

AECN/ALEC 388
Ethics in Agriculture and Natural Resources
Fall Semester 2009

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Purpose of Course: Ethical issues permeate the agricultural and natural resource professions. Practitioners regularly face many ethical questions in the workplace. Other issues are of much broader scope, calling for societal responses in the policy arena. College graduates need to be able to think critically on ethical issues and apply appropriate conceptual tools for resolution.

In this applied ethics course, students will integrate previous education, formal and informal, with learning experiences focusing on ethical issues and the process of ethical reasoning. Such integration will better equip students to function with integrity, in both their professional roles and as responsible citizens in the global community.

Course Objectives: This course meets the Achievement-Centered-Education (ACE) Learning Objectives for either #8 or #9.

Upon completion of the course, the student will:

1. Understand why and how ethical issues arise with particular emphasis on the areas of agriculture and natural resources.
2. Be able to identify underlying values, articulate assumptions, apply sound ethical reasoning, and interact effectively concerning critical issues in agriculture and natural resources.
3. Have a basic knowledge of concepts and theoretical approaches in ethics and philosophy; and understand how these apply to contemporary agriculture and environmental decision-making in both the professional workplace and society.
4. Have basic skills for resolving real-life ethical dilemmas, using practical resolution principles.
5. Possess skills in team decision-making and conflict resolution gained from working in teams on relevant ethical challenges.
6. Demonstrate enhanced communication skills, both oral and written, in articulating value-laden issues and ethical positions.
7. Have greater understanding of, and appreciation for, diversity in its many forms, including the biological, cultural, and human.

Required Texts:

1. Rachels, J. 2007. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill
2. Comstock, Gary. (ed.) 2002. *Life Science Ethics*. Iowa State Press: Ames IA.
3. Additional texts will be posted on Blackboard or handed out during the semester.

Expectations:

- We expect you to come to class prepared to take ownership of your own learning.
- We expect you to contribute your own knowledge, perspectives and expertise to the learning community.
- We expect you to integrate and apply expertise in the learning community (teammates, instructors, authors, etc.).
- We expect you to behave in a manner that increase wisdom, your own and others, in the learning community.

Course Methods: The course is structured to maximize wisdom. Wisdom is the synthesis of knowledge (content) and application (process). People retain approx. 5% of what they hear, 20% if visual aides are present, 75% if they apply what they hear and see, and 90% if they teach it to others. Therefore, the course roughly follows this model: individual preparation; listening to others; viewing and/or constructing visual aides; applying knowledge; and teaching others in the learning community.

Academic Integrity Statement: All students are expected to conduct themselves with the utmost academic integrity in this class. Please review Section 4 of UNL's Student Code of Conduct for definitions and warnings against cheating and plagiarism.

ADA Accommodation:

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Christy Horn for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Journal Entries: Are due on the dates listed in the Semester Schedule in the syllabus and online. Each journal entry must be at least two pages, single spaced, one-inch margins, size 12 Times New Roman font. Journal entries must be submitted via Blackboard by midnight on the due date. All entries are visible only to the individual student and the instructors.

Extra Credit:

- The instructors are open to extra credit projects; however, we will not assign extra credit. Students need to present their extra credit idea in written form or email to both instructors.
- Letter-to-the-editor: If during the semester you get a LTE published in a newspaper regarding a natural resources or agriculture issue (discussed or not discussed in class) you will receive extra credit. The printed letter must be shown to instructors. 5 points for a LTE in a local or state newspaper. 15 points for a LTE published in a national newspaper.

Twitter:

Get updates, links to supplemental material, and reminders by following us on Twitter. UNL388.

Note We will not follow you on Twitter. Please send us a direct message or communicate through another channel.

Honors project options: If you would like to use this class for your honors project(s), we would be excited to work with you

Grading:

Assignment	Points
Unit #1	
Readiness Assessment Test - Individual	
Readiness Assessment Test - Team	
Amphibian Loss conversation map	10
Natural resource cycle In-class Activity	10
Assisted Migration conversation map	10
Team choice conversation map, materials	10
Team Project #1	50
Unit #2	
Readiness Assessment Test - Individual	
Readiness Assessment Test - Team	
Ethics of eating In-class Activity	10
Water use in agriculture In-class Activity	10
Team choice conversation map, materials	10
Team Project #2	50
Unit #3	
Readiness Assessment Test - Individual	
Readiness Assessment Test - Team	
Ethical arguments for climate change In-class Activity	10
Equity, Development, and Action In-class Activity	10
Team choice conversation map, materials	10
Team Project #3	50
Journals	
My Morals (Online & Reflection)	10
6 journal entries	60
Final Reflection	30
Contribution Evaluation	
Peers'	50
Instructors'	50
Interview assignment	50
Final Portfolio	50
Total	700

Semester Schedule:

Day	Topic	Reading	Activity
Aug. 25	Intro-Class Philosophy		1. class introduction 2. form teams 3. get to know team members
27	Teams/Community	1. syllabus 2. Comstock Ch. 1	1. RAT 2. Overview of syllabus, grading, content 3. decide on quiz grading
Sept. 1	Teams/Community	1. Why Conservatives Live in a Different Moral Universe 2. take Moral Foundations Questionnaire at www.yourmorals.org	1. Pillars of Character /road rules 2. In-class activity 3. critical thinking survey results of 5 morals due
3	Go through ch. 3 together	1. Comstock Ch. 3 2. Leopold "The Land Ethic"	use Comstock model with Leopold Journal Entry #1 due
8	UNIT #1 Natural Resources & Kant	1. Rachels Ch. 8 2. Rolston "Environmental Ethics: Values in and Duties to the Natural World" 3. Lucht "Does Kant Have Anything to Teach Us About Environmental Ethics?"	RAT Unit #1 Individual Test Team Test
10			1. Re-teach 2. Team Project #1 intro
15	case study- Amphibian Loss	1. The Vanishing 2. The Thin Green Line 3. The Sixth Extinction	1. In-class activity Journal Entry #2 Due
17	case study-The Cycle of Natural Resource Use Jigsaw day: split into expert groups	1. Diamond 'Easter Island' from <i>Collapse</i> 2. The Real Price of Gold Mining's Hard Rock Legacy 3. High Tech Trash PBS Frontline episode 4. The Story of Stuff	1. In-class activity

		Diamond- 'Why Do Some Societies Make Disastrous Decisions?' from <i>Collapse</i>	
22	Case Study-Assisted migration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Radical Step to Preserve Species 2. A Framework for Debate of Assisted Migration in an Era of Climate Change 3. Seddon et al. The Risks of Assisted Colonization 4. Wilson: "The Little Things that Run the World" 	1. In-class activity
24	Case Study	students find own material, this topic will also be poster topic	conversation map
29	Workday		Journal Entry #3 Due
Oct. 1	Poster Session/Peer Evals		
6	UNIT #2 Agriculture, Utilitarianism	Comstock Ch.7 Rachels Ch. 7	RAT-Unit 2 Individual Test Team Test
8			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re-teach 2. Team Project #2 intro 3. watch Planet in Peril-sharks
13	Case Study- the ethics of eating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Singer- 'All Animals are Equal' 2. Pollan- 'An Animal's Place' 3. CNN video 'Planet in Peril: Shark meat' 4. Last of the Amazon 	
15	case study- water use for agriculture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Global Food Crisis 2. Australia's Dry Run 3. The Water Footprint of Bioenergy 	In-class activity Journal Entry #4 Due
20	Fall Break		
22	case study- open food issue	students find own material	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. conversation map 2. turn in reading material or online links for team food issue
27	Workday		Journal Entry #5 Due
29	Workday		

Nov. 3	Presentations/Peer Evals		
5	UNIT #3 -climate change virtue ethics	1. Rachels Ch. 12 2. Attributing physical and biological impacts 3. Outlook Extreme	RAT-Unit 3 Individual Test Team Test
10			Re-teach 2. Team Project #3 intro
12	Case Study-ethical arguments for climate change action	1. 'The Ethical Response to Global Warming' 2. A Perfect Moral Storm	In-class activity
17	Case Study	1. Suffering the Science 2. Living on Thin Ice 3. Oxfam: The Most Vulnerable 4. The Debt of Nations	In-class activity Journal Entry #6 Due
19	Case Study	students find own material that relates to their Team Project #3 country	turn in reading material or online links for team issue
24	Workday		
26	Thanksgiving Holiday		
Dec. 1	Workday		
3	Presentations		
8	Presentations		
10	Evals: Peer & Class /Closure		Journal Entry #7 Due
16 Wed.	Final Exam Day3:30 to 5:30 p.m.		Final Portfolio due