

# PHIL/ENVIR 416A: Ethics and Climate Change

Fall 2012, University of Washington Seattle

Mondays & Wednesdays 1:30pm-3:20pm

Room: Mary Gates Hall 238

Instructor: Lauren Hartzell Nichols, Ph.D., Acting Assistant Professor  
Program on Values in Society and Program on Environment  
Office: Savery Hall M383  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10am-12pm & By Appointment  
Email: [greenphd@uw.edu](mailto:greenphd@uw.edu)  
Course Website: [www.canvas.uw.edu](http://www.canvas.uw.edu)

## Course Description:

Climate change is arguably one of the most important issues facing the world today. In this course we will investigate the ethical and philosophical challenges connected to climate change. Such issues include: What ethical challenges does climate change raise? What would constitute a just allocation of the burdens of climate change? What can economic analysis tell us (and not tell us) about climate change? In what ways does uncertainty challenge our ability to understand what we should do about climate change? Why might geoengineering be ethically problematic? What are we individually required to do about climate change? This course will focus on the philosophical dimensions of these issues, but we will also read about and discuss related issues in climate science, economics, and policy.

## Course Learning Goals:

- *Cultivate philosophical skills* (e.g., reading, verbal and written presentation of arguments)
- *Work towards a deeper awareness* of the main ethical questions raised by climate change
- *Critically reflect* on the views presented and on students' own views

## Texts:

- Gardiner, S. M., S. Caney, D. Jamieson, and H. Shue, eds. 2010. *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
  - *Note that you can access an ebook version of this text via the UW Library!*
- All other readings will be available on our course website.

## Assessment:

The assessment in this course is designed to both ensure engagement and to help advanced students develop their philosophical writing skills.

In-Class Participation	10%
In-Class Reading Quizzes	20%
Personal Action Project (2 assignments)	10%
Reading Responses (3 assignments)	15%
Paper: Topic Statement	5%
Paper: First Draft	20%
Paper: Final Paper	20%

***In-Class Participation (10%)***

Students are expected to participate in general class discussion and in small group exercises. Such participation presupposes regular attendance. Credit will be given for active engagement with the material and for helpful interactions with others. We aim to establish an environment where mutual respect is accompanied by serious reflective engagement with the material.

***In-Class Reading Quizzes with Turning Technologies Clickers (20%)***

Reading quizzes will be given during each class throughout the quarter starting on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Each student's lowest four quiz grades will be dropped. This policy is in part designed to allow for unexpected absences (i.e., due to illness). Because of this, students will not be allowed to take make-up quizzes except in exceptional circumstances (e.g., serious ongoing medical conditions or family emergencies). Quizzes will cover the reading assignment that was to be completed for that day and/or material covered in previous readings and class sessions. Quizzes will be graded such that each wrong answer subtracts 1 point from a total of 20 points (regardless of how many questions are asked on a particular day). Students who are absent from class will receive a grade of 0.

**Turning Technologies Clickers – Set up instructions**

1. Go to the website *student.turningtechnologies.com*
2. Enter your ResponseCard ID (found on back of unit)
3. Enter your first name and last name in the appropriate fields
4. Enter your Student Number in "Other Field"
5. Complete security entry
6. Press Next
7. Enter instructor's email address (*greenphd@uw.edu*)
8. Select "Climate Ethics Fall 2012" and add it to the list on the right
9. Click Next and confirm information. You may click Back if you find information you need to correct.

***Personal Action Project (10%)***

This assignment has two parts. At the beginning of the quarter students will reflect on their 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 chose 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 quarter students will reflect back on their choice, again writing a short paper (1-2 pages) reflecting on this assignment. *Service-learning students will write a longer (2-3 page) final reflection paper in lieu of readings responses – see below.* **The first personal action project paper is due on 10/8 at 9am. The second personal action paper project paper is due on 12/5 at 9am.**

***Reading Responses (15%)***

Each student will submit three reading responses (1-2 pages each). Students can choose when to turn in their reading responses, but each reading response must address the entire reading assignment for a given day. Reading responses may consist of short summaries of key ideas, thought-provoking questions about the readings, a response to an idea or argument from the

readings, or an interesting idea arising from the readings. The purpose of the reading responses is for students to think critically about the readings before they are discussed in class. To receive full credit, students should engage with *all* of the readings from a given assignment in their reading response. Further expectations for reading responses will be discussed on the first day of class. **Reading responses must be submitted before the start of class (1:30pm) on the day for which the given reading(s) were assigned.** *Service-learning students do not have to turn in any reading responses; instead, they will write a longer personal action project reflection paper at the end of the quarter.*

***Paper Assignment (Topic Statement 5%, First Version 20%, Final Version 20%)***

Each student will write a paper of either at least 2,000 words ( $\approx 6.5$  pages) or at least 3,200 words ( $\approx 10$  pages) if s/he wants writing credit for this course. This paper should focus on a single argument or issue and develop that material. Its main aim should be to push forward the debate in the area it considers. In doing so, it should contain only limited exegesis and consider 1-2 serious objections to its main line of argument. This paper should be a highly polished piece, reflecting a strong understanding of the relevant material, of the sort that is appropriate for the culmination of a 400-level class.

Students are encouraged to write on the topic of whether or not (or to what extent) individuals are morally responsible for their climate-affecting activities (e.g., driving), though students will be allowed to write on a topic of their choosing that is relevant to the course. Students will be required to submit a **topic statement**, including a thesis statement, by **11/2 at 9am**. Students must submit the **first version** of their paper by **11/14 at 9am**. The instructor will provide feedback on this version so that students can revise and improve their paper before submitting their final version. Students must submit the **final version** of their paper by **12/3 at 9am**. More details about this assignment and how it will be graded will be discussed in class a few weeks into the quarter.

***Service-Learning Option***

Service-learning provides students a unique opportunity to connect coursework with life experience through public service. Offered as an integral part of many University of Washington courses, service-learning provides students an opportunity to experience theories traditionally studied within classrooms come to life, through serving with community-based organizations. Choosing to engage in service-learning is a way to demonstrate your commitment to your community and your ability to link your academic studies to practical, real-world experiences. The Carlson Leadership and Public Service Center, located in 171 Mary Gates Hall, facilitates contacts with community-based organizations and will help you to coordinate your service-learning opportunity.

Students who choose this option are advised to keep a *service-learning journal* in which they reflect on their experiences. Time will be provided a few times throughout the quarter for service-learning students to check in with the instructor at the end of class so that the instructor can help students relate their service-learning experiences to what is being covered in the course. Service-learning students will NOT have to complete the reading responses requirement and instead will write an extended personal action project reflection paper in which they discuss their service-learning experiences. Expectations for this assignment will be discussed in class.

Instructions for how to browse a list of organizations and service-learning positions matched with this course will be presented the first day of classes. You can also visit the Carlson Center web site at <http://exp.washington.edu/carlson/> and follow the link to AUTUMN 2012 Service-Learning. You can log in using your UW Net ID to browse positions starting on Monday, September 24th. The Carlson Center will send you an email if browsing is available before this time. For this class, service-learning registration opens on **Thursday, September 27th at 8 am** and closes on Monday October 1<sup>st</sup> at noon.

All students are expected to complete an orientation with their registered service-learning organization as soon as possible after registering for service-learning (unless otherwise noted in the description). Please be proactive in contacting your organization (after your service-learning registration is confirmed) by phone and e-mail to either 1) schedule an orientation or 2) confirm your attendance at an already scheduled orientation session. It is expected that all service-learning students will have completed an orientation and begun their service-learning experience no later than October 8<sup>th</sup>.

In addition, the Carlson Center offers a Pre-Service Workshop designed to help students prepare for their service-learning experience through intentional, structured reflection. Reflection is a central component of the service-learning experience; through reflection that is intentionally integrated with academic content, service-learning students are able to deepen their learning through a real life experience. The Pre-Service Workshop will provide students with a basic overview of service-learning fundamentals including building reciprocal relationships, approaching community work from an asset-based perspective, and exhibiting professionalism in their work with community organizations. Students will reflect on aspects of their personal identity and examine how these inform their ideas about entering into service work and how they would work through potential scenarios they might encounter as a service-learning student. Students will also have an opportunity to hear from their peers through activities, small group, and large group discussion.

Sessions will be offered during the second week of Autumn Quarter in the Carlson Center in MGH 171. Space is limited, and students must sign up to attend. Please visit the Carlson Center website (<http://exp.washington.edu/carlson/>) for a list of dates and times Pre-Service Workshops will be offered and to register for a session.

Carlson Center staff are available between the hours of 9:00 am-5:00 pm Monday-Friday to assist you. Feel free to e-mail, [serve@u.washington.edu](mailto:serve@u.washington.edu) with any questions you may have, or to call the office at (206) 616-2885 if you are unable to come to Mary Gates Hall 171.

**Course Policies:***Grade Conversions:*

Grade Point	Percentage
4	95-100
3.9	94
3.8	93
3.7	92
3.6	91
3.5	90
3.4	89
3.3	88
3.2	87
3.1	86
3	85
2.9	84
2.8	83
2.7	82
2.6	81
...	...

*Getting help from the instructor:*

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours (or by scheduling an appointment). If students would like help with a paper assignment they are encouraged to bring an outline and/or draft of their paper to office hours. To get the most out of their time with the instructor, students are encouraged to come prepared with specific questions or short sections of their paper highlighted that they would like help with. Short questions are also welcome via email, but the instructor will *not* read outlines or drafts of papers sent via email.

*Extensions:*

Assignments are to be handed in on the due dates specified. If you see that you cannot make a given deadline, contact your instructor immediately. Normally, routine extensions can be granted only if (a) your instructor is notified in advance and (b) the reason for the delay is both documented and serious. However, extensions for serious medical or family emergencies will usually be granted if written evidence is provided.

*Late Paper Policies:*

Late papers will incur sanctions of (a) one step on the 4-point scale (e.g., from 3.8 to 3.7) for submission on the due date after the appointed time and (b) two steps on the 4-point scale (e.g., from 3.7 to 3.5) for each additional day late (or part thereof).

*Plagiarism and Dishonest Practice:*

Plagiarism and other forms of dishonest practice are unacceptable. See the Student Code at: <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm#plagiarism>

*Please also see the Philosophy Department Policies (separate handout available on [canvas.uw.edu](http://canvas.uw.edu)).*

**Reading Schedule:**

Reading assignments (bullet points) should be completed before the class session for which they are listed. Articles in *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings* are marked with CE and the page number on which they begin. All other articles are available in electronic format on our website.

**Day 1 (9/24): Introduction – Understanding Climate Change**

**Day 2 (9/26): Addressing Climate Skepticism**

- Bill McKibbin. 2012. “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math.” *Rolling Stone*.
- Brigitte Nerlich. 2010. “‘Climategate’: Paradoxical Metaphors and Political Paralysis.” *Environmental Values* 19: 419-442.
  - *Optional Background Reading*: Michael Mastrandrea and Stephen Schneider. 2010. “Climate Science Overview.” From *Climate Change Science and Policy*.
  - *Optional Background Reading (skim)*: IPCC 2007 AR4 *Synthesis Report*

**Day 3 (10/1): Climate Change as the Perfect Moral Storm**

- Stephen Gardiner. 2006\*. “A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption.” CE, p.87
- Andrew Light. 2011. “Six Reasons Why the Durban Decision Matters.” *ThinkProgress*.
  - *Optional Background Reading*: Joyeeta Gupta. 2010. “A History of International Climate Change Policy.” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 1: 636-653.
  - *Optional Background Reading*: Stephen Gardiner. 2004\*. “Ethics and Global Climate Change” CE, p.3

**Day 4 (10/3): Ethics, Economics, and Climate Change**

- Dale Jamieson. 1992\*. “Ethics, Public Policy and Global Warming.” CE, p.77
- *Background (skim)*: Nicholas Stern. 2008\*. “The Economics of Climate Change.” CE, p.39
  - *Optional*: William Nordhaus. 2007. “A Review of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 45: 686-702.
  - *Optional*: Doug McNeill et al. “Analyzing Abrupt and Nonlinear Climate Changes and their Impacts.” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 2: 663-686.

*Personal Action Statement Due on 10/8 by 9am*

**Day 5 (10/8): Risk, Uncertainty, and Climate Change**

- Henry Shue. 2010. “Deadly Delays, Saving Opportunities: Creating a More Dangerous World?” CE, p.146
- Timothy Lenton. 2011. “Beyond 2°C: Redefining Dangerous Climate Change for Physical Systems.” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 2: 451-461.

- *Optional Background Reading:* Stephen Schneider and Michael Mastrandrea. 2010. "Risk, Uncertainty, and Assessing Dangerous Climate Changes." From *Climate Change Science and Policy*.

**Day 6 (10/10): The Non-Identity Problem**

- Derek Parfit. 1983\*. "Energy Policy and the Further Future: The Identity Problem." CE, p.112
- Lauren Hartzell-Nichols. In press. "How is Climate Change Harmful?" *Ethics & the Environment* 17(2).

**Day 7 (10/15): Environmental Ethics and Climate Ethics**

- John Nolt. 2011. "Nonanthropocentric Climate Ethics." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 2(5): 701-711.
- Clare Palmer. 2011. "Does Nature Matter? The Place of the Nonhuman in the Ethics of Climate Change." From *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*.

**Day 8 (10/17): Against Individual Responsibility for Climate Change**

- Baylor Johnson. 2003. "Ethical Obligations in a Tragedy of the Commons." *Environmental Values* 12:271-287.
- Walter Sinnott-Armstrong. "It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations" CE, p.332

**Day 9 (10/22): A Defense of Individual Responsibility for Climate Change**

- Marion Hourdequin. 2010. "Climate, Collective Action and Individual Ethical Obligations." *Environmental Values* 19: 443-464.
- Baylor Johnson. 2011. "The Possibility of a Joint Communiqué: My Response to Hourdequin." *Environmental Values* 20: 147-156.
- Marion Hourdequin. 2011. "Climate Change and Individual Responsibility: A Reply to Johnson." *Environmental Values* 20: 157-162.

**Day 10 (10/24): The Harmfulness of Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

- John Nolt. 2011. "How Harmful Are the Average American's Greenhouse Gas Emissions?" *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 14(1): 3-10.  
*And at least two of these short replies to Nolt's article:*
- Robin Attfield. 2011. "Nolt, Future Harm and Future Quality of Life." *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 14(1): 11-13.
- Lauren Hartzell. 2011. "Responsibility for Emissions." *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 14(1): 15-17.
- Jason Kawall. 2011. "Future Harms and Current Offspring." *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 14(1): 23-26.
- Anders Schinkel. 2011. "Causal and Moral Responsibility of Individuals for (the Harmful Consequences of) Climate Change." *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 14(1): 35-37.
- Thomas Seager et al. 2011. "Determining Moral Responsibility for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions." *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 14(1): 39-42.

**Day 11 (10/29): Development, Gender, and Individual Responsibility**

- Henry Shue. 1993\*. "Subsistence Emissions and Luxury Emissions." CE, p.200
- Chris Cuomo. 2011. "Climate Change, Vulnerability, and Responsibility." *Hypatia* 26(4): 690-714.
  - *Optional Background Reading:* Irene Dankelman. 2010. "Climate Change, Human Security and Gender." From *Gender and Climate Change: An Introduction*.

**Day 12 (10/31): A Deontological Perspective on Responsibility**

- Benjamin Hale. 2011. "Nonrenewable Resources and the Inevitability of Outcomes." *The Monist* 94(3): 369-390.

*Paper Topic Statement Due 11/2 by 9am*

**Day 13 (11/5): Climate Change, Inequity, and Inequality**

- Henry Shue. 1999\*. "Global Environmental and International Inequality." CE, p.101

**Day 14 (11/7): Adaptation, Mitigation, and Equal Per Capita Emissions Rights**

- Dale Jamieson. 2005\*. "Adaptation, Mitigation, and Justice." CE, p.263
- Steve Vanderheiden. 2009. "Distinguishing Mitigation and Adaptation." *Ethics, Place & Environment* 12(3): 283-286.

*Veteran's Day November 12<sup>th</sup> – No Class*

*First Version of Paper Due on 11/14 by 9am*

**Day 15 (11/14): Cosmopolitan Justice and Human Rights**

- Simon Caney. 2005\*. "Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility and Global Climate Change." CE, p.122
- Simon Caney. 2010\*. "Climate Change, Human Rights, and Moral Thresholds." CE, p.163.

**Day 16 (11/19): Climate Change and (Sustainable) Development**

- Paul Baer, et al. 2010. "Greenhouse Development Rights: A Framework for Climate Protection that is 'More Fair' than Equal Per Capita Emissions Rights." CE, p. 215
- Darrel Moellendorf. 2011. "A Right to Sustainable Development." *The Monist* 94(3): 433-452.

*No Class on 11/21 – Use your extra time to work on your Final Paper!*

**Day 17 (11/26): Geoengineering Research**

- David Keith. 2010. "Engineering the Planet." From *Climate Change Science and Policy*.
- Nancy Tuana et al. 2012. "Towards Integrated Ethical and Scientific Analysis of Geoengineering: A Research Agenda." *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 15(2): 136-157.

- Alan Robock. 2012. “Will Geoengineering with Solar Radiation Management Ever Be Used?” *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 15(2): 202-205.

**Day 18 (11/28): Geoengineering as Arming the Future**

- Stephen Gardiner. 2010. “Is ‘Arming the Future’ with Geoengineering Really the Lesser Evil? Some Doubts About the Ethics of Intentionally Manipulating the Climate System.” CE, p.284

*Final Paper Due on 12/3 by 9am*

**Day 19 (12/3): Geoengineering from Indigenous and Environmentalist Perspectives**

- Kyle White. 2012. “Now This! Indigenous Sovereignty, Political Obliviousness and Governance Models for SRM Research” *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 15(2): 172-187.
- Christopher Preston. 2011. “Re-Thinking the Unthinkable: Environmental Ethics and the Presumptive Argument Against Geoengineering.” *Environmental Values* 20: 457-479.

*Reflection Paper Due 12/5 by 9am*

**Day 20 (12/5): Final Discussion – Where do we go from here?**

- Cheryl Hall. Forthcoming. “Beyond “Gloom and Doom” or “Hope and Possibility”: Constructing Motivating Visions of a Greener Future without Dismissing Loss.” *Ethics, Policy & Environment*.