

# Environmental Science & Ethics

ENV221H1  
Sept 22, 2020

1

1

## Announcements

- This week using ZOOM for class lectures.
- Tutorial # 1 next Wed

SCHOOL OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT



2020

**UNDERGRADUATE ORIENTATION**

**September 24, 2020 | 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM**

Register at: <https://bit.ly/2DY058n>



2

# ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

3

3

## Environmental Ethics Lecture Outline

- *What are the disciplinary contributions to the study of the environment?*
- *How does the discipline approach the study of environmental issues?*
- *What questions does it ask?*
- Definitions
- History
- Key figures

4

4

## Worldview

- Reflects a person`s (or group`s) beliefs about the meaning, operation, and essence of the world
- Different worldviews can study the same situation, review identical data, but draw different conclusions

5

5

## Ethics

- Branch of philosophy that involves the study of good and bad, right and wrong
- How **ought** we to behave?
- Set of moral principles or values held by an individual or society
- Relativists: ethics vary with social context
- Universalists: there exist some fundamental, objective notions of right and wrong, good and bad

6

6

## Ethical Standards

- Criteria to help differentiate right from wrong
  - categorical imperative (proposed by Immanuel Kant) similar to the golden rule “do unto others as you would have others do unto you”
  - Utilitarian principle (John Stuart Mill): something is right when it produces the greatest practical benefits for the most people

7

7

## Environmental Ethics

- Application of ethical standards to relationships between humans and nonhuman entities.
- Concern once people perceive environmental changes brought about by industrialization

8

8

## Evolution of Environmental Ethics

- Academic discipline arising in 1970s
- Ancient aboriginal oral traditions – environment as source of sacred teachings
- Jain Dharma (one of the oldest religious traditions) – compassion for all life
- Plato – “The land is our ancestral home and we must cherish it even more than children cherish their mother”

9

9

## Religious Traditions

- Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have been critiqued for such teachings as:
  - “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth”
- Encourages separation from and animosity towards nature: humans should be masters of nature
- Others interpret a more stewardship role over nature
  - “you shall not defile the land in which you live...”

10

10

## *Laudato Si* (Praise Be to You) On Care for our Common Home

- Circular letter (encyclical) in June 2015 from Pope Francis (who holds a graduate degree in chemistry)
- an encyclical is generally used for significant issues, and is second in importance only to the highest ranking document now issued by Popes
- Encyclicals indicate high Papal priority for an issue at a given time
- Example of another important encyclical: *Humanae Vitae* (On the Regulation of Human Births), July 25, 1968, [Encyclical] of Pope Paul VI, July 25, 1968

11

11

- first encyclical to tackle climate change & ecology
- Critiques “irrational confidence in progress and human abilities” and the “throwaway culture” of unbridled consumerism.

12

12

Sánchez Sorondo & Ramathan. 2016. Pursuits of integral ecology. Science

- The real innovation is this new synergy between science, policy, and religion.
- The resolution of major environmental problems facing society requires a fundamental reorientation in our behavior and attitude toward nature and toward each other.
- the mitigation of climate change was a moral and religious imperative, and that the development of a sustainable relationship with the planet also requires a moral revolution

13

## Conservation and Preservation

- Conservation ethic: humans should put natural resources to use but we have a responsibility to manage them wisely – Gifford Pinchot, Clifford Sifton
- Preservation ethic: should protect the natural environment in a pristine, unaltered state
  - Nature deserves protection for its own inherent value – John Muir, James Harkin

14

14

## Ethical Consideration to Whom?

- Anthropocentrism
- biocentrism
- ecocentrism

15

15

- Peter Singer and Tom Regan
  - We should extend moral standing to other species of animals
  - Because they possess a form of consciousness
- Mahatma Gandhi reportedly said :
  - *“the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”*

16

16

## The Land Ethic

- Aldo Leopold (1887-1949), forester and wildlife manager, wrote “The Land Ethic” in 1949

17

17

## Land Ethic

- “The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land”
- “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise”

18

18

## Deep Ecology

- Developed in 1970s by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess
- All living things have **equal intrinsic** value and that because we are truly inseparable from our environment, we should protect all living things as we protect ourselves

19

19

## Social Ecology

- Environmental problems are directly related to social problems
- Humans must recognize they are part of nature not distinct or separate from it.
- Relationships are mutualistic and interrelated, non-hierarchical

20

20

## Environmental Justice

- Based on the principle that all people – regardless of race, colour, national origins, or income – have the right to :
  - live and work in a clean, healthy environment;
  - to receive protection from the risks and impacts of environmental degradation;
  - be compensated for having suffered such impacts;
  - have equitable access to environmental resources of high quality

21

21

## Ecofeminism

- Evolve alongside social movements of the 60's and 70's such as civil rights and the feminist movement
- Connections between the oppression of nature and of women
- Patriarchal society tends to try to dominate and conquer what they hate, fear, or do not understand

22

22



23



24

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25