

University of Southern California  
ENST 344: Environmental Ethics  
Class Day/Time: MWF 10.0-10.50 Location: WPH 206  
Instructor: Dr. Monalisa Chatterjee  
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Office Hours: MW: 2.30 - 3.30 pm or by appointment  
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Environmental problems are complex. Part of the complexity comes from fundamental ideologies that define society's relationship with the environment and as a result determine the purpose and approach to environmental problem solving. Often the underlying goal of environmental policy solutions is protecting the environment and better manage resources required for human welfare. If successful, these efforts frequently produce a skewed outcome saving only economically useful components of the environment. Moreover, these results are unevenly distributed with marginalized communities suffering disproportionately large shares of the negative consequences. Protecting the environment requires looking beyond the economic values of the environment to ensure complete ecosystems, the natural world in its entirety is protected. Decisions about the environment must consider inequities and issues of environmental injustice to ensure actions taken do not exacerbate but address the social imbalances and discrepancies in outcomes. The class will go over a wide spectrum of ethical positions on questions, such as, what is the value of environment? Where do these values come from? How do we make ethical decisions about environment when perceived values come into conflict? How experiences with the natural world are distributed in the society? How issues of social justice transcend complex environmental problems and vice versa? Are there parallels between the exploitation of nature and marginalized groups? What is the relationship between science, technology and ethics in environmental actions?

## **Learning Objectives**

The class will prepare students to

- identify and understand different philosophical framings towards environment and learn to be the linking member in a multidisciplinary team with different and often competing approaches to environmental problem solving
- critically evaluate real world challenges relating energy, water, forests that are often nested in sustainable development processes
- have strong foundation in environmental justice issues
- deliberate and communicate about complex environmental problems

- use local and global cases and develop an experience-based knowledge on ethics and environment problems
- have a sophisticated conceptual vocabulary and knowledge of fundamental concepts and ideologies relevant for environmental issues
- connect abstract theories with lived practice and learn about the grassroots work and local leaders who are making the efforts to simultaneously improve social justice and environmental conservation

Please refer to <https://dornsife.usc.edu/environmental-studies/> for more information.

## Required readings and other material

*Readings and other materials* are provided via blackboard webpage <https://blackboard.usc.edu>.

### Optional textbooks for additional reading –

Desjardins J.R. 2013. Environmental ethics (fifth edition) Wadsworth learning

Light and Rolston. 2011. Environmental Ethics. An anthology. Blackwell Publishing

### Ground rules for classroom -

- Share responsibility for including all voices in the conversation.
- Listen respectfully.
- Be open to changing your perspectives based on what you learn from others.
- Understand that we are bound to make mistakes in this space.
- Understand that your words have effects on others.
- Take pair work or small group work seriously.
- Understand that others will come to these discussions with different experiences from yours.
- Make an effort to get to know other students. Introduce yourself to students sitting near or in breakout groups with you.
- Understand that there are different approaches to solving problems.

## Tentative Lecture Schedule

Date	Topic	Activities and assignments
WEEK 1 (AUG 23 <sup>RD</sup> )	<b>Introduction to environmental ethics Science, politics and Ethics</b>	Environment stewardship exercise
WEEK 2 (AUG 30 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Ethical theories and the environment One environmental ethic or moral pluralism</b>	Tbd: Guest speaker

WEEK 3 (SEPT 6 <sup>TH</sup> ) Sept 6 <sup>th</sup> is a holiday	<b>Instrumental and intrinsic values Traditional and alternative framings, deep ecology</b>	Assignment 1: Bring your favorite cartoon/meme to class!
WEEK 4 (SEPT 13 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Environment ethics, spirituality and politics, indigenous approaches and historical roots</b>	Student presentation 1
WEEK 5 (SEPT 20 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Animal rights –I Foundation and critiques, similarities and differences with environmental conservation movements</b>	Student presentation 2
WEEK 6 (SEPT 27 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Animal rights –II Sentience, pain and justice and honor among non-human species, what is a pet?</b>	Assignment 2: Documentary reflection and discussion
WEEK 7 (OCT 4 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Ecofeminism – I Environment and Ecofeminism: parallels between nature and women</b>	Student presentation 3
WEEK 8 (OCT 11 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Ecofeminism – II Intersectionality</b>	
WEEK 9 (OCT 18 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Ecofeminism – II Midterm (Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>) and Fall Break</b>	Assignment 3: Introduce an ecofeminist
WEEK 10 (OCT 25 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Environment Justice - Pollution Environmental Justice and the Risk Society, pollution, exposure and health</b>	Student presentation 4
WEEK 11 (NOV 1 <sup>ST</sup> )	<b>Environment Justice - Food ethics Green revolution and altering of global agricultural landscape, ongoing land rush and dispossession of traditional communities</b>	Research paper topic discussion: Topics due by Friday
WEEK 12 (NOV 8 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Technology and environment ethics - Climate Change Historical accountability; climate migrants</b>	Student presentation 5

WEEK 13 (NOV 15 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Technology and environment ethics – Geoengineering</b>  <b>Ethical implications of enhanced weathering and designed climate</b>	Student presentation 6
Thanksgiving week		
WEEK 14 (NOV 29 <sup>TH</sup> )	<b>Case study – Applying ethics and justice lens to environmental decisions</b>  <b>Wrap up</b>	<b>Role play</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>December 3<sup>rd</sup> (in class)</b>	Research paper due by December 7 <sup>th</sup>

### Students will be evaluated in the following ways

Midterm and Final (definitions and short essay questions)	40% (20% each)
Discussion lead and presentation	15%
Participation/Class activities/homework	10%
Case study presentation	10%
Final paper (10 pages)	25%

**Presentation and discussion lead:** Students will take responsibility of presenting and leading a discussion based on readings of the week. These ‘student led’ discussions will be held on Fridays and the student will give a short 10 minutes presentation summarizing the readings and then will continue with facilitating a discussion on the topics covered in those readings. A signup sheet will be circulated in the second week of class.

**Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively in class, which includes attending class, reading all assigned material, and participating professionally and productively in the class. Discussion is crucial to this class, please feel free to raise any question, objection, or other thoughts about the topic being discussed. Questions on readings will be submitted every week.

**Class activities/homework:** Participation in group activities and contributing to the outcome of these assignments is part of class assessment. Class assignments will not be announced ahead of time. There is no make up for these assignments.

**Midterm and Final:** Exams will have short answer definitions and essay questions.

**Role Play:** A role play exercise will be conducted in class. Students will be divided in groups of stakeholders and assigned positions to debate in class to resolve the ethically challenging environmental problem. More information and guidance will be provided separately.

**Final Paper:** A carefully written paper that succinctly presents the ethical issues in a real case using outside research. The topic will be of the student's choice, refined in collaboration with the instructor and reflecting the student's research interests. The final paper will be 10 pages in length and written in the style of an academic paper. The paper will be assessed on the basis of its clarity, quality of research and content, strength of its arguments and clear conclusions.

## **Course Policies**

You are expected to have read the course materials by the date it is discussed in class. Roll will be taken periodically in the form of thought exercises, and in-class questions. You are responsible for all information, announcements, date changes, and any other course material presented, regardless of your participation in the classroom.

You will be graded on the basis of your performance on exams, written assignments, critiques, and class participation (e.g., Blackboard assignments, oral presentations, etc.). Exam questions will be drawn from course readings, assignments, lectures, and will include both short answer and essay questions. No make-up midterms or final exams will be allowed without explicit permission from the instructor. Late assignments will be penalized 10% of total points per day.

## **Grading Scale**

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76

## **Policy on Missed Lecture, Assignments, or Exams**

**UNPLANNED ABSENCES:** You may be excused from an exam only in the event of a documented illness or emergency as outlined by university policy. No other excuses for missing exams will be accepted. If you miss a class, quiz or graded activity due to medical illness you must present a valid medical excuse to the Instructor within 48h of the missed examination or quiz. The excuse cannot be to attend a dental appointment, a conference, or other similar reasons. The reason for missing an examination or quiz must be of a medical nature or totally unavoidable (e.g., a verified automobile collision on the day and time of the examination). Notify the Instructor in writing that you were seen by a physician, making sure that you include: 1) the physician's name and telephone number, and 2) a statement authorizing us to discuss with the doctor whether you were too ill to take the examination. Note that neither you nor the physician need tell us the nature of your illness. If the excuse is verified, we will accommodate needs. An invalid excuse, or the excuse turned in late, will result in a score of zero for the activity missed. If you miss the final examination and have provided a valid medical excuse within 72 hours of

the examination time, a final course grade of incomplete (IN) will be recorded and you will be permitted to take a make-up final examination during the following semester.

**PLANNED ABSENCES:** Students who wish to miss an examination for observance of a religious holiday should be aware of the University's policy on such absences, published at: <http://orl.usc.edu/religiouslife/holydays/absences.html>. Requests for such absences should be made by email to the Instructor at least 2 weeks in advance of the absence. If the absence is approved, a reasonable accommodation will be provided.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with the Office of Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Be sure that the letter is delivered as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The telephone number of DSP is 213-740-0776. If a student's approved accommodation is limited to extra time on examinations, accommodation will be provided. For any other accommodation, such as a private room, translator, etc., students must make prior arrangements with the DSP office 2 weeks before the exam date. For more information please visit the following website:

[http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html).

### **Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office* <http://equity.usc.edu> and/or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://dps.usc.edu>. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

### **Support Systems**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://ali.usc.edu>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The*

*Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://dsp.usc.edu> provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Research Support: Need to do research but don't know where to start? Not sure how to cite a source in your bibliography? Ask a librarian! <http://libguides.usc.edu/> General Academic Support: The Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity provides customized support services to help students transition into college and achieve their academic goals. <https://kortschakcenter.usc.edu/> Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call [studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling) Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call [studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault) Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298 [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu) Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298 [usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report) Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776 [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu) Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710 [campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu) Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101 [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu) Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu) Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu) Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC) [ombuds.usc.edu](http://ombuds.usc.edu) A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will