NREM 491 Natural Resource and Environmental Ethics

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Summary
This course will consist of three modules, taught individually in successive 5 week periods. The first module will cover the philosophical foundations of ethics and how they relate to environmental issues. The second module will review the major ethical approaches developed specifically to deal with environmental issues. The third module will focus on modern environmental issues in Hawaii and across the globe and how personal, professional, political, and cultural ethics play a part in shaping the causes of and responses to environmental issues. Although students will be expected to learn a variety of facts and concepts associated with environmental issues, the emphasis will be upon the ethical dimensions of how we respond and deal with these issues.

Objectives
Students will accomplish one or more of the following objectives

1. learn the basic philosophical foundations of ethics, especially in reference to environmental issues
2. understand how ethical principles have been redefined and expanded to address human-environment relationships and interactions.
3. analyze the ethical dimensions of environmental issues from personal, professional, political, and cultural perspectives.

Class Structure and Assignments
The course will consist of two 50-minute lecture periods on Monday and Wednesday and a 50-minute discussion section every other Friday.

There will be written assignments associated with the discussion sections. These will be a 1-2 page written argument outlining your position or response to the particular topic being discussed. Detailed instructions will be provided with each assignment.

There are two exams during the course of the semester. They will cover the first and second modules, respectively.

A final project will be assigned in lieu of a final exam. Details about the project will be handed out later in the semester.

Grading
Discussion section assignments (written and oral)  25%
Exam 1 and 2  50%
Final project  25%

This course meets the requirements for Contemporary Ethical Issues (E) and Oral Communications (O) focus designations.
Module 1. Philosophical Foundations for Environmental Ethics
(1) Introduction to Ethics (Des Jardins Ch. 1)
   Class discussion: constructing good ethical arguments (handout)
(2) Act Consequentialism and Utilitarianism (Des Jardins Ch. 2)
   Group Discussion: Drilling in ANWR; Taking Sides: Issue 7.
(3) Deontology and Theories of Rights (Des Jardins Ch. 2)
(4) Rules of the Game and Economics of Environment (Des Jardins Ch. 3; handout)
(5) Free Market Environmentalism and Green Economics (handout)
   Exam 1

Module 2. Non-Anthropocentric Ethics of the Environment
(6, 7) Aldo Leopold and the land ethic (Des Jardins Ch. 8)
   Class Discussion: Is recycling a sound waste management strategy? (Taking Sides: Issue 14)
(8) Deep ecology and the concept of “wildness” (Des Jardins Ch. 10)
   Group Discussion: The ethics of whaling around the world (Life Science Ethics: Ch. 11)
(9) Ecofeminism (Des Jardins Ch. 11)
   Class Discussion: Have we been getting it backwards all along? A discussion of ecofeminism
(10) Professional Ethics in Environmental Fields
   Exam 2

Module 3. Case Studies of Environmental Ethics
The final module will consist of specific topics that will change from year to year, based on student interest and current events. Previous examples have included:
Animal rights and human responsibilities (Des Jardins Ch. 5)
Agricultural Ethics
Genetically Modified Organisms
Sustainability As a Goal of Human Enterprise and Development

Finals: Case Study Presentation and Paper