

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

FALL, 2017

Term project

In line with the primary goal of this class, the term project will involve a critical evaluation, from an ethical point of view, of human beings' interactions with the natural environment. Because the main focus of the course is on interactions with the environment at the social level, subject to the actions and regulations of governments, for the term project you will choose a specific environmental *policy* – a rule dealing with the relationship between individuals, organizations, or other groups and the natural environment. You should choose a policy that has generated controversy, so that you can explore disagreements over relevant moral values and scientific information.

Your project will take the form of a related set of short statements which you will present on a website you will develop. This is to enable you to take advantage of features of the medium: the abilities to link to sources of information on the web; to easily link together elements of your project; and to incorporate pictures (and other multi-media) elements into your presentation. You will receive training on how to use OU Create and WordPress to develop your website. (However, you will also submit your written work through Canvas for plagiarism detection.)

Once you have chosen a policy controversy (see below) I will assign you to a group of students working on a similar topic. I expect group-members to assist each other with their research efforts, to help deepen each other's understanding of the issues, as well as assist each other with their writing and website development.

I will grade (and comment on) the elements of the term project as you turn them in; together they are worth 80% of your final grade. At the end of the semester you will have the opportunity to revise each of the elements, and work on how they fit together. At that time I will grade them again, and you will get credit for improvements. In addition, I will evaluate your project overall, taking into consideration its coherence and your use of the website medium; the overall evaluation is worth 10% of your final grade.

Step 1 – Proposal/Introduction (~ 1 p.)

Task presented: Fri., Sept. 22

Due: Mon., Oct. 2

Making use of the orientation to environmental issues provided by *Environmental Transformations*, you will choose a controversial environmental policy to work on, i.e. one about which there is substantial disagreement. I will make comments and approve or disapprove of your proposal (if the latter you will need to resubmit a revised version). Your proposal will serve as the introduction for your completed project.

Step 2 - Presentation of two sides (~4-6 pp.)

Task presented: Mon., Oct. 2

Due: Mon., Oct. 23

During this stage of the class you will develop two statements (~2-3 pp. each), one in favor of the policy you are working on and one against it. In your statements you will make use of ideas from the moral theories we will cover to offer justifications of the two positions. You will research statements made by proponents and opponents of the policy, and draw on them to frame moral arguments on both sides of the question.

Step 3 - Presentation of research (~4-6 pp.)

Task presented: Mon., Oct. 23

Due: Mon., Nov. 13

During this stage of the class you will do research into the factual bases for the arguments you presented in the previous element. You will identify the key claims made in the statements you found in your research, analyze their moral significance, and then investigate and evaluate the sources for these claims. You will summarize your findings in two research briefs (~2-3 pp. each), one for each side in the dispute.

Step 4 - Statement of own position (~2 pp.)

Task presented: Mon., Nov. 13

Due: Mon., Nov. 20

During this week of the class you will work on a statement of your own position on the policy you are working on. You might favor one of the two sides you have presented in the previous elements, or you might have a distinct point of view. But in your statement you will use moral ideas you have studied and the factual research you conducted to justify the position on the policy you think is right.

Step 5 - Project revision

Task presented: Mon., Nov. 27

Due: Wed., Dec. 6

In the final week and a half of classes you will work on revising the elements of your project, and ensuring that it forms a coherent whole. You will also work on the way you display it on your website. In addition to my evaluation of the separate elements, I will take those factors into consideration in evaluating the project overall. During the last two classes of the term you will work with your group on an ungraded presentation to the entire class of the broad area your group has examined.