



Summer 2017 WRITING INTENSIVE + ETHICS  
POLS 324

## Global Environmental Politics

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Meets M-F 10.30 – 11.45 Saunders 637

The legacy of human activities is profoundly altering geologically significant conditions and processes on the planet, such as global warming, changes in erosion and sediment transport, and changes in the chemical composition of oceans, soils, and the atmosphere. These alterations are drivers of ocean acidification, habitat loss, species invasions, and the sixth great extinction event, to such an extent that we can now speculate whether the continued extraction of carbon from underground will eventually lead to the extinction, or at least a

significant reduction, of the human species. These changes have prompted a suggestion to name the current geological epoch 'the Anthropocene', and have sparked a surge in scholarly research and discussions of 'the end of the world'.

Traditionally, international politics thinks of environments and ecosystems as stable entities that form the constraint or material context of human-driven politics. This results in a view of international politics as determined solely by human activity and meaning making, which endorses the very same ideas of modernity, human enlightenment and mastery, progress, and divisions between society and nature that brought about the troubles of the Anthropocene in the first place. This class focuses on the way possibilities for human and non-human thriving are relentlessly contingent and dependent on vast ecological systems in which myriads of entities and beings play a significant role. In relation to this, the class has a distinct focus on the ethics of global environmental governance.

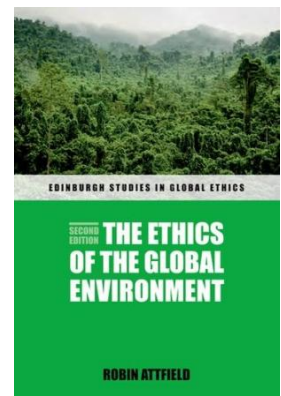
## Focus Designations

This course has a **Contemporary Ethical Issues (E)** Focus designation. Contemporary ethical issues are fully integrated into the main course material and will constitute at least 30% of the content. At least 8 hours of class time will be spent discussing ethical issues. Through the use of lectures, discussions and assignments, students will develop basic competency in recognizing and analyzing ethical issues; responsibly deliberating on ethical issues; and making ethically determined judgments.

This course also has a **Writing Intensive (WI)** Focus designation. The class uses writing to promote the learning of course materials in order to develop strategies for effective writing and learn to use and value writing as a tool for learning. The class provides interaction [e.g., conferences, written feedback] between the instructor and students while students do assigned writing. Written assignments contribute significantly to each student's course grade. The class requires students to do a substantial amount of writing—a minimum of 4,000 words, or about 16 pages.

## Textbook

Our textbook for this class is Robin Attfield, *The Ethics of the Global Environment, Edinburgh Studies in Global Ethics, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Edinburgh University Press 2015.



## Additional Books

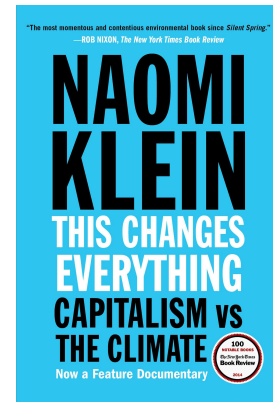
Naomi Klein. *This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the climate*. Simon and Schuster, 2015

Thom Van Dooren. *Flight ways: life and loss at the edge of extinction*. Columbia University Press, 2014

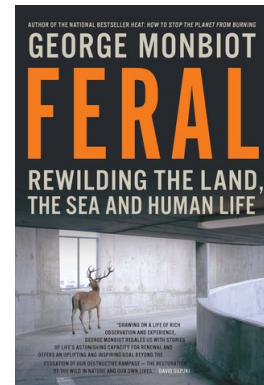
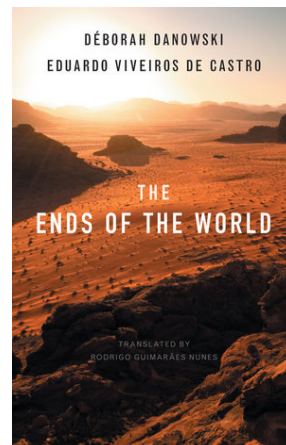
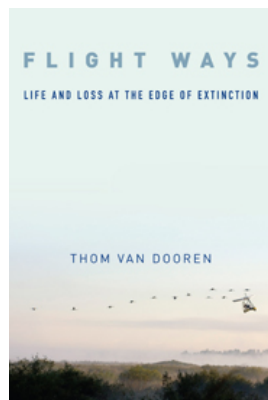
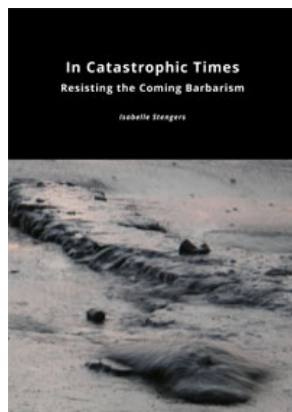
George Monbiot. *Feral: Rewilding the land, the sea, and human life*. University of Chicago Press, 2014

Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros De Castro. *The Ends of the World*. Polity Press, 2016.

Isabelle Stengers. *In catastrophic times: resisting the coming barbarism*. Open Humanities Press, 2015



All other materials will be made available on Laulima.



## Attendance

You are allowed up to 3 unexcused absences in this class. Every absence thereafter lowers your overall grade by 5%.

## Student discussants

Each class, two students will have read the material extra carefully, and will be ready to give a 5-minute presentation in which they launch the ethical discussion for the day. What major ethical topics, questions or controversies does the text for that day raise? Each student will be discussant three times during the semester.

## Writing Assignments

### **Letters (2 x 1000 words) (WI) (E)**

Twice during the semester, students will write a letter to a person or thing we have encountered in our readings. This person/thing can be the author of one of the texts, or someone/something who is mentioned or quoted in the text. Write something you want to tell this person/thing. Maybe its something you want to bring their attention to, maybe you want to show them your sympathy with their situation, or maybe you want to tell them that they are wrong somehow. Whatever you choose, your letter has to be about 1000 words long, has to make at least three references to material we have read in class, and has to focus on ethical issues. Each student will receive written feedback for each letter, and will have the option to revise and resubmit.

### **Final Paper (2000 words) (WI) (E)**

In January 2016, The *Boston Review* hosted a written forum in response to this query: *It is impossible to divorce nature from human influence. Can that influence be democratic?* Jedediah Purdy launched the forum, and 10 prominent scholars responded. Your final paper is also a response to Purdy's launch, namely a response that explicitly discusses the ethical dimensions of this question. You will be graded on your ability to write an engaging and focused essay that responds to the forum and that also showcases independent critical thinking and what you have learned in this class. Prior to the deadline, we will discuss the final paper assignment in class. Each student will receive written feedback for their paper from the instructor.

## Grading

Being student discussant: 10 % each time = 30%

Letters: 20 % each = 40 %

Final Paper: 30 %

90-100% A | 80-89% B | 70-79% C | 60-69% D | >60 % F

# Semester Schedule

## **Week 1: May 22-May 26 Introductions to the class**

Monday: Introduction to the class.

Tuesday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* chapter 1 "Nature and the Global Environment"

Wednesday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* chapter 2 "Global Ethics and Environmental Ethics."

Thursday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* chapter 6 "Sustainable Development"

Friday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* chapter 7 "Populations and Poverty".

## **Week 2: May 29- June 2 Climate Change**

Monday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* Chapter 11 "The Ethics of Climate Change

Tuesday: excerpts from Naomi Klein. *This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the climate*. Simon and Schuster, 2015.

Wednesday: Excerpts from *This changes Everything*

Thursday: Watch the documentary *This changes everything* in class.

Friday: Finish watching documentary and excerpts from *This Changes Everything*.  
**First letter due (W).**

## **Week 3: June 5 – June 9 Biodiversity, Infectious disease and Extinction**

Monday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* Chapter 8 "Biodiversity and Preservation"

Tuesday: Keesing, F., Belden, L.K., Daszak, P., Dobson, A., Harvell, C.D., Holt, R.D., Hudson, P., Jolles, A., Jones, K.E., Mitchell, C.E. and Myers, S.S., 2010. Impacts of biodiversity on the emergence and transmission of infectious diseases. *Nature*, 468(7324), pp.647-652.

Wednesday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* Chapter 4 "The Ethics of Extinction

Thursday: excerpts from Thom Van Dooren. *Flight ways: life and loss at the edge of extinction*. Columbia University Press, 2014.

Friday: Excerpts from *Flight Ways*.

#### **Week 4: June 12- June 16: Rewilding**

Monday: Magnus Sylven, *Rewilding Lapland: Creating a sustainable future for Europe's largest unspoiled natural and cultural treasure*. Rewilding Europe, November 2015.

Tuesday: Excerpts from George Monbiot. *Feral: Rewilding the land, the sea, and human life*. University of Chicago Press, 2014

Wednesday: Excerpts from *Feral*

Thursday: Read Lorimer, Jamie. "Probiotic Environmentalities: Rewilding with Wolves and Worms." *Theory, Culture & Society* (2017): 0263276417695866.

Friday: Watch an episode of BBC's *Planet Earth* **Second letter due (W)**.

#### **Week 5: June 19 – June 23: What comes after the end?**

Monday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* Chapter 12 "World Citizenship in a Precarious World"

Tuesday: excerpts from Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros De Castro. *The Ends of the World*. Polity Press, 2016.

Wednesday: *The Ethics of the Global Environment* Chapter 9 "Environmental Justice and World Order"

Thursday excerpts from Isabelle Stengers. *In catastrophic times: resisting the coming barbarism*. Open Humanities Press, 2015.

Friday Excerpts from *In catastrophic times*.

#### **Week 6: June 26 – June 30 Anthropocene debate and final papers**

Monday: Jedediah Purdy: "The New Nature." *Boston Review*, January 11, 2016.

Tuesday: Jairus Grove: "Response to Jedediah Purdy." *Boston Review*. Talk about final papers (W).

Wednesday + Thursday: Work independently on final paper.

Friday: **Final paper due (W)**.