

**ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**  
**ENST 94301-1/ PHIL 09218-1**  
**SYLLABUS – FALL 2020**



<b>Instructor information and office hours</b>
Prof. Eva Boodman Contact info: <b>boodman@rowan.edu</b> Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30pm-3pm, and by appointment, on Webex. *Please make an appointment either way. Webex link for meetings outside of class time: <a href="https://rowan.webex.com/meet/boodman">https://rowan.webex.com/meet/boodman</a>

<b>Course information</b>
Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30-4:45pm Location: <b>Remote (on Zoom), with synchronous meetings during scheduled class times.</b> All Zoom meetings can be found in Canvas – click “Zoom” tab on the sidebar, just below “Home” for all class meetings, links, passcodes, and call-in numbers. Office hours and one-on-one meetings will take place on Webex (see above for link)

## 1. Course Description

This course focuses on our ethical relationship to our environment and the ecological systems of which we are a part, wrestling with complex philosophical questions that do not have simple (or single) answers. We'll begin with the philosophical question of our relationship to the natural world. What place or role do/should humans have, and how do our answers to that question impact our responsibility to nature, the environment, and ecological systems? What justifies responsibility to nature, and what does it imply in terms of climate change and ecological disruption? What is the most ethical response to climate change, and if the problem is “emissions”, what would constitute a “just” transition away from fossil fuels? When and how is human intervention in natural processes ethically justified? Does nature have “rights”? What is environmental racism? What can we learn from the environmental justice movement and Indigenous environmentalisms? What kinds of activism should we take up to create healthy communities? By reading, writing, and talking through these questions, students will leave this course equipped to participate in contemporary debates and to think in new ways about their own place in ecosystems. Most importantly, students will learn the skill of confronting complex issues that require complex thinking.

## 2. Learning Goals

- For students to develop conceptual tools for thinking through, and participating in, complex ethical discussions about nature, the environment, and ecosystems.
- For students to encounter and consider a variety of new perspectives, principles, and frameworks that may be different from their own.
- For students to strengthen their critical reading, writing, and thinking skills.
- For students to become familiar with classic and current concepts, topics and debates in environmental ethics.
- For students to cultivate intellectual curiosity and engagement, and to connect the course material to their lived experience and the world.

### 3. Our Routine – What to expect

This course will be fully remote. To make things smoother for all of you, each week will have a clear and regular routine. Remote “synchronous” meetings will happen on Zoom during class time on Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30pm-4:45pm, with the expectation that students (you) will be in attendance. My goal is to create a remote learning environment as similar as possible to a classroom environment.

Here are some details:

**a) Zoom class session routine:** In the minutes before class, I may play some music as students arrive. At 3:30, we will begin each session with a 15 minute participation activity (discussion, breakout groups, reflection, writing on google slides, or something else). In this activity, be prepared to share a question about the reading, what you thought the most important point was, what you thought the most important passage was. I’ll then give a brief presentation, during which time you can interrupt to ask questions. We will then have more breakout groups or discussions in pairs so students can process the material, and will close out the class with students’ questions, thoughts, etc. Please note that this class format assumes that students will come to virtual class prepared (in other words, you read the assigned reading and are ready to discuss, ask questions, and share both what you understood AND what you didn’t understand).

**b) Films:** When possible, I will screen these during class time by sharing my screen, leaving time for discussion at the end of our class period.

**c) Assignments:** All reading should be done by class time. Student discussion leaders should likewise post their discussion questions by class time on the day they are assigned to do so (I will post a schedule assigning a date to each student). All other assignments are always due by Friday at 6pm each week (writing prompts, responses to discussion questions, etc.).

### Expectations

- Please do your best to show up on time, and to be mentally and digitally present once you are there.
- Please be prepared for class, and prepared to participate.
- I will communicate with you by e-mail, and possibly another format, TBD. Please be sure to check these accounts for messages from me.
- I will grade assignments within 4-5 days of submission.
- I will respond to e-mails within 48 hours. If your message falls through the cracks, please simply e-mail me again.
- Life happens: if you are having an issue or a problem inhibiting your success, participation, or performance in this class, please get in touch with me so we can figure out a solution. If you do not get in touch with me, I cannot help you succeed in the course.

### Technology, Privacy, Accessibility

*\*As this is an unusual, strange, and experimental time, technical issues may arise. Please be patient – we will make adjustments along the way if need be. Please let me know if something is preventing you from participating, or if you are having access issues: We will find a solution together.*

*\*I am committed to your privacy. While it is more similar to a regular class to have participants use video, I understand that this may not always be possible. I do ask, however, that you be present and ready to*

participate in smaller group activities with at least audio. Again, if you are having access issues, please contact me at [bloodman@rowan.edu](mailto:bloodman@rowan.edu).

*\*Recording: I will ONLY record parts of the meeting where I am lecturing, and will be sure to let you know anytime that happens. I will not record your discussions or participation activities. This means that in exchange, you will need to be present during class time in order to fully benefit from the course.*

#### **4. Breakdown of Assignments/Grades**

##### **a) Attendance and participation (10%)**

Your attendance is expected and required. Lesson plans and video recordings will be made available only in the case of students' *justified* and *communicated* absences (e.g. in the case of sickness, COVID-19 infection, or other forms of hardship that you communicate with me). Students will be penalized after 3 unjustified absences. Participation means being mentally and virtually present, having read the material to the best of your abilities, and being prepared to speak, write, and discuss the material "in" class. You cannot receive a participation grade if you do not both show up, and participate.

##### **b) Three written responses (30%)**

These three assignments are meant to help you synthesize, reflect, and meta-reflect on the readings. They should be about 2-3 pages double-spaced, and uploaded directly to Canvas. Each assignment has a question-prompt that you are meant to answer. Your answer **MUST** use the texts we read; these are **NOT** simply opinion pieces independent of the reading! They are opportunities for you to dig into the texts, show that you understood them, and decide what you think about them. Your writing must reference the course readings and use the points made in those readings to answer the question. If you do not read and reference the ideas in the texts, you are not completing the assignment.

##### **c) Discussion leading and current event/example (15%)**

Each class, a student will post a discussion question inspired by the reading on Canvas for the rest of the class to answer. These posts are due by class time (3:30pm) on the day we are discussing that reading.

Your post must include:

1. A brief statement (once sentence) of the main point of the reading, according to you.
2. A current event, piece of news or legislation, scientific discovery or experiment, example of activism, related to the reading, and an explanation of why your linked event, experiment, etc. is connected to, or inspired by the reading. This means highlighting a relevant passage or paraphrasing an idea.
3. An open-ended discussion question for your classmates to answer, inspired by the reading, or your current event, or both.

##### **d) Discussion posts each week (15%)**

Each week, there will be two discussion questions (posted by students) for all other students to answer. You must answer both questions (from Monday and Wednesday's classes) by Friday at 6pm. You're welcome to post more than once, and to respond to other students' responses, but your own initial response should include an explanation/justification for why you think what you think. You do not need to post more than once.

##### **e) Final essay/project (flexible format) (25%)**

Students must submit a final project that answers one of a list of prompts. An example prompt could be: "What should responsibility for ecological harm look like?" Guidelines and a complete list of prompts

will be posted separately on Canvas. The format for this final project is flexible, so long as your creation/piece of writing meets the assignment guidelines. Format choices include: podcast or audio recording, video, diagram or poster, or a traditional paper. The content should be the equivalent of about 4 pages double-spaced.

**f) Check-in with prof (10 minutes) (5%)**

Each of you is required to meet with me at least once during the semester for a check-in. This is to make sure that none of you falls through the cracks, to make sure I have a sense for how the semester is going and what's working for you, and to make sure we are all connecting even under virtual, remote circumstances. It will be great to get to know you! These check-ins will be scheduled through the Calendly app; the link to sign up will be made available on Canvas.

## 5. Course materials

All readings will be available on Canvas (via google drive links) in pdf format. You are required to have read them before class, and you must be prepared to consult them (or your notes on them) during our meetings. If life gets in the way and you cannot read the entire thing, please read as much as you can, and be ready to engage and participate either way. You are strongly encouraged to take notes as you read to prepare for class. [[Readings in square brackets are only suggestions for further reading, in case you are interested to read more. They will not be discussed in class, but you may use them in your final projects.]]

## 6. Calendar of Readings and Assignments

DATE	TOPIC/BIG QUESTION	READING	ASSIGNMENTS DUE by Friday 6pm each week
<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>Course Intro</b>		
Wed. Sept. 2	Welcome! Introduction to the course	-The Syllabus. This is MANDATORY reading. -introductory videos	
<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>Why does “nature” matter?</b>		
Mon. Sept. 7 – no class	Labor Day, no class		
Wed. Sept. 9	Perspective 1: Anthropocentrism (What place do/should humans have with respect to nature?)	- Thompson, “Anthropocentrism: Humanity as Peril and Promise”  [[Further reading: Beckerman and Pasek, “In Defense of Anthropocentrism”]]	
Fri. Sept. 11			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>Why does “nature” matter? (cont’d)</b>		
Mon. Sept. 14	Perspective 2: Biocentrism (Do individual species matter, and why?)	Palmer, “Living Individuals: Biocentrism in Environmental Ethics”	

	What about invasive species?)		
Wed. Sept. 16	Perspective 3: Ecocentrism/Deep Ecology	Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement"; McLaughlin, "The Heart of Deep Ecology"	
Fri. Sept. 18			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>Why does "nature" matter? (cont'd)</b>		
Mon. Sept. 21	Critique of deep ecology	Guha, "Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique"	
Wed. Sept. 23	Does nature have rights?	-Stone, "Should Trees Have Standing?" - Lake Erie: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwhcrpJTzGQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwhcrpJTzGQ</a>	
Fri. Sept. 25			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 5</b>	<b>Responsibility for nature</b>		
Mon. Sept. 28 – no class	Yom Kippur, no class		
Wed. Sept. 30		Hale, "Rights, Rules, and Responsibility for Nature"	
Fri. Oct. 2			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 6</b>	<b>Intervention and Social Organization</b>		
Mon. Oct. 5	When is intervention justified?	Hourdequin, "The Ethics of Ecosystem Management"	
Wed. Oct. 7	What's the relationship between social organization and the environment?	Bookchin, "What is Social Ecology?"	
Friday. Oct. 9			<b>PROMPT 1:</b> Why does nature matter, and how can respect for [it] be justified? Use readings from weeks 2-6 to answer. What approaches from weeks 2-6 have the most/least merit, and why?  Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 7</b>	<b>Does environmentalism</b>		

	<b>need “climate change”?</b>		
<b>Mon. Oct. 12</b>	What role should science play in determining our ethical actions?	Eisenstein, <i>Climate, A New Story</i> , Ch. 2-3: “Beyond Climate Fundamentalism” and “The Climate Spectrum and Beyond”	
<b>Wed. Oct. 14</b>	Does one need to believe in climate change to justify ethical responses to ecological harm?	Eisenstein, Ch. 5-6: “Carbon: An Ecosystems View”, and “A Bargain with the Devil”  *Film: <i>This Changes Everything</i>	
<b>Fri. Oct. 16</b>			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 8</b>	<b>Can “green development” (consumption/technology/jobs/Big Green...) save us?</b>		
<b>Mon. Oct. 19</b>		Szasz, “Is Green Consumption Part of the Solution?”  [[Further reading: Naomi Klein, <i>This Changes Everything</i> ]]	
<b>Wed. Oct. 21</b>	What is green labor?	A Planet to Win, “Strike for Sunshine”; Roach, “The Climate Case for Working Less”  [[Further reading: Vasingtjan, “Degrowth vs. The Green New Deal”]]	
<b>Fri. Oct. 23</b>			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 9</b>	<b>Responsibility for climate change</b>		
<b>Mon. Oct. 26</b>	Who is responsible for climate change/ecological harm?	Shue, “Subsistence Emissions and Luxury Emissions”  [[Further Reading: The People’s Agreement of Cochabamba]]	
<b>Wed. Oct. 28</b>	Is fracking defensible as part of a “just transition”?	*Film: Gasland	
<b>Fri. Oct. 30</b>			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas  <b>PROMPT 2:</b> Choose one of the following options: A. What, in your view, is the most just “transition”? Transition to what, and Who would be responsible for getting us there? What

			is the role of fossil fuels, work, and money in this transition? B. What is Eisenstein's position on climate change, and why? Do you agree with him? Connect or compare his view to one other author we have read so far.
<b>WEEK 10</b>	<b>Indigenous/Decolonial Environmentalisms</b>		
<b>Mon. Nov. 2</b>	What could it take to decolonize the environmental movement?	Whyte, "Indigenous Environmental Movements and the function of governance"	
<b>Wed. Nov. 4</b>		LaDuke: "Native Environmentalism", excerpt  *Film: Beyond Standing Rock	
<b>Fri. Nov. 6</b>			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 11</b>	<b>Land and Food</b>		
<b>Mon. Nov. 9</b>	What is an ethical (anti-colonial?) connection to the natural world?	Kantor, "Ethnic Cleansing and America's Creation of National Parks"	
<b>Wed. Nov. 11</b>		Kimmerer, <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> , excerpt, and Shiva, "The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply"	
<b>Fri. Nov. 13</b>			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 12</b>	<b>Environmental Racism</b>		
<b>Mon. Nov. 16</b>		Taylor, <i>Toxic Communities</i> , Ch. 1, "Toxic Exposure", and Ch. 2, "Disproportionate Citing"	
<b>Wed. Nov. 18</b>		Taylor, <i>Toxic Communities</i> , Ch. 7, "The Rise of Racial Zoning" and Ch. 9, "Racializing Blight"	
<b>Fri. Nov. 20</b>			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 13</b>	<b>Environmental Justice and Activism</b>		
<b>Mon. Nov. 23</b>	Environmental Justice. How can you get involved in your community?	Bullard, "Environmental Justice for All," and Villarosa: <a href="#">"Pollution is Killing Black Americans. This community Fought Back"</a>	

<b>Wed. Nov. 25</b>	Is ecosabotage justified? Is it different from civil disobedience?	Martin, "Ecosabotage and Civil Disobedience"  *Film: "If a Tree Falls"	
<b>Fri. Nov. 27</b>			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas
<b>WEEK 14</b>	<b>Ecologies of Liberation</b>		
<b>Mon. Nov. 30</b>	Connecting prisons to land deprivation / liberation to farming	Heynen, "Abolition Ecologies"  [[Further reading: Kadalie, Pan-African Social Ecology]]	
<b>Wed. Dec. 2</b>		White, <i>Freedom Farmers</i> : "Intro: Black Farmers, Agriculture, and Resistance"  [[Further reading: Penniman, <i>Farming While Black</i> ; Boggs, <i>An American Revolutionary</i> ]]	
<b>Fri. Dec. 4</b>			Responses to discussion questions due on Canvas  <b>PROMPT 3:</b> How are colonialism, racism, and environmental harm related? Use the readings from weeks 10-15 to answer the prompt.
<b>WEEK 15</b>	<b>Ecologies of Liberation/Review and wrap-up</b>		
<b>Mon. Dec. 7</b>		White, <i>Freedom Farmers</i> . Ch. 1: "Intellectual Traditions in Black Agriculture"	
<b>Fri. Dec. 11</b>			Responses to discussion questions due
<b>Dec. 14<sup>th</sup></b>			<b>Final projects due by midnight</b>