

# Philosophy 160-C: Introduction to Ethics and the Environment fall 2008 syllabus

jayme johnson  
355 Bartlett Hall  
email: jamesj@philos.umass.edu  
website: www.people.umass.edu/jamesj/

## course overview

This course is divided into two unequal parts. The first, and shorter, part of the course will be a survey of some of the major theories in the normative ethics of behavior. For this first part, we will be reading *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* by James Rachels. In part two, we will shift our focus to some of the major applied problems in the area of environmental ethics. We will spend most of part two of the course discussing Joseph DesJardin's influential text *Environmental Ethics*. Finally, we will end the course by reading and discussing *Ishmael*, an inspirational work of fiction which helped to spearhead the sustainability movement.

## purpose of course

The purpose of this course is two-fold. The first fold is to familiarize students with various ethical theories, and the problems that arise for each of them. This will provide students with a variety of perspectives with which to view ethical questions. The second fold will be to look at the challenges involved in applying these ethical theories to environmental questions. We will spend the majority of the semester focusing on these difficult environmental questions.

## course readings

The following texts are required for the course. All three are available at Amherst Books (near Subway).

- *The Elements of Moral Philosophy 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* by James Rachels (2006), McGraw Hill : ISBN 978-0-07-312547-3
- *Environmental Ethics 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* by Joseph R. Desjardin (2006), Thompson Wadsworth: ISBN 0-534-52084-7
- *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn (1992), Bantam: ISBN 978-0-553-37540-4

## course requirements

The requirements for the course are as follows:

(1) *regular attendance*: while I will not be taking attendance, students are expected to show up for class regularly. Being present for in class discussions of the readings will be necessary to achieve success in this class.

(2) *short homework assignments*: Throughout the course of the semester I will be assigning short (1-2 page) response papers. These papers are designed to help students more actively engage the topics covered in the readings. The “response” will be to a question, or short set of questions, which will be given in class at the end of a Thursday class. Papers will be due at the beginning of next class (That is, the following Tuesday). I will not accept late response papers, no exceptions.

(3) *exams*: Exams will be given in class, and be in an essay question format. Each exam will cover only the material from the salient unit. **Note: there is no cumulative final exam for this course.**

## grading

Your grade for the course will be based on the following.

- Your best 4 of 6 homework scores. I will assign a total of 6 homework assignments, but only count your 4 best scores. Homework assignments will be worth a total 5 points. Homeworks will count for a total of 20% of your grade.
- Exams 1 and 2 will each be worth 25 points
- Exam 3 will be worth 30 points.

The point breakdown, then, is as follows:

Homework	= 20 points
Exam 1	= 25 points
Exam 2	= 25 points
<u>Exam 3</u>	<u>= 30 points</u>
Total	= 100 points

## cheating

Don't do it. The university's policy concerning academic honesty can be found at [www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/rights/acad\\_honest.htm](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/rights/acad_honest.htm).

Students are responsible for knowing this policy and knowing what constitutes an act of academic dishonesty.

## schedule

The following is a tentative schedule of the reading assignments.

<i>Week 1</i>	Topic	Reading Assignment	Notes
Tues Sept 2	Course overview	Syllabus, Rachels, Chapters 1 & 2	First Day of Class
Thurs Sept 4	-What is ethics? - Cultural Relativism	Rachels, Chapters 3 & 4	
<i>Week 2</i>			
Tues. Sept 9	Subjectivism , Religion and Morality	Rachels Chapter 5	
Thurs Sept 11	Ethical Egoism	Rachels Chapters 6 & 7	
<i>Week 3</i>			
Mon Sept 15			Last day to add/drop
Tue Sept 16	Utilitarianism	Rachels Chapters 8 & 9	
Thurs Sept 18	Kantian Formalism	Rachels Chapter 10	
<i>Week 4</i>			
Tue Sept 23	Social Contract	Rachels Chapters 11 & 12	
Thurs Sept 25	Care and Virtue Ethics	Rachels Chapter 13	
<i>Week 5</i>			
Tue Sept 30	Review Day!		
Thurs Oct 2	<b>Exam 1</b>	DesJardins Chapter 1, & p. 17.	In class exam today!!!
<i>Week 6</i>			
Tues Oct 7	Science, ethics, and the environment	DesJardins Chapter 3	
Thurs Oct 9	Managing Public Land	DesJardins Chapter 4	
<i>Week 7</i>			
Mon Oct 13			Columbus Day
Tues Oct 14	No Class		Mon. Schedule
Thurs Oct 16	Sustainable Development	DesJardins Chapter 5	

<i>Week 8</i>	Topics	Readings	Notes
Tue Oct 21	Anthropcentric vs Non Anthropcentric		
Thurs Oct 23	Review Day		
<i>Week 9</i>			
Tues Oct 28	<b>Exam 2</b>	DesJardins p. 123-126	In class exam today!!!
Thurs Oct 30	Discussion: Biodiversity	DesJardins Chapter 6	
<i>Week 10</i>			
Tues Nov 4	Biocentrism	DesJardins Chapter 7	
Thurs Nov 6	Wilderness, Ecology, and Ethics	DesJardins Chapter 8	
<i>Week 11</i>			
Tues Nov 11	No Class		Veteran's Day
Wed Nov 12	The Land Ethic	DesJardins Chapter 9	Tues Schedule
Thurs Nov 13	Deep Ecology	DesJardins Chapter 10	
<i>Week 12</i>			
Tues Nov 18	Environmental Justice	DesJardins Chapter 11	
Thurs Nov 20	Ecofeminism	DesJardins Chapter 12	
<i>Week 13</i>			
Tues Nov 25	Pluralism, Pragmatism, Sustainability	Start reading Ishmael	
Thurs Nov 27	No Class		Thanksgiving Break
<i>Week 14</i>			
Tues Dec 2		Ishmael	
Thurs Dec 4		Ishmael	
<i>Week 15</i>			
Tues Dec 9	Review Day		
Thurs Dec 11	<b>Exam 3</b>		In class exam today!!!
Fri Dec 12			Last Day of Classes