



KS Climate Ethics

University of Graz | Department of Philosophy | Winter Term 2019

Time:	Thursday, 13:30 – 15:00
Venue:	HS 06.03, Universitätsplatz 6, 8010 Graz
Lecturer:	Dr. Thomas Pözlner, MA
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Office hours:	By appointment

Description

Human-induced emissions of greenhouse gases significantly change the Earth's climate. These changes have caused considerable harm, and will cause even more harm in the future. There is thus strong reason to regard climate change as an ethical issue. In this course we will investigate some of the ethical questions that are raised by climate change. How ought the burdens of mitigation and adaptation be distributed globally? What do we owe to future generations with regard to climate change? Do individuals have a responsibility to act more climate-friendly? Why have so many individuals and states failed to take sufficient action, and how might their motivation be increased? How should we respond to agents who fail to comply with their climate-related obligations? And finally, what to think of alternative solutions and perspectives, such as climate engineering, changing one's relation to nature, and considering the good of non-human beings?

Aims

Having completed the course, students should be able to:

- name, evaluate and compare principles of the (global) distribution of climate change's burdens;
- discuss currently living persons' climate-related obligations towards future generations;
- explain and evaluate arguments for and against individual responsibilities for climate change;

- explain the prevailing lack of motivation for climate-friendly actions, and name suggestions about how to increase this motivation;
- name, evaluate and compare proposals about how to respond to agents' failing to comply with their climate-related obligations;
- name and critically analyze arguments for and against alternative solutions and perspectives to climate change.

Schedule and Topics

10/03/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: **Preliminary Discussion**

Climate Change Denial

10/10/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: Catriona McKinnon: Should We Tolerate Climate Change Denial?

Global Issues

10/17/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: Henry Shue: Global Environment and International Inequality

Intergenerational Issues

10/24/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: Clarke Wolf: Intergenerational Justice, Human Needs, and Climate Policy

10/31/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: Joseph Heath: Climate Ethics: Justifying a Positive Social Time Preference

Individual Responsibility

11/07/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: It's not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations

The Motivational Problem

11/14/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: Stephen Gardiner: A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption

11/21/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: Tyler Kasperbauer: The Implications of Psychological Limitations for the Ethics of Climate Change

Non-Ideal Circumstances

11/28/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: Simon Caney: Climate Change and Non-Ideal Theory: Six Ways of Responding to Noncompliance

12/12/2019, 13:30 – 15:00: **Discussion of Seminar Paper Proposals**

Alternative Strategies and Perspectives

01/09/2020, 13:30 – 15:00: Clare Heyward: A Growing Problem? Dealing with Population Increases in Climate Justice

01/16/2020, 13:30 – 15:00: Stephen Gardiner: Is 'Arming the Future' with Geoengineering Really the Lesser Evil? Some Doubts about the Ethics of Intentionally Manipulating the Climate System

01/23/2020, 13:30 – 15:00: Clare Palmer: Does Nature Matter? The Place of the Nonhuman in the Ethics of Climate Change

01/30/2020, 13:30 – 15:00: **Final Discussion**

All texts can be downloaded at the course's Moodle page (moodle.uni-graz.at).

Assessment

Seminar Paper

Your seminar paper should answer a specific and interesting research question in the area of basic needs and public policy. For example, you may compare the arguments of two or more authors, criticize the arguments of a particular author, or defend a thesis of your own. You can choose your research question freely. Make sure that your paper involves sound arguments that support your answer to this question.

The language of your seminar paper should be clear, simple and intelligible. Its structure should be logical and aid understanding. In particular, you should motivate and explicitly state your research question in an introductory section, and summarize your thesis and most important arguments in a concluding section.

Your seminar paper should be between 2.000 and 4.000 words (excluding title page, contents, footnotes, bibliography, etc.), and engage with at least three relevant sources. These sources can be texts that we discussed in class, additional texts provided on the course's Moodle page or texts that you researched yourself.

Your seminar paper must be submitted via Moodle by February 29, 2020. The paper's grade will be primarily based on the following criteria: (1) the appropriateness of your research question, (2) the soundness and relevance of your arguments, (3) your compliance with the rules of academic writing (citation, style, etc.), (4) the clarity, succinctness and intelligibility of your language, and (5) the adequacy of your paper's structure.

Further recommendations for writing a philosophy seminar paper can be found at: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.

Comments/Questions

In our course we will discuss eleven texts. For at least eight of these texts you should formulate a comment or question that we may then consider in class. Your contributions should either address how to understand certain aspects of the text or evaluate them. For example, you may ask how an author uses a certain key concept, or whether a particular argument is based on a problematic tacit assumption. Your comments/questions should be less than ten sentences. For each session they should be submitted via Moodle by Wednesday, 23:55.

Class Participation

Please do all readings and actively participate in our discussions; for example, ask questions, raise objections or point out interconnections.

General Policies

Attendance

In order to complete the course in a regular way you must not be absent from more than

three of our fourteen sessions. In case you miss four or five sessions I ask for an explanation (e.g., doctor's confirmation) and some compensatory task (e.g., a longer seminar paper or additional comments/questions). In case you miss six or more sessions you cannot successfully complete the course.

Deadlines

Late submissions of seminar papers and comments/questions will not be considered.

Academic Honesty

Violations of academic honesty (e.g., using others' ideas without citing them) will automatically lead to a negative assessment of the seminar paper or comment/question in which they occur.

Discussion Rules

For our course to succeed it is essential that we treat each other politely and with respect (even when our opinions on some matter diverge).

Laptops, Smartphones, etc.

Please limit the use of electronic devices as much as possible (except for note-taking).