

W. Russ Payne

PHIL 102 Applied Moral Problems

Integrating Sustainability, Winter 2013

Personal Sustainability Teaching Mission:

Teaching sustainability in philosophy will be focused largely on thinking critically about what matters. We can only understand sustainability in terms of what matters, what is worthy of sustaining. At the same time, only some human values can be sought sustainably in a world of limited resources. So, sustainability in ethics will aim at developing conceptions of human well being are amenable to social justice, both within our generation and between ours and future generations, in a world of limited resources. My sustainability teaching mission in philosophy is to help student think critically about this.

Sustainability and Philosophy

Since sustainability has to be understood in reference to a defensible set of human values, philosophy connects to sustainability primarily through ethics. In ethics we critically examine conceptions of value and social justice. What thinking about sustainability brings to this endeavor is awareness of the often ignored interconnections to others and environment in our value laden choices. What to do for a living, how we eat or how we get around town might not appear to be ethically relevant until we think critically about these interconnections and the distant impacts of our actions.

Mapping of PHIL 102 Applied Moral Problems outcomes to Sustainability Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

	PHIL 102 outcome	Relevant Sustainability outcome
1	Explain the ethical foundations for sustainability.	Apply an ethical perspective in which one views oneself as embedded in the fabric of an interconnected world.
2	Apply substantive ethical theories including utilitarianism and respect for persons to a range of specific problem areas like the death penalty, physician assisted suicide, animal rights, poverty, environmental protection and free speech.	Apply an ethical perspective in which one views oneself as embedded in the fabric of an interconnected world.
3	Write argumentative essays containing clear thesis claims,	Explain how sustainable thinking

<p>strong arguments for the theses, reasonable consideration of opposing views, and conforming to the presentation/writing standards set forth in the "BC Philosophy Writing Guidelines."</p>	<p>and decision-making contribute to solutions for current and emerging social, environmental and economic crises.</p>
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This course begins with an introduction to ethical theory in general. Given a theoretical foundation in utilitarianism, respect for persons and the ethics of care, we will investigate a range of topics using primary and secondary source philosophical and popular readings, lecture and discussion, group projects and writing assignments. Information of Sustainability related topics, assessments and outcomes included in the course is outline below:

Sustainability Topics, Assignments Outcomes and Assessment:

- Tragedy of the Commons (using climate change as one example)
 - Assignment: Explain what a tragedy of the commons is. Identify a specific tragedy of the commons. Outline a range of policy proposals that could avert the TOC you are addressing. Develop argument for the best policy option and addressing why it is to be preferred to alternative approaches. (2-3 pages written, peer reviewed draft, individually graded)
 - Outcomes addressed: 1-3 from above
 - Grading: A three page paper would be a 30 point assignment in my classes. Points awarded would be interpreted on roughly as an A for the 90% of available points awarded, B for 80% to 89% of available points awarded. Grading criteria are limited to clarity of writing especially regarding clearly developed and structured argument and explanation. Amply guidance on writing for philosophy is provided.

- Boundaries of the moral community (do animals and ecosystems matter for their own sake and how?). The ethics of respect for persons takes moral obligation and responsibility to be grounded in the nature of persons. What kind of value might non-persons have (animals, ecosystems)? What might be the value grounding features of these entities?
 - Assignment: Read Holmes Rolston III, "The Value of Nature and the Nature of Value" or Arne Naess, "Deep Ecology". In small groups, discuss the features of non-persons that could provide a basis for intrinsic value. Also address the implications of such value for moral responsibility in general.
 - Outcomes addressed: 2 from above
 - Not Graded

- Environmental citizenship: Andrew Light's work on this topic suggests that we see ourselves and various aspects of the natural and human shaped world as members of a common community. In so doing we should develop a conception of citizenship that applies to our membership in this broader community. (explain connections to the ethics of care).

- Assignment: Read Andrew Light's, "Ecological Restoration and the Culture of Nature". Small groups are assigned to investigate particular ecological restoration projects (this could include visiting sites or volunteer activity and service learning). Produce report discussing elements of Environmental Citizenship present or cultivated in the groups restoration project.
 - Outcomes addressed: 1 from above
 - Grading: Separate grades for quality of report (weighted for individual contributions as determined by peer review of group members) and service learning component if any.
- The good life: how are problems of sustainability related to uncritically held conceptions of the good life and how might we better understand the good life? What is consumerism as a theory of the good life? Aside from being unsustainable, what is problematic about consumerism as a view of the good life (hedonic treadmill, passivity etc.)? What alternative conceptions of the good life are more easily reconciled with sustainability? (see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, for starters)
 - Assignment: In a 2 page self-reflection describe the conception of the good life that has shaped your daily habits and life aspirations. For one week, monitor how your daily habits exemplify this view of the good life. Meanwhile, critical reflect on the nature of the good life in discussion with classmates and identify one area of your life where you can implement a change that reflects a more critically held understanding of the good life.
 - Outcomes addressed: 2 from above
 - Graded on a 20 point scale. Grading criteria restricted to clear and developed discussion of the competing views of the good life and their respective personal and sustainability related merits or problems.

Sustainability Content and Resources:

Climate Science

- **Elizabeth Kolbert, "The Climate of Man":** <http://www.wesjones.com/climate1.htm>
Originally published as a 3 part article in *The New Yorker*, it is also available at assorted addresses on the web. It appears that *The New Yorker* is graciously not enforcing copy right on this nicely written overview of climate science. This, to my mind, is the best piece of writing on climate science for a lay audience I've run across. Kolbert has also published a book based on this work titled *Field notes to a Catastrophe*. The book's tone is somewhat angrier. I think *The New Yorker* just doesn't do angry.
- **Russ Payne, "Why Climate Skeptics are in Denial":**
http://personal.bellevuecollege.edu/wpayne/why_climate_skeptics_are_in_deni.htm

This is one of my notes based on a Philosophy Talk I gave a year or so ago. This is really a critical thinking lesson that focuses on the nature of the reasoning behind concern about anthropogenic climate change. It's easy to lose sight of the structure of the core argument in the constant flood of climate information. Here I aim to concisely put the central argument in focus and say a thing or two about how should be evaluated.

The Tragedy of the Commons

- **Garret Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons":** <http://www.dieoff.org/page95.htm>
This is Garrett Hardin's classic essay originally published in *Science* in 1968. Hardin focuses on overpopulation here. But this is used to illustrate a more general kind of problem. A Tragedy of the Commons is a problem we face whenever self interested individuals have free access to a finite and commonly held resource. The logic of TOC situations is perfectly clear and presents us with a pretty limited range of possible responses to avoid a TOC. In some cases we can just not have a commons. Bu we can hardly privatize ecosystems, aquifers or the atmosphere. In cases (fish hatcheries, for instance) we can expand the commons. But otherwise, we pretty much have to limit and regulate use of the commons.
- **Wikipedia on the Tragedy of the Commons:**
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy_of_the_commons
- **Russ Payne, note on the Tragedy of the Commons:**
<http://personal.bellevuecollege.edu/wpayne/toc.htm>
I like to give super concise explanations of important ideas, but this might be taking it a bit far. I plan to expand this note to include a couple of illustrations and also a discussion of how many TOC situations are "non-zero sum games". A zero sum game is a situation where the sum of the loser's losses and the winner's gains is zero. So, for instance, a friendly neighborhood poker game is a zero sum game. The money that enters the basement at the beginning of the evening is equal to the amount of money that leaves the basement at the end, it's just in different pockets (assuming no on orders pizza or makes a beer run). But most TOC situations are not like this. The losses of the losers generally far outweigh the gains of the winners.

Environmental Citizenship

- **Andrew Light, "Ecological Citizenship: The Democratic Promise of Restoration":**
http://www.vedegylet.hu/okopolitika/Light%20-%20Ecological_Citizenship.pdf
- **Andrew Light interviewed at Grist:** <http://grist.org/article/light4/full/>

Andrew Light was UW's environmental ethicist a few years ago and did some important work on the ethical value of restoration ecology and environmental citizenship.

- **W. Russ Payne, Note on Environmental Citizenship for Earth Week talk (2007):**
<http://personal.bellevuecollege.edu/wpayne/environmental%20citizenship.htm>

This note also discusses Light's contribution and is prefaced by a more general discussion of citizenship.

The Good Life

- **The Story of Stuff:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLBE5QAYXp8>
- **Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics:** <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>

PHIL 102 Contemporary Moral Problems

Syllabus

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Office Hours: 10:30 – 12:20 Tuesday and Thursday

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Philosophy department's web site: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/philosophy/>

Course Information

The range of questions that philosophers investigate is perhaps as diverse as can be found in the empirical sciences. Our focus in this class will be Ethics or moral philosophy, inquiry in what is good or bad, right or wrong. We evaluate assorted things as good or bad including actions, policies, societies, people and their characteristics. And we evaluate these things as good or bad for assorted reasons. Some of those reasons might be pretty good ones. Others probably aren't.

The job of the ethicists is to critically examine our reasons for making the evaluations we make and to try to understand this reasoning in a systematic way

We will start with a general introduction to ethical theory. Here we will be concerned with what, in the broadest terms, could provide a reasonable basis for our moral judgments. In other words, we will be interested in what ultimately matters or what has fundamental value and why. Theories of value can be understood as providing the foundation for theories of good action, good character or the just society. The first part of the course will be concerned with very general ethical issues of this sort. Thereafter, the course will focus on assorted specific problem areas including issues like sustainability and environmental protection, criminal justice issues like the drug policy and the death penalty, social justice issues like poverty and access to education and health care issues like stem cell research, abortion and physician assisted suicide. We will not likely get to focus formally on each of these, but the course will also afford some latitude for you to pursue topics you care about.

The scope of this course covers a broad range of politically “hot” issues. But as you will see, a philosophical approach to these is quite different from what you are used to seeing in the media and the debates among policy makers and pundits. We will have little use for the sort of rhetoric that drives our political culture. Our job here is not to fire up the base, build momentum or win elections. Our job here is not to persuade, but to investigate. Here we try to formulate clear arguments grounded in reasonable theory and to evaluate these in the light of interesting cases and cogent objections. In this kind of activity, people with opposing views are to be listened to carefully and learned from, not ridiculed or vanquished. Our sharpest critics are also our best friends because these are the people who can bring to light relevant considerations we might be prone to overlook. Our task is the cooperative one of trying to find the best views, not the competitive one of trying to get our own view to prevail.

Majoring in Philosophy?

In case you are considering majoring in philosophy, you should be prepared to answer your parents and friends when they ask what you plan to do with a philosophy degree. Tell them you plan to live well and make a living. Tell them that philosophy majors earn more than any other arts and humanities major and more than most social science majors (the exceptions being the dark arts of economics and political science.)

<http://www.payscale.com/best-colleges/degrees.asp>

Of course, you might find philosophy enjoyable even if you are already anxious to go into Management Information Systems or Aerospace Engineering.

Course Outcomes

The official outcomes for this course are as follows:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Formulate, clarify and evaluate arguments.
2. Analyze and assess views that make ethics a matter of convention, including moral relativism and Divine Command Theory.
3. Explain and evaluate substantive ethical theories including utilitarianism, respect for persons and the ethics of care.
4. Explain how substantive ethical theories including utilitarianism, respect for persons and the ethics of care incorporate the value of cultural diversity.
5. Explain the ethical foundations for sustainability.
6. Apply substantive ethical theories including utilitarianism and respect for persons to a range of specific problem areas like the death penalty, physician assisted suicide, animal rights, poverty, environmental protection and free speech.
7. Write argumentative essays containing clear thesis claims, strong arguments for the theses, reasonable consideration of opposing views, and conforming to the presentation/writing standards set forth in the “BC Philosophy Writing Guidelines.”

Some unofficial commentary: People come in all kinds of different. What you get out of studying philosophy depends as much on who you are and how you’ve experienced the world so far as anything I or any other philosopher can tell you. Philosophy provides rich intellectual (and emotional and spiritual) nourishment. But to commit to specific outcomes about what you will understand or be able to do at the end of this course is analogous to a gardener saying plant here and you’ll get a nice zucchini. But maybe you are a rose, not a zucchini.

According to Socrates, the point of doing philosophy is the leading of the examined life. But the examined life is not a bit of knowledge or a specific skill or ability that can be captured in any sort of course outcome. Leading the examined life does involve applying one’s capacity for reason to better understanding one’s own nature as a human being and the nature of the world. But given our unique backgrounds, talents and limitations, there is no saying just what route your examined life will take or what perspectives it will open up for you. The real outcomes for studying philosophy can only be identified after the fact. For me to specify the outcomes for your study of philosophy up front would amount to stating the moral of your story without having read it (much less lived it). One shudders at the arrogance of it.

Though Socrates was among the founders of philosophy as an academic discipline (and I’m not so sure he’d be happy about that) this hardly gives him the final say about the point of doing philosophy. My motivation for doing philosophy has never been quite so noble as attaining enlightened self-awareness or acquiring wisdom. I’ve simply found the problems of philosophy to be amusing and absorbing. Finding the interplay of philosophical ideas amusing and absorbing is the course outcome I’d most sincerely wish for you.

How Outcomes will be met

A good deal of reading and writing and lots of conversation.

Course Requirements:

Attendance: A college course requires a significant amount of time and attention. While we do not meet on campus at a set time, attending the course is required in other ways. A 5 credit course is defined as one that meets for 5 hours a week. While you get to choose the hours, you are required to be in class for 5 hours a week. This includes activities on the site like reading lecture notes, reading and participating in discussions and taking assessments. In addition, you should expect to put well over 5 hours a week into reading and writing outside of class. I do run activity logs that show how much time students are putting into various activities on the site, what documents you are reading and so forth. If my logs show significantly less than 50 hours of active time in the course, then you have an attendance problem that will adversely affect your grade.

Assignments and Assessments: Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on a variety of assignments and assessments plus your participation on class discussion boards. There will be short comprehension quizzes on the reading assignments, brief essay assignments that may ask you to reflect on ideas from the reading or explain arguments offered by the philosophers we will read. Most assignments and assessments will be fairly brief, but a few (2 or 3) will be more involved tests including multiple choice, true false, short answer and essay questions.. Assignments and assessments will have deadlines. There will usually be ways for you to work ahead, but do not fall behind and try not to let things wait until the last minute (do you really trust your router that much?). I need to adhere to deadlines in order to get timely feedback to the class.

Grading: Essay questions and brief essay assignments will typically be graded on a 10 point scale with 9 or 10 point scores representing the A to A- range, 8 point scores representing B work, 7 point scores representing C work and so forth. Points for assignments will show up in your grade book. So, at any point in the course, you should be able to identify how many of the available points you have earned. My deliberations for letter grades for the course start with a 10% scale where point totals above 90% are A range, 80% to 89% are B range and so forth. But I may adjust the scale for final grades based on the overall performance of the class.

There will be points available for participation on the discussion boards. Here I will be looking for engagement with the material, including but not limited to explanation and analysis of arguments, insightful questions, questions of clarification, objections to arguments and so forth. Philosophy is done by critically questioning ideas and arguments. So do this, but there is generally little to be gained by criticizing people. So keep your critical focus on ideas and lines of reasoning. If one of your ideas draws some critical attention, you should (a) remember that it is an idea or argument that is being critically examined, not you, and (b) be flattered that someone considers your idea or argument worthy of careful attention. Approach discussions with humble good humor and don't be shy. If you are shy anyway, you can earn some discussion points from personal emails with me. If a personal discussion is interesting, I may want to share it with the class, but I'll protect the identity of the innocent should they prefer.

Secrets to success

Stay active and engaged. Being active starts with keeping up with the reading and discussion. Being engaged with the material will show in your writing and participation in discussion. I will

be encouraging scholarship and looking for evidence of it and the intellectual maturity scholarship brings. Well-intentioned contributions in class can help you significantly. Inappropriate or disrespectful behavior may adversely affect your grade in the course. You should consult the BC course catalog for information on grading standards at this institution. <http://bellevuecollege.edu/about/publications/catalog/>

Maintaining a good learning environment will be your responsibility as well as mine. Philosophy is best learned through actively engaging in discussion of the issues. You may have strong feelings about some of the issues we will discuss. This is fine and it will present no problem so long as we all make respect for each other a guiding principle of our inquiry. While the experience will be new to many of you, talking about the existence of God or the nature of morality with people that disagree with you can actually be fun. Keep in mind that what matters most in philosophy is that we do a good job at evaluating the reasons for and against the views we consider. And we can do a good job at this quite independent of our feelings about those views. That we all end up agreeing is not essential to a fruitful philosophical dialogue. That we are amicable and gracious towards one another is.

I take a dim view of cheating and plagiarism. Write your own stuff. I have a duty to report cheating, plagiarism and other conduct that is destructive to the course to administration and student services. I would appreciate not having to act on that duty.

Affirmation of Inclusion

Bellevue College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination.

We value our different backgrounds at Bellevue College, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect.

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/about/goals/inclusion.asp>

Division Statements

You should also see the Arts and Humanities Expectations posted here:

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/artshum/policy.html>

Information about Bellevue College's copyright guidelines can be found at:

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/links/copyright.html>

A good resource for Plagiarism is the Writing Lab:

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/Plagiarism.html>

Student Code

“Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the

Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Vice President of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Vice President of Student Services.” The Student Code, Policy 2050, in its entirety is located at:
http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050_Student_Code.asp

Important Links

Bellevue College E-mail and access to MyBC

All students registered for classes at Bellevue College are entitled to a network and e-mail account. Your student network account can be used to access your student e-mail, log in to computers in labs and classrooms, connect to the BC wireless network and log in to MyBC. To create your account, go to: <https://bellevuecollege.edu/sam>

BC offers a wide variety of computer and learning labs to enhance learning and student success. Find current campus locations for all student labs by visiting the Computing Services website.

Disability Resource Center(DRC)

The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact us as soon as possible. If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter. The DRC office is located in B 132 or you can call our reception desk at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach us by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. . . . Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc

Public Safety

The Bellevue College (BC) Public Safety Department’s well trained and courteous non-commissioned staff provides personal safety, security, crime prevention, preliminary investigations, and other services to the campus community, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Their phone number is 425.564.2400. The Public Safety website is your one-stop resource for campus emergency preparedness information, campus closure announcements and critical information in the event of an emergency. Public Safety is located in K100 and on the web at: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/publicsafety/>

Final Exam Schedule

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/classes/exams>

Academic Calendar

The Bellevue College Academic Calendar is separated into two calendars. They provide information about holidays, closures and important enrollment dates such as the finals schedule.

Enrollment Calendar - <http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/calendar/deadlines/>. On this calendar you will find admissions and registration dates and important dates for withdrawing and receiving tuition refunds.

College Calendar - <http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/calendar/holidays/0910.asp>.

This calendar gives you the year at a glance and includes college holidays, scheduled closures, quarter end and start dates, and final exam dates.