

## PHIL3420-01 – Ethics and Climate Change (Fall 2015)

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Office hours: By appointment

Mailbox/Location: Adorjan Hall, Philosophy Office, 1<sup>st</sup> floor

Class Location: Beracha Hall 216

Meeting Times: TR 3:45pm-5:00pm

### Course Description

This course introduces students to climate change as a global, intergenerational, moral and political problem. It explores the way that climate change strains major Western moral theories, understandings of individual responsibility, the place of science in society, and the ability of current democracies to deal with long-term problems and issues of global justice. It equips students to engage in informed and respectful debate on the most pressing environmental problem of the early 21st century.

### Required Texts

Gardiner, Stephen M., et al. *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 0195399617

Gore, Al. *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It*. Emmaus, PA.: Rodale Books, 2006. ISBN: 1594865671

### Course Objectives

1. To equip students with an introductory knowledge of the science, politics and economics of global climate change
2. To deepen students' understanding of major ethical systems and concepts by applying those systems and concepts to the issue of global climate change
3. To equip students with the skills for engaging in the process of making ethical judgments and defending them in speech and writing
4. To further cultivate student's own intellectual and moral virtues by calling them to engage in moral reflection on global climate change

### Course Requirements

*Class preparation and participation:* **This is an advanced, discussion-based course.** Every student is expected to come to class having read and reflected on the readings and ready to contribute to class discussion.

Homework: I expect each student to **bring one question for discussion based on the readings for that day**. Questions can be about parts that you didn't understand, parts that were unclear or parts you disagree with. Other homework questions may be assigned.

*Attendance:* **Like a job does, this course gives you three sick-days to use at your discretion.** Students missing *three* classes will have their final grade reduced by 2%, *four* classes by 4% and so on. I will take attendance each class after the first week. I will assume that all absences are for good reasons such as illness, *so you do not need to provide excuses or notes for such absences* (unless it causes you to miss an assignment). I urge you to use your sick-days for when you really need them. Exceptions will be made only for illness or other extraordinary circumstances that are severe enough to make these limits unreasonable.

*Reflection Paper:* Unless a topic is assigned, reflection papers should address one of the readings/topics covered in the relevant part of the course. You don't have to develop a rigorous argument for a thesis (unlike in an essay). Instead, you should engage in critical reflection about the issues raised in the readings. For example, what did you think of what the author(s) said? Do you agree or disagree? Why? What would happen if the ideas in the readings were applied to other issues? You have a lot of latitude.

I will grade these mainly by how thoughtful they are, so *lazy thinking* is the most important thing to avoid. I want your *insights*, so try to show that you have reflected on the readings and say something interesting. Grades will also reflect your understanding of the material and quality of writing. The best reflection papers will (1) reflect your understanding of the material under consideration, (2) show you have engaged in thoughtful reflection on the material and (3) ensure that your ideas and thinking come clearly through your writing.

*Personal Action Project:* This assignment has two parts. At the beginning of the semester you will reflect on your

personal impact on climate change. Students will decide whether or what action(s) they would like to take to address their personal contribution to climate change and write a short paper (1-2 pages) explaining their choice. Such actions may include using a less carbon intensive form of transportation, eating fewer animal products, writing a letter to a congressperson, or volunteering for a nonprofit organization. Alternatively, students may choose to explain why they choose not to engage in any such action. Reasons for choosing not to act to address climate change may include that individual actions cannot meaningfully address climate or that individuals bear no responsibility for taking such actions. At the end of the semester students will reflect back on their choice in light of the course discussion, again writing a short paper (1-2 pages) reflecting on this assignment.

*Class Lead:* Students will pick one of our class days to be class lead. You will be responsible for giving a short opening presentation motivating the moral importance of that day's topic and summarizing the positions presented in the reading. You will also prepare some questions to start the discussion that day.

*Exams:* There will be a final exam. If a student is unable to take the exam, he or she must contact me **in advance**. If a student does not contact me in advance and does not write the exam, no make-up will be possible and you will receive a grade of 0.

### **Classroom Policies**

*Technology:* I do not permit computers in the classroom as they too often allow students to be distracted and disconnected from the discussion. Please silence your phones.

*Turning in work:* I expect you to take responsibility for appropriately managing your time. All work must be submitted in **hardcopy** the class that it is due, unless you have made other arrangements with me in advance. *For each day a paper is late, I will deduct 5% of the grade up to four days, after which the paper will receive an F.*

*Academic Honesty:* Plagiarism is not tolerated. Work must be your own and any quote or idea you take from another must be cited. I will always take appropriate measures if a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing. See <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml> for SLU's policy.

*Disabilities:* Please see me if you have a disability that has been documented by the university's Office of Student Disability Services. I strongly believe in an open and accessible classroom and will work with you to ensure this. Students with disabilities needing documentation should visit the SLU Disability Services website at <http://www.slu.edu/x24491.xml>.

*Etiquette:* Climate change is a heated topic. We must debate respectfully with each other if we are to move toward mutual understanding. Extremely rude behavior can result in expulsion from the classroom and course.

*Syllabus:* I reserve to revise this syllabus in any way but changes will be made in consultation with students.

### **Student Evaluation**

*Grading Criteria:*

Reflection Papers (3): 35% (8%, 11%, 16%)

Personal Action Project: 10%

Class Lead: 10%

Final: 25%

Participation, Preparation, Professionalism: 20%

*Grade Concerns:* I encourage you to talk with me if you feel a grade was unfair, but you must do so within a week after I return graded work to the class.

### **Reading and Assignment Schedule**

1. Aug. 25

Overview - *start reading inconvenient truth*

2. Aug. 27

Intro to climate change and ethics

- Daniel Gilbert, "If Only Gay Sex Caused Global Warming"

- Jeffrey Kluger, “What Makes Us Moral”
- Principlism.pdf

3. Sep. 8

Intro to global climate change

- Inconvenient Truth 1 to p. 157

4. Sep. 10

Intro to global climate change

- Inconvenient Truth 2 to end

5. Sep. 15

Intro to science: Scientific Method, Climate Science Overview

**Personal Action Plan 1 Due**

- “Science of cc”
- “Intro to scientific method”

6. Sep. 17

Guest Lecture from Climatologist

7. Sep. 22

1. Where we are today

- “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math.” - McKibben.pdf
- “Escalating Emissions”

2. The human cost: global vulnerabilities to climate change related events

- “Page”
- AR5, WGII Summary for Policy Makers [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/ar5\\_wgII\\_spm\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/ar5_wgII_spm_en.pdf)
  - A-1: Observed Impacts, Vulnerability and Exposure
  - B-1: Key Risks across Sectors and Regions
  - B-2: Sectoral Risks and Potential for Adaptation
- Impacts of climate change on the Midwest:  
<http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/regions/midwest#intro-section-2>
- Against climate action: “Lomborg”

8. Sep. 24

What could the world do to address the threats of climate change?

- Mitigation
  - AR5 Summary for Policy Makers:  
[https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5\\_SYR\\_FINAL\\_SPM.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf)
  - read: SPM 3.2-3.4, p.17-26, SPM 4.3, p. 28-29
- Adaptation
  - “Intro to adaptation”

What has the world done to address climate change?: UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol

- “Gupta”
- “The Weight of the World”

**Emailed Reflection Paper 1 Proposal Due**

9. Sep. 29

Are individuals morally responsible for the harms of climate change?

- Sinnott-Armstrong, "It's not *my* fault," CE
- Nolt, "How Harmful?"
- calculate your footprint: <http://carbonfootprint.c2es.org/>

10. Oct. 1

Do we need new values, new virtues for individual responsibility?

- Jamieson, Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming, CE
- "Virtues of Responsibility"

11. Oct. 6

How is climate change related to global inequality?

- Henry Shue, "Global Environmental and International Inequality." CE

How should the costs of addressing climate change be shared globally?

- Caney, "Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change," CE

12. Oct. 8

Against distributive justice: Posner and Weisbach.pdf

**Reflection Paper 1 Due**

13. Oct. 13

Why has the US done so little about climate change?

- Berger, "Climate Myths"
- we will watch *Climate of Doubt* in class

14. Oct. 15 - **No class:** Prof. Katz away at conference

15. Oct. 20 - **No class:** Fall Break

16. Oct. 22

Discussion of *Climate of Doubt* - Q: What ethical responsibilities do individual scientists have in regards of major public issues? Q: What place should science have in the decision-making structures of a democratic society?

- read Plato, Barker and Kitcher, Dahl

17. Oct. 27

Is addressing climate change a matter of global human rights?

- Caney, "Climate Change, Human Rights, and Moral Thresholds," CE
- Baer, "Greenhouse Development Rights," CE

18. Oct. 29

Do costs to further future individuals matter equally? Do future people have rights we can violate today? - Intergenerational Justice and climate time-frames - Non-existence and non-identity

- Partridge, "Future Generations"
- "The toxic train"
- Parfit, "Energy Policy and the Further Future," CE

19. Nov. 3

Solutions: technological - Will they work?

- climate101-technology.pdf
- clean coal
  - recent EPA regulations: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/08/03/clean-power-plan-myths-and-facts>
  - "clean coal technology"

- “An important step”
- “coal and climate change”
- CCS
  - “SaskPower”
  - “Carbon Capture and Storage”
- “Solutions for Mitigation”

20. Nov. 5

Market-based solutions: Putting a price on carbon

- readings on cap/trade v. carbon tax
  - - market-based solutions: Putting a price on carbon (readings starting with 1, 2, 3, 4)
- “climate101-business”
- pledge by CEOs to cut GHG emissions
- Broome, “Economics”
- Baxter, “The Case for Optimal Pollution”

### **Reflection 2 Due on Five Videos**

21. Nov. 10

Criticizing market-based solutions

- Goodin, “Selling Environmental Indulgences,” CE
- “Can the Invisible Hand Adjust the Natural Thermostat”

22. Nov. 12

Prep class for debate

### **Personal Action Plan Part Two Due**

23. Nov. 17

### **In-class debate**

24. Nov. 19

Geo-engineering

- Keith, “Engineering the Planet.”
- Gardiner, “Arming the Future,” CE

### **Email Reflection Paper 3 Proposal Due**

25. Nov. 24

The value of the non-human world: criticizing anthropocentrism

26. Nov. 26 - **No class:** Thanksgiving Break

27. Dec. 1

Non-anthropocentric value and climate change

- “Nolt, Nonanthropocentrism”

28. Dec. 3

Final reflections: Becoming global citizens and stewards

### **Paper 3 Due**