

PHIL 126 - Environmental Ethics and Philosophy



Plastic, plastic, everywhere: The world's oceans are full of discarded trash that degrades and sinks, or drifts ashore at places like Turneffe Atoll in Belize. PHOTOGRAPH BY WATERFRAME, ALAMY National Geographic.

Fall 2023: Online Asynchronous

Instructor: Michael Jordan (michael.jordan@sjsu.edu)

Course Description:

Environmental ethics applies ethical thinking to the natural world and the relationship between humans and non-human entities. For example, do we have special duties, obligations, or responsibilities to other species or nature in general? What duties do humans have with respect to the environment, and why? Should we save resources for future generations? When is it justifiable to destroy a forest to create jobs? Should humans drive other species to extinction? Is it justifiable for some communities to be exposed to more pollution? Is it morally permissible to deny and ignore climate change?

In this course we shall examine and assess many different ethical theories concerning the environment and apply these theories to different environmental ethical issues. We will examine ethical perspectives concerning such things as animal rights, naturalism, anthropocentrism, biocentrism, holism, deep ecology, environmental justice, ecofeminism, sustainability, economics, capitalism and the environment, food ethics, climate change, over population, consumption, and pollution.