



**JOHN FELICE
ROME CENTER**

PHIL 287: Environmental Ethics
John Felice Rome Center
Spring 2026
Tuesdays & Thursdays | 5:15-6:30pm
Dr. Moreno Rocchi
Email: mrocchi1@luc.edu
Office Hours: Tue./Thu., 2:00-3:00pm (by appointment)

Course Description

In this course we will examine environmental issues from an ethical perspective. To be more precise, we will try to clarify the nature of ethical discourse and principles and how they are applied to environmental problems by focusing on the following questions: What is the nature of environmental ethics? What are the foundational readings to this new academic field? What is the nature of a solution to environmental issues, if any? What is ecofeminism? How does environmental ethics relate to other fields such as social or global justice? How should we take action?

This course is divided into two blocks.

The first block has a genealogical approach. Having briefly analyzed the principles of the two most influential paradigms in modern ethics (Kantianism and Utilitarianism) and how those can be applied to environmental issues, we will address the emergence of the idea of a “Land Ethic” as well as the fundamental distinction between a “shallow” and a “deep” ecology.

In the second block we will expand our vision by looking at the intersections between environmental ethics and other fields such as feminism, social justice, international law and world history.

The last classes will be more participatory. Having explored two case studies of key-importance in today’s world – recycling and food consumption – we will conclude by discussing about how to best take action on today’s environmental issues.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the major philosophical questions in the area of environmental ethics with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions, and be able to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

This course should also enable students to:

- (a) appreciate the profound issues involved in our relationship with other animal species and our planet;
- (b) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision;
- (c) insert their own reflections into the dialogue;
- (d) examine the way different philosophically defended views challenge each other, and how they also challenge unexamined presuppositions in our own culture;
- (e) recognize the need for ethical judgment;
- (f) distinguish alternative courses of action;
- (g) articulate the relevant ethical values, principles, rights, and virtues from the point of view of each stakeholder;
- (h) formulate and support an ethical judgment in respect to environmental issues;
- (i) recognize the premises for a given conclusion or viewpoint, identify unexamined presuppositions, appreciate astute insights, expose vulnerabilities in established positions;
- (j) compare and contrast ethical theories and evaluate them in terms of strengths and weaknesses;
- (k) differentiate among historical and contemporary perspectives about the world with a view to fashioning a humane and just world;



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- (l) understand the relationships among cultural, economic, political, and social forces, and their impact on human life on this planet;
- (m) assess how moral principles are conditioned by one's involvement in (and responsibilities toward) the socially organized community in which one lives.

Required Texts/Materials

Ronald Sandler, *Environmental Ethics: Theory in Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2017;
Assigned readings posted on Sakai.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor's discretion. All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.

- **After 2 absences**, a **2% final grade reduction** will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing **6 classes** or more will result in an **automatic failure (F)**.

Campus Health

The JFRC will conduct all activity according to policies and best practices as prescribed by the Italian Ministries of Health and Education and in consultation with the Loyola University Chicago main campus. These policies will be subject to change as the situation warrants.

Assessment Components

• Midterm Exam (in-class test)	30%
• Final Exam (take-home paper)	30%
• Presentations*	12%
• Forum participation**	7%
• "Awareness Campaign" ***	7%
• In-class participation	14%

* Students are required to give two presentations (one individual and one group presentation).

** Students are required to participate in the forum discussions that will take place on Sakai, section "Discussions", during the first half of the course. Each student is required to publish at least three posts before Spring break, of which at least one must be a direct response to one of my prompts.

Basic requirements of each post:

- Posts should be between 150 and 250 words;
- Use language that is professional and respectful of both the authors discussed and your classmates;
- Posts that respond to classmates' posts should begin with a brief statement about what you appreciate or agree with about the classmate's post.

*** Student are required to create some type of distributable piece that can summarize an ecology-related issue with meaningful data and information to articulate a message for a broader audience. Projects are meant to be creative (e.g., a poster, an infographic, a webpage, a short pamphlet) and are due on the Friday before the last week of class.



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Grading

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+
84-86: B
80-83: B-
77-79: C+
74-76: C
70-73: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
59 or lower: F

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize; **the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such.**
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.
6. Student may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures: (https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.

Accessibility Accommodations (with addendum on classroom recording policy)

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes. Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Student Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Professors receive the accommodation notification from SAC via Accommodate. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential.



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Please note that in this class, software may be used to record class lectures exclusively in order to provide equal access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester.

For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am a Responsible Campus Partner ("RCP") under Loyola's Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation (available at www.luc.edu/equity). While my goal is for you to be able to engage fully and authentically with our course material through class discussions and written work, I also want to be transparent that as a RCP, I must notify the Office for Equity & Compliance ("OEC")/Title IX Coordinator when I have any information about conduct that reasonably may constitute Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination. Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination includes any of the following conduct, when the conduct was within the University's education program or activity:

- Discrimination or discriminatory harassment on the basis of sex (including sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, gender identity, sexual orientation, and Pregnancy or Related Conditions),
- Sexual harassment (including quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment),
- Sexual assault,
- Dating and/or domestic violence, and/or
- Stalking

As the University's Title IX office, the OEC coordinates the University's response to reports and complaints of sexual misconduct (as well as discrimination of any kind) to ensure students' rights are protected. The University maintains such reporting requirements to ensure that any student who experiences sexual/gender-based violence receives accurate information about available resources and support. Such reports will not generate a report to law enforcement (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Additionally, the University's resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. If you have any questions about this policy, you are encouraged to contact the OEC at equity@luc.edu or 773-508-7766.

If you ever wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call The Line at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with resources as needed – without generating a report or record with the OEC. More information about The Line can be found at www.luc.edu/wellness.

Course Schedule

(N.B.: ALL READINGS MUST BE DONE BEFORE CLASS!)

Date	Topic	Assignment
Tue. 20/01	Introduction to the course	
Thu. 22/01	Why Environmental Ethics?	Sandler, Ch. 1 and 2



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Tue. 01/27	Principles of Kantianism	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> , Ch. 1 + PowerPoint presentation
Thu. 01/31	Utilitarianism and the moral considerability of animals	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (excerpts)+ PowerPoint presentation
Tue. 02/03	Environmental Utilitarianism	Sandler, Ch. 8
Thu. 02/05	Environmental Kantianism	Sandler, Ch. 9
Tue. 02/10	Land Ethic	Sandler, Ch. 11
Thu. 02/12	Deep Ecology	Sandler, Ch. 12
Tue. 02/17	Jonas' Theory of Responsibility	<i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i> , excerpts from Ch. 1, 2 and 4
Thu. 02/19	The Ethics of Care	Held, «The Ethics of Care as Moral Theory»
Tue. 02/24	Ecofeminism	Sandler, Ch. 14 (only sections 14.1, 14.2, 14.3); Plumwood, "Nature, Self, and Gender"
Thu. 02/26	Review	
Tue. 03/03	Midterm Exam	
Thu. 03/05	Online Forum Discussions: a wrap-up	
<u>[SPRING BREAK]</u>		
Tue. 03/17	Environmental and Global Justice	Sandler, Ch. 15 (+ section 16.4 and box 16.3)
Thu. 03/19	Environmental Ethics and Environmental Law	Makoul, «Environmental Ethics and Environmental Law: A Virtuous Circle»
Tue. 03/24	How did we get here? Narratives of the Anthropocene (part I)	Bonneuil&Fressoz, <i>The Shock of the Anthropocene</i> (Preface + excerpts from Ch. 4 and 7)
Thu. 03/26	How did we get here? Narratives of the Anthropocene (part II)	Bonneuil&Fressoz, <i>The Shock of the Anthropocene</i> (excerpts from Ch. 8 and 9 + Conclusion)
Tue. 03/31	Towards a Decolonial Ecology	Ferdinand, <i>Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World</i> (excerpts)
Thu. 04/02	Ecological Resistance: Life Between the Cracks	Armiero, «City of Silence, City of Stories: Or of Ghosts, Doors, & Subversion. Urban Narratives about Nature»



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Tue. 04/07	Group presentations on Recycling	Links and materials posted on Sakai
Thu. 04/09	Group presentations on Food Consumption	Links and materials posted on Sakai
Tue. 04/14	How far into the future?	Sandler, section 6.3; Crary, «The Toxic Ideology of Longtermism»
Thu. 04/16	Debate class: How to take action?	Franzen, «What if We Stopped Pretending the Climate Apocalypse Can Be Stopped?»
Tue. 04/21	“Awareness Campaign”: feedback and discussion	
Thu. 04/23	Study day: <i>work on your final paper!</i>	
Thu. 04/30 (to be confirmed)	Final Exam (= take-home paper deadline)	