practical by helping us shape our beliefs and actions, things that are critical for engaging with the crisis.

Course Texts

Gardiner, Stephen M. (2011). *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional readings will be made available online.

Course Requirements

Weekly Question (8) 16%

Students are expected to submit a weekly question. Each submission is worth 2%, but this requirement is crucial for the course. Seminars require discussion on the part of the students, so the weekly question will help encourage discussion by focusing on the students' questions about the weekly readings. The weekly question should be approximately 200 words and include a brief summary of the context for the question and a developed philosophical question about the reading. The weekly questions are due online by noon the day before class and students should attend the seminar ready to present their questions. There is no weekly question due the first week and there are 3 other free weeks.

Presentation 14%

Students are expected to give one seminar presentation. The presentation is worth 14%. The presentation should be approximately 10 minutes. This presentation should be treated like an extended version of the weekly question, introducing the other students to the reading and the context for your question and then presenting a question about one aspect of the reading and developing a critical analysis. Presentations have to include a handout and a power-point presentation is encouraged. The goal of your

presentation is to provoke further class discussion. There will be a sign-up sheet to determine which week each student presents. If 2 students want to present on the same reading, then they will have to coordinate their presentations on different aspects of the reading.

Participation 10%

The participation requirement reinforces a commitment to all the requirements of this course for the students. Students are also encouraged to read the news and share any relevant news articles with the class.

Documentary Analysis Assignment 10%

Students are expected to critically analyze the documentary *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power* in order to demonstrate a connection to the theories and concepts related to climate change ethics that we are investigating in the course. This assignment should be approximately 750 words. The documentary analysis assignment is worth 10% and it should be submitted online by midnight on the due date. This documentary analysis will help demonstrate the relevance and importance of climate change ethics. Students will be expected to discuss their analysis in class after the assignment is graded. The class discussion will highlight the connections between the theories and concepts we are investigating in the course and the arguments and strategies in the documentary.

Essay Question 5%

This requirement has 2 two parts, a short presentation and a submission. Students are expected to be prepared to present their essay questions and the context for their questions to the class. This presentation should be approximately 5 minutes. Students will also be encouraged to comment on other students' essay questions with respect, enthusiasm and constructive engagement. Students are also required to submit their essay questions online by noon the day before class. It is always possible to choose a different essay question after this presentation and submission, but the essay question needs to be approved.

Essay Outline 10%

This requirement again has 2 parts, a short presentation, including a handout, and a submission. Students are expected to identify their thesis, outline their argument, explain who or what they are drawing on for support and gesture towards the kind of conclusions they hope to draw and why they think these conclusions are significant. This presentation should be approximately 10 minutes. Students should also be prepared to answer and ask questions about the outlines. Students are also expected to submit their essay outline by noon the day before class. This submission should include a thesis, an outline and an annotated bibliography. Students will be provided with detailed guidelines for the essay outlines in advance of the due date.

Final Essay 35%

Students are expected to submit a final essay which is due online by midnight. The final essay should be approximately 2000-4000 words. Students will be provided with detailed guidelines for the final essay in advance of the due date.

Course Schedule

Week 1 - Introduction (An Inconvenient Truth)

Week 2 - A Perfect Moral Storm

Gardiner, S. (2011). Chapter 1 "A Perfect Moral Storm" & Chapter 2 "The Consumption Tragedy". *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*.

Week 3 - The Global Storm

Gardiner, S. (2011). Chapter 3 "Somebody Else's Problem" & Chapter 4 "A Shadowy and Evolving Tragedy". *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*.

Week 4 - The Intergenerational Storm

Gardiner, S. (2011). Chapter 5 "The Tyranny of the Contemporary" & Chapter 6 "An Intergenerational Arms Race". *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*.

Week 5 - The Theoretical Storm

Gardiner, S. (2011). Chapter 7 "A Global Test for Contemporary Political Institutions and Theories" & Chapter 8 "Cost-Benefit Paralysis". *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*.

Week 6 - Documentary Analysis 1

Gore, A, B. Cohen, J. Shenk, J. Skoll, R. Berge and D.Weyermann. (2017). *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*.

Reading Week - No Class

Week 7 - Moral Corruption

Gardiner, S. (2011). Chapter 9 "Jane Austen Vs. Climate Economics" & Chapter 10 "Geoengineering in an Atmosphere of Evil". *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*.

Documentary Analysis Assignment Due

Week 8 - The Future

Gardiner, S. Chapter 11 "Some Initial Ethics for Transition" & Chapter 12 "The Immediate Future". *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*.

Week 9 - Anthropocentrism 1

Palmer, C. (2011). "Does nature matter? The place of the nonhuman in the ethics of climate change". *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*; McShane, Katie. (2016). "Anthropocentrism in Climate Ethics and Policy". *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*.

Week 10 - Anthropocentrism 2

Gardiner, S. (2016). "Betraying the Future". *Debating Climate Ethics*; Weisbach, D. (2016). "Climate Policy and Self-Interest". *Debating Climate Ethics*.

Essay Question Due

Week 11 - Documentary Analysis 2

Gardiner, S. & D. Weisbach. (2016). "We Agree: The Failure of Climate Ethics". *Debating Climate Ethics*.

Week 12 - Conclusion (The Climate Crisis)

Essay Outline Due