

ES/PH 302- ETHICS AND SUSTAINABILITY
IES Abroad Freiburg

DESCRIPTION:

Students are introduced to the concept of sustainability with a focus on its ethical implication, such as the question of whether or why present generations have a moral obligation towards future generations. The course provides basic knowledge of key ethical theories, such as utilitarianism and Kant's categorical imperative. The course also gives students an understanding of the concept of sustainability, its historical background and its current controversies, such as the concept of "weak" and "strong" sustainability. Ethical questions that arise in the context of sustainability are discussed, with specific focus on the climate change debate. Based on this theoretical background, students apply the key tenets of ethics and sustainability to issues such as climate change mitigation and adaptation. Students reflect upon their own position regarding the "value" of nature and use this reflection to inform their analysis of the central lines of argumentation within environmental ethics. These include anthropocentrism, varieties of physiocentrism, extending the realm of rights and critical feminist perspectives.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures
- Discussions
- Group work
- Student presentations
- Excursions (if weather permits)
- Self-study

Moodle will be used to post additional material, share assignments, follow recent developments in the field and offer learning exercises.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation - 5%
- Role Play – 15%
- Position paper - 20%
- Reading responses – 30% (x6, 5% each)
- Final exam - 30%

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Analyze and compare central tenets of key ethical theories
- Draw the connection between ethics and sustainability
- Define sustainability and its underlying principles
- Understand the difference between weak and strong sustainability
- Assess the ethical implications of climate change
- Reflect upon their own positions regarding the "value" of nature on the basis of their knowledge of differing



- viewpoints in environmental ethics: anthropocentrism and physiocentrism
- Be familiar with main ethical stances in environmental debates

Attendance Policy (see also the detailed version on Moodle ESS Academics page)

IES Abroad courses are designed to utilize the unique contribution of the instructor; the lecture/discussion format is regarded as the **primary mode of instruction**. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. Any unexcused absence will incur a penalty on your final course grade. Deductions from grades due to absences are based on contact hours (= 45 minutes). Any unexcused absence will result in a penalty on your final course grade (1 unexcused contact hour absence - 1%, 2nd unexcused contact hour absence -2%, 3rd unexcused contact hour absence – 3% and so on). Any student who misses more than 25% of a course (= more than 11 contact hours), whether the absences are excused or are unexcused, will receive an “F” as the final grade in the course.

ESS courses may have entire course blocks that take place on one day in addition to longer field trips that count for several contact hours. In this case, the actual missed contact hours are added together, and the absences are sanctioned according to the rule above. If you are late for a planned field trip, you will generally not be able to join the trip, since the group needs to leave on time and cannot wait for one person. Punctuality is therefore essential here. If you miss a class, it is **your responsibility** to make up on everything that was covered in class. Tests/presentations missed during unexcused absences **cannot be made up**.

Arriving late for class: Punctuality is important for the planned course schedule. If you are late for class, the late time will be recorded and added up at the end of the course. You will receive a grade reduction based on the accumulated amount of missing contact hours (as outlined above; i.e., if you were late by 15 minutes on 3 days, your grade would be reduced by 1% for 1 missing contact hour).

LATE OR FAILURE SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS: Late submission of assignments or failure of submission of assignment results in the grade F of that particular assignment. This does not apply to late or non-submission due to illness with an excused absence.

Excused absence: Please call the IES Center before the start of your first class if you are ill and would like to be excused from your course, as outlined in the "Cell Phone and Attendance Policy" handed out during orientation. Student Affairs staff will decide whether your absence can be excused directly or whether a doctor's note is necessary. Absences due to religious observances and family emergencies may be excused at the discretion of the Center Director, with written approval. A petition for an excused absence due to a religious holiday needs to be submitted 2 weeks in advance. If permission is granted, the student needs to inform the Academic Dean, the Student Affairs Team and their instructors. Absences due to private travel or travel delays cannot be excused, even with advanced notice.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Code of Academic Integrity. The detailed IES Abroad academic integrity code can be accessed on Moodle.

All work submitted by a student for academic credit should constitute the student's own original work. Regardless of the quality of work, plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and/or an academic review and possible expulsion from the program. Plagiarism may be broadly defined as “copying of materials from sources, without acknowledging having done so, claiming other’s ideas as one’s own without proper reference to them, buying materials such as essays/exams, and using AI-generated content without disclosure.”

As AI tools continue to evolve, learning how to use them responsibly is an important emerging skill. Some of our courses allow students to explore the use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools such as ChatGPT for some assignments and assessments. The instructor of each course will communicate whether GAI may be used in a course and provide specific guidelines and procedures for its appropriate use.

Updated information on your course and readings, including additional readings from journalistic articles, can be found on the Moodle platform at <https://moodle.iesabroad.org/login/index.php>

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments and Readings
Week 1	Session 1: What is ethics? Styles of ethical reasoning	<u>Required Reading:</u> Pojman 2000
	Session 2: Classical Ethical Theories Main concepts and analytical approaches	<u>Required Reading:</u> Selections from the Brundtland Report
	Session 3: Sustainability? Sustainable Development and Future Generations	<u>Required Reading:</u> - Golding 1972 - Gardiner and Hartzell-Nichols 2012
	Session 4: Climate Change. Intro to Problems and Ethical Issues	<u>Required Reading:</u> Grubb 1995
Week 2	Session 5: Climate Change Mitigation: Governance Solutions and Ethics	<u>Required Reading:</u> Pogge 2002
	Session 6: Climate Change Adaptation: Governance Solutions and Ethical Concerns	<u>Required Reading:</u> Read the latest submission of your party/coalition as uploaded. Prepare a position paper (1 per group, 3 min talking) reflecting your position and ethical concerns. Additional research may be useful.
	Session 7: Climate Change Negotiation Simulation: UNFCCC Role Play	<u>Required Reading:</u> - Benson 2000 <u>Recommended Reading:</u> - Optional: Routley and Routley 2000
	Session 8: Moral Debates. The Values of Nature	- Singer 1974 - White 1967

Week 3	Session 9: Sentience and the consideration of animals. Animal liberation	Cullinan 2008
	Session 10: Physio-centric Ethics. Extending the realm rights.	Warren 1990
	Session 11: Feminist Perspectives on Environmental Ethics Wrap-up and Feedback	
	Session 12: Final Exam	

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS (possible destinations):

- St. Peter / Freiamt (0-energy villages with wind turbines and biomass plants)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Benson, John. "Environments and environmental ethics", Chapter 1 in *Environmental Ethics*. London: Routledge. 2000, pp. 9-29.
- Cullinan, C. (2008). If Nature Had Rights, what would people need to give up? Orion Magazine, 27(January/ February), 26-31.
- Gardiner, S.M. & Hartzell-Nichols, L. 2012. "Ethics and Global Climate Change". Nature Education Knowledge, 3(10): 5
- Golding, M.P. 1972. "Obligations to Future Generations." The Monist, 56, 1, 85-99.
- Grubb, M. 1995. Seeking fair weather: Ethics and the international debate on climate change. International Affairs, 71(3), 463- 496
- Pogge, T. 2002. World Poverty and Human Rights: General Introduction. Polity Press. 1-32
- Pojman, Louis P. (2000), Classical Ethical Theories and the Problem of future Generations, Chapter 5, in *Global Environmental Ethics*, Mountain View, Ca.: Mayfield Publishing. pp.63-96.
- Routley, Richard and Roultey, Val. "Environmental ethics in practice" in *Environmental Ethics*. London: Routledge. 2000, pp.139-141.
- Selections from the Brundtland Commission's 1987 Report of the World Commission on the Environment and Development: Our Common Future, Ch. 2, "Towards Sustainable Development."
- Singer, Peter, "All Animals are Equal", *Philosophical Exchange* 1 (1974): 103-116 (reprinted in Schmidtz and Willot, Environmental Ethics, New York: Oxford University Press (2002), pp.17-27).
- Warren, Karen J. "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 125-146. (reprinted in Schmidtz and Willot, Environmental Ethics, New York: Oxford University Press (2002), pp. 234-247).
- White, Lynn. "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis", *Science*, New Series, Vol. 155, No. 3767 (Mar. 10, 1967), pp. 1203- 1207.



Appendix:

Course Participation

Students are expected to participate in debates with questions related to the readings and Students are required to complete all reading assignments and will be expected to demonstrate this through regularly assigned homework, pop quizzes, and/or insightful and relevant contributions to in-class discussion. All these components will count toward the class participation grade. Participation also applies to course-related trips, outings and/or special events in and around Freiburg. A rubric for participation is available in the appendix and on Moodle.

Appendix:

Rubric for course participation:

A	Excellent participation The student's contributions reflect an active reading of the assigned bibliography. Skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and raises questions about the applications and implications of the material. Demonstrates, through questions and comments, that they have been capable of relating the main ideas in the readings to the other information discussed in the course and with their own life experience. The student makes informed judgments about the readings and other ideas discussed in class, providing evidence and reasons. They respectfully state their reactions about other classmates' opinions and can contribute to the inquiry spiral with other questions. The student gets fully involved in the completion of the class activities.
B	Very good participation The student's contributions show that the assigned materials are usually read. Most of the time, the main ideas are identified, even though sometimes it seems that applications and implications of the information read were not properly reflected upon. The student can construct over others' contributions, but sometimes seems to interrupt the shared construction to go over tangents. They are respectful of others' ideas. Regularly involved in the activities but occasionally loses concentration or energy.
C	Regular participation The participant evidences a regular reading of the bibliography but in a superficial way. They try to construct over others' ideas, but commonly provide comments that indicate a lack of preparation about the material. Frequently, contributions are shallow or unarticulated with the discussion in hand.
F	Insufficient participation Consistently, the participant reads in a shallow way or does not read at all. Does not participate in an informed way and shows lack of interest in constructing over others' ideas.