Global Environmental Justice
(PHL 3712)

crosslisted as Introduction to Environmental Policy (ENVP 2000)

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Spring 2010
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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Fridays after class 4 - 6pm, some Weds by appt (I'm often at RH).

Précis of the Seminar:
Drawing on several recent books packed with stunning information and written in a form accessible to all, this course surveys the largest scale environmental problems that confront the whole world, making students familiar with the scope and potential impact of these problems. They include:

- deforestation and the resulting loss of animal species
- global warming, its effects, and the debate over its causes
- soil erosion, desertification, availability and productivity of arable land
- potential exhaustion of accessible fresh water sources
- pollution of lands, rivers, and oceans by excessive resource extraction and waste sinking
- energy usage increases and renewable energy sources
- the effects of human population growth and per capita usage increases on all the above
- fair ways of holding nation-states responsible for preserving global environmental goods.

These problems are presented using information from environmental accounting and other methods for assessing the global impact of human activities on the biosphere's overall capacity to produce and sustain life. To evaluate policy options in response, the course introduces the concept of global public goods and a model of intergenerational justice analogous to conservative management of an endowment so that it will continue to yield in perpetuity. This model is used to explain moral arguments behind norms of "sustainable growth" and to assess the coordination problem of balancing the immediate-future costs of global environmental goods among different nations -- especially given wealth disparities between the 'first world,' 'second world,' and developing nations.

At the beginning of the semester and at intervals throughout the course, students will also be introduced to a sample of different value-theories used to articulate environmental goods, and to standard moral theories for assessing policies in response to environmental goods (including the endowment model described above). However, while these ethical concepts provide an evaluative framework, this course does not dwell in detail on theoretical issues in environmental ethics, such as questions about the ultimate ground of environmental values (in individual living beings, species, sentient animals, ecosystems etc), how we can know them, and their relation to human life. These topics are investigated in detail in seminars on environmental ethics. Rather, this course is devoted to laying out the global environmental problems that make such theoretical questions important.
Without an adequate appreciation of the scale and nature of these problems, it is hard to appreciate the importance of philosophical work on environmental values and their role in theories of justice.

**Prerequisites and Programs Served.** This course presupposes no expert scientific knowledge nor philosophical background in theories of justice or environmental values. It is an introductory and interdisciplinary course that provides a sound basis for further study in environmental ethics, policy, law, and economics. However, students must complete their two required Philosophy courses before taking this course. Students are also advised that they should take one of their social science core courses, and one of their natural science core courses, before enrolling in this course. This course counts towards the Environmental Studies program as well as the Philosophy major and minor, and may be crosslisted by other departments. Given the case studies from around the world used in this course, it will also be of interest to students in International Studies, Political Science, Urban Studies, Economics, and others concerned to understand the full scope and nature of sustainability problems facing the 21st century.

**The Global Justice theme.** Because of the focus on global limits to environmental resource usage and its implications for sustainable development, this course is more interdisciplinary than most electives in Philosophy: it considers a wide range of issues, many of which are not well-known, that affect the life-prospects of current peoples and future generations around the world. But each of these major problems also illustrates the same fundamental insight in political philosophy: collective action through law and common policy is essential to securing goods that cannot be attained by free markets alone. Students are asked to consider whether sustainability is such a good.

However, if we accept that justice requires preserving at least some environmental goods that unchecked market forces will destroy, then given the global scale of the problems at hand, we must reconsider the entire structure of political governance on Earth. Students will consider and evaluate strong evidence that the most serious environmental problems we faced cannot be solved if public policy is based primarily on the economic interests of separate nation-states. But even given a will to make sacrifices to meet these problems, each nation (or group of nations) has strategic interests in free-riding on the sacrifices of other nations. Can such problems be solved by treaties from which nations can opt out, along with the efforts of NGOs? Or do they require a transfer of primary sovereignty to some kind of global government? And how could such a government be legitimate unless it were democratically elected by the world's citizens?

**Texts:** These texts are all required. The books are available in the bookstore and the course packet will be available through the instructor:

7. Course packet for all other readings, including media articles on different environmental policy issues. Students pay for the course packet with a $25 money order made out to Fordham Univ.
**Further Readings:** other readings on each of the major case studies will be provided on Eres, and can serve as part of the basis for student research on a final position/policy paper.

**Requirements:**

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 short response to reading (Feb)</td>
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<td>1 short essay (March) or oral report</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 take-home test on readings (early April)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 policy/position paper (late April)</td>
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<td>Class participation</td>
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**Class Participation:** This grade depends mainly on two factors:

-- The quality of your questions and contributions in class, including your answers in class to assigned study questions for the day. Be an active contributor, not just a passive listener, and you'll get more out of this material! Someone who never contributes the entire semester cannot score better than 50% on this component, which means losing 3% on your overall class score.

-- Your attendance. If you are absent more than two classes, you will lose points. Four absences is likely to lower you a whole grade. No illness is excused without a doctor's note. No absence is excused for flights or travel made during class days, or family events other than a wedding or funeral (proof required). You will be responsible for any readings covered in a missed session.

**Take-Home Test:** Your knowledge of the readings will be evaluated in one take-home test late in the semester (in lieu of final exam). It will consist of multiple choice questions along with some short-answer questions. Attending to class discussion will help a lot here, since test questions will emphasize the material we focus on during class.

**Oral Report:** In lieu of one essay, give a 10 minute report on one reading for the day. Prepare a written report, perhaps 2-3 pages double-spaced, explaining the material, evaluating it (why do you agree or disagree), and raising further questions to be addressed. Take this seriously; it counts as much as an essay. Don't be scared of speaking in class. We'll help you out if you stumble, and this isn't a test in public speaking. The key is to be organized and have thought through your questions on the reading. You may also make a handout for the class or even give a PowerPoint presentation.

**Essays:** The two short essays in the first half of the semester will focus on critical response and analysis of assigned readings. You will be able to choose among a short list of assigned questions for each of these essays. For the final paper, each student selects and researches a topic I approve related to current environmental policies and problems; I will also suggest further readings on these topics beyond assigned course texts. *I must approve the topic and the main sources you will use.* These must include books and print articles, not only webpages.

**Tentative Schedule**

**Jan. 19 - 22: Introduction: Environmental Values and Sustainability**

1. Anthropocentric, ecocentric, and biocentric approaches to environmental values (overview).
2. Louis Pojman's *Introduction to Global Environmental Ethics* (see course packet)
(4) Todd Sandler, *Global Challenges*, chs. 1-2 on public goods and game theory.
   - Introduction to course themes.
   - The environmental capital endowment model and sustainability as principle of basic justice.

**Jan.26-29: Global Public Goods and Environmental Problems: an outline**
(1) Sandler chs. 1-2 continued.
(2) Rischard, *High Noon*, chs. 1 -11 on global public goods and the global commons.
(3) Speth, *Bridge at the Edge of the World*, ch.1 on the major global environmental problems.
   - An expansive definition of public goods not providable in a stable way by markets alone.
   - Questions about governance and collective action problems (course handouts).

**Feb.2-5: Free Market Capitalism and Future Generations**
(1) James Speth, *Bridge at the Edge of the World*, ch.1 continued, chs.2-3.
(2) DesJardins, *Environmental Ethics*, ch. 4: Responsibilities to Future Generations (packet)
   Discussion: Rousseau and Locke on original ownership of lands (course handouts).

**Feb.9-12: Earth's Environmental 'Endowment' and Yield Usage – overviews**
(1) Pimm, *The World According to Pimm*, chs.1, 6 (course packet)
   Discussion: comparison of “environmental capital" and “cultural capital" to "social capital."

**Feb.16 (follows Monday schedule) - Feb.19 (professor in Chicago at conference)**
(1) Short response topics will be due Tuesday Feb.16 in my box (room 916).
(2) Makeup class possible (date to be discussed)

**Feb.23-26: Earth's Environmental Endowment – human "footprint" calculations**
(1) Walter Dodds, *Humanity's Footprint* chs.1-2 on our unsustainable resource use trajectory.
(3) Discussion: components of 'footprint' (direct use, carbon use, waste sinks, minerals, etc).
   - see course packet section on Population, Food Crops, Footprint and Sustainability
   - presentation to compare Pimm's figure of 42% land resource usage to Wilson's and Dodd's.

**March 2-5: Deforestation, Biodiversity Loss, and Stress on Arable Land**
(2) Wilson, *The Future of Life*, ch.3 on rainforest biodiversity.
(3) Recommended: Wilson, *The Future of Life*, ch.5 on value of the biosphere.
(4) Presentation on deforestation: Haiti, Madagascar, Brazil, etc.
   - see course packet section on Tropical Forest Loss

**March 9-12: Loss of Rainforests and Ecosystem Services**
(1) Sandler, *Global Challenges*, ch.4 sections on population, rainforests, acid rain.
(3) Case studies for class discussion: the Amazon, Congo, Indonesia
(4) Recommended: Selections from Hecht & Cockburn, *Fate of the Forest* (on eres).
(5) Short essay will be due on March 12 for those not doing an oral report.
March 15-19: Spring Break (enjoy!)

March 23-26: the Destruction of Land, Freshwater, and Sea Ecosystems
(1) Dodds, *Humanity's Footprint*, chs. 3-4 on human impact on land and seas (skip warming).
(2) Pimm, *The World According to Pimm*, ch.7 on fresh water usage (course packet)
(3) Case studies: Mediterranean Tuna, East Africa coastal fishing, desalination in Saudi Arabia.
   - see course packet section on Fresh Water and Oceans

March 30: Sustainable Economic Growth?
(1) Speth, *Bridge at the Edge of the World*, chs. 4-7 on transformed economic expectations.
(2) Discussion: How can fairness to the developing world be reconciled with sustainability?

April 2: Easter Break

April 6-9: Sustainable Futures
(1) Speth, *Bridge at the Edge of the World*, chs. 8-9 on corporations and the emerging paradigm.
(2) Dodds, *Humanity's Footprint*, ch.7 on population growth and prospects for sustainability.
(3) Speth, *Bridge at the Edge of the World*, chs.10-11 on proposed solutions (time-permitting).

April 13-16: Political Infrastructure: Worldwide Coordination and Global Governance deficits
(1) Sandler, *Global Challenges*, chs. 5 and 7 on global institutions and inequality among nations.
(3) Take-home test will be due April 16.

April 20-23: Pollution: Poisons, Plastics, and Global Warming
(1) Watersheds II selections on pollution problems (eres)
(2) Discussion: harms caused by the plastic mountain in accumulating in the middle of the Pacific.
   (See readings in back section of course packet)
(3) G.T. Miller, "Global Warming: How Serious in the Threat?" from Sterba (course packet)
   - see course packet section on Pollution and Plastics

April 27-30: The Debate about Causes and Effects of Global Warming
(2) Course packet section Global Warming and Carbon Cycle (more articles on eres)

May 4-7: Alternative Energies and Global Sustainability
(1) Gore and global warming continued.
(2) Watersheds 4, ch.9: "Fueling the World" (course packet)
(3) Recommended: Peter Tertzakian, *A Thousand Barrels a Second*, chs. 5-6 (eres)
(4) Presentation on green energy, proposed 'technofixes' for various environmental problems.
(5) Recommended: Wilson, *Future of Life*, ch.7 on proposed solutions.
(6) Final papers will be due May 7.
Contents of the Course Packet

Syllabus

Environmental Programs
- Fordham Environmental Policy major and minor
- Masters programs at Yale and Columbia

Course Handouts

Main Course Readings (in addition to assigned books)
1. Louis Pojman, Introduction to *Global Environmental Ethics*
7. *Watersheds* 4, ch.9: “Fueling the World"

Supplemental Readings
1. Population, Food Crops, Footprint, and Sustainability
2. Tropical Forest Loss and Biodiversity
3. Fresh Water and Oceans
4. Pollution and Plastics
5. Alternative Energy
6. Global Warming and Carbon Cycle
Environmental Ethics Overview

1. Intrinsic Value
   Are human persons the only beings with intrinsic value? – the anthropocentric position.
   Or could intrinsic value or moral standing also be found in
   a. conscious animals – the animal rights position
   b. unconscious animals, plants, landforms, ecosystems – the ecocentric position
   c. individual species and biodiversity of species in total – the biocentric position

2. Utilitarian and Nonutilitarian approaches
   If the natural environment and its species have intrinsic value, should this be reflected in our thinking according to cost-benefit analysis along with other benefits and harms to human welfare, or reflected by other nonconsequentialist ethical principles?

   Related global environmental problems:
   (1) treatment of animals in factory farming, the ethics of meat-eating and animal research;
   (2) the loss of rainforests and other biorich habitats;
   (3) land pollution
   (4) damage to the oceans

3. Duties to future human persons
   Are our only interhuman duties to other presently existing human persons, or do we also have a responsibility to the distant future?

   Related global environmental problems:
   (1) global warming and the buildup of greenhouse gasses;
   (2) human population growth and the growth of natural resources use;
   (3) groundwater carrying capacity;
   (4) desertification and topsoil erosion, loss of arable land;
   (5) economic development of third-world nations and proportional responsibility;
   (6) our fragmented global political structures.