Global Ethics and Sustainable Development

REL 875 / FES 80043
Thursday 3.30-5.20 S-100
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The international community regularly calls for global action to provide more decent lives for more of earth’s inhabitants, while securing the future for everyone. Those common calls to action invoke a set of global moral practices – practices like economic development, public health, human rights regulation, and environmental protection. This seminar explores the ethical landscape of those practices, including the questions they provoke and the vocabularies of assessment they require. In particular we consider whether recent proposals for a “global ethic” can describe common values and whether the concept of “sustainable development” can help organize those commitments.

We prepare to assess these proposals by first examining major challenges of human rights and development theory. What conceptual problems must an adequate global ethic address? We then consider several philosophical frameworks for addressing global problems, before turning to proposals for a “global ethic” and the contested concept of “sustainable development.” Can a global ethics of sustainability fulfill the aspiration to integrate and harmonize shared ethical commitments to the present and future, to economics and human rights, to ecology and social justice? The readings conclude with theological responses.

At the end of the seminar, participants present research of their own which investigates some particular interest in this ethical landscape (perhaps a localized issue in human rights or a particular development case, or a problem in public health). Discussion of the papers will help us explore the helpfulness of the broad theories we have read, and to further uncover the dimensions of an adequate global ethic.

This seminar may be especially helpful for students with professional interests in international relief, sustainable development, mission, or humanitarian advocacy. Participants with cross-cultural and/or development experience are encouraged to integrate personal reflection with our weekly discussions and with their paper.

Requirements: attendance and participation, short response each week, and final research paper.

Weekly responses of no more than 500 words are due by the midnight before our seminar. No response required for the UNDP report on the first day, and participants may omit a response for any one of the weeks from Nov 1 to Nov 29. (So you will complete nine reading responses over the semester.)

Working with another seminar participant, help lead discussion for one week (required but ungraded).

A final paper of 5,000-6,000 words presents independent research. This may focus on a particular issue, such as a local problem for human rights, a specific environmental problem, or a case in sustainable development. Or it may engage ethical debate related to theories of development, rights, relief, or environmental protection. Papers may draw on previous research or practical experience. Submit abstract by November 3rd, and prepare to make a brief presentation of your research to the seminar in early December (6th or 11th).

Grading: 40% participation and responses; 60% research paper.
Titles marked with a (*) are available in the YDS bookstore. The others can be found on e-reserves on the class website, or with the URL provided. Two readings will not be available on e-reserve and you may choose to buy the whole book or use the library reserve copy: Daly & Cobb *For the Common Good*, Norton *Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Management*.


Sep 13  *Donnelly  Universal Human Rights* (1-46, 109-24, 143-228)  
2nd edition: chapters 1-4, 8, 11

Sep 20  *Sen  Development as Freedom*  
chapters 1-4, 12 (chs 5-6, 10-11, if time)

Sep 27  *Shech & Haggis  Development: A Cultural Studies Reader*  (Intro, chapters 2-3, 5-6, 8-10, 13, 20)  
case: “Radical American Environmentalism” [handout]

Oct 4  *Nussbaum Women and Human Development*, 1-166  
case: “Well of Pain”  [posted on v2 “resources”]

Oct 11  [Fall Reading Break]

Oct 18  *Rawls Law of Peoples,*

Oct 25  Singer  *One World* 8-13, 150-95  [e-reserve];  
*Booth (ed.) How Might We Live?*  
Intro (1-7, 24-60, 95-130)

Nov 1  Global Ethics and the Earth Charter  
Porter “The Search for a Global Ethic” 105-21  [e-reserve]  
Robinson “Squaring the Circle”  
[http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VDY-4C4W27D.2&_user=483692&_coverDate=04%2F20%2F2004&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&view=c&_acct=C000022720&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&userid=483692&md5=d6d4c18c345b63bbaa700d4e025d9f](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VDY-4C4W27D.2&_user=483692&_coverDate=04%2F20%2F2004&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&view=c&_acct=C000022720&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&userid=483692&md5=d6d4c18c345b63bbaa700d4e025d9f)  
d’Evie & Glass “The Earth Charter: An Ethical Framework”  [e-reserve]  
Engel “The Earth Charter as a New Covenant”  [e-reserve]  
Dower “The Earth Charter and Global Ethics”  [e-reserve]  
Hessel “Integrated Earth Charter Ethics”  [e-reserve]

Nov 8  Social Justice and Future Generations  
Shiva “Women, Ecology, and Development”  (from *Staying Alive*) 296-302  
Shue “Global Environment and International Inequality” 531-45  
Partridge “Future Generations” (377-89)  
Barry “Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice” 487-99  
Solow “Sustainability: An Economist’s View”  
Rogers et al. *Introduction to Sustainable Development* 42-7

Nov 15  Sustainability Theory  
Davison  *Technology and the Contested Meanings of Sustainability*  11-36  
Palmer “Some Problems with Sustainability” 52-62*

Nov 22  [No class]

Nov 29  Theology and Sustaining the Common Good  
Daly & Cobb  *For the Common Good*  159-75, 190-206, 382-406  
Deane-Drummond “Environmental Justice and the Economy” 294-310*  
Cahill “Toward Global Ethics” 324-43.  
“Globalization and the Common Good” 42-54.
Dec 6 Research Presentations

for next year, see:

Nussbaum, Frontiers of Justice

O’Neill Bounds of Justice


Burger et al. Global Ethics: Illusion or Reality?


[cf also the list at the end of 2006 syllabus]

The Anthropology of Development and Globalization (Edelman and Haugerud, Blackwell 2005) has some interesting essays.

The Globalization and Development Reader (Blackwell 2004; Roberts and Hite, ed.s). Maybe one or two essays.

Thomas Pogge in Freedom from Poverty as Human Right – excellent to follow Rawls and Sen.

(handwritten notes)

see Current Debates in Global Justice

Making Globalization Good (some essays may work)