Bio 611: Ethics of Biodiversity Conservation is a syllabus for a one credit graduate course. Taught at Arizona State University, Bio 611 attracts a mix of natural science and humanities graduate students and does not assume students will have substantial experience in ethics. Beyond exploration of the topic of ethics of biodiversity conservation, the course aims to develop the ability of students to analyze ethical issues through the incorporation of case discussion and case writing.

The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Karin Ellison, OEC - Life and Environmental Sciences Editor, and Joseph Herkert, OEC Engineering Editor. They provided valuable input in selecting topics and crafting the resources.

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### Course Overview

In this course, we will contemplate the ethical aspects of subjects normally encountered in a conservation biology or ecology course. Topics will include assisted migration, ecosystem services, ex situ conservation, and more. Discussions will center on case studies through which we will reflect on some important cross-cutting themes in the ethics of biodiversity conservation, including questions of how to value biodiversity, issues about conflicting ways of protecting nature, tensions and tradeoffs between human development and biodiversity conservation, and concerns over governance and regulation of biodiversity conservation projects. The ethical analysis of biodiversity conservation requires an inquiry into past, present, and possible future frameworks for conservation, and their ethical, social, economic, legal, political, and ecological implications. It also requires recognition of the fact that social and cultural values influence the research and adoption of certain conservation tools and methods over others, as much as biodiversity and ecosystem conditions drive social and cultural changes.

### Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will learn how to identify and evaluate the competing interests, potential benefits, and possible risks in case studies, as well as analyze crosscutting themes in the ethics of biodiversity conservation. These themes include: 1) questions about the appropriate way to value biodiversity (e.g., ecocentric, economic, etc.), 2) concerns about balancing biodiversity conservation goals with economic development, 3) issues in the governance of biodiversity and conservation programs, and 4) accounting for scientific uncertainty and the complexity of biodiversity and ecosystems. Students will be encouraged to incorporate different levels of analysis, critical perspectives, ethical principles, and competing values into a rigorous ethical analysis of biodiversity conservation.
BIO 611: Ethics of Biodiversity Conservation

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Participate in an ongoing discussion about the relationship between conservation biology, ecology, ethics, and society.
2. Understand the foundations of environmental ethics and apply them to current issues.
3. Recognize the ethical implications of their work as a developing conservation biologist and/or ecologist.

Requirements

The assignments are readings, short response papers, and a case or book review. Natural science and engineering graduate students typically prepare a case, while graduate students in humanities or social science programs typically prepare a book review. In week one or two of class, we will decide which formal writing assignment you will complete.

Readings

The Course Schedule gives the reading assignments. Students must complete readings before each class so that discussion can draw on knowledge of the readings. The reading materials will be posted on Black Board.

Response Papers

Each session students will write brief (1-page) response papers on the assigned readings. These informal essays should state the argument of each piece assigned and raise two issues for discussion. At least one point should be positive – i.e. discuss some fashion in which a reading for the week might serve as a model for scholarship. The response papers are due at each class session on paper.

Cases

Students are required to write a 1-page narrative, which can be a summary of an actual event or a hypothetical scenario, and four pages of ethical analysis. The analysis will follow a format that we will discuss during week one.

A draft is due via Blackboard AND in hard copy in class. Students will present their cases for class discussion. During the discussion, we will workshop the draft case. Final cases and case analyses, incorporating comments from class discussion, are due via Blackboard one week after the last class meeting.

Book Review

Students preparing book reviews will write a 4 to 5-page book or article review of humanistic or social science scholarship on the unit topic. Students will need to explore the literature beyond that assigned for class. The review should be modeled on those in Science and Engineering Ethics, American Journal of Bioethics, Technology and Culture, ISIS, or another similar type of academic journal. I must approve the book or articles you wish to review. If you don’t know how to locate this kind of scholarship, I can give you tips. You will also need to submit a draft review for comments before the final submission.

Evaluation

Grades will generally be calculated as follows:

- Attendance, demonstrated knowledge of assigned readings, and thoughtful contributions to discussion: 20%
- 6 response papers: 30%
- Draft case or book review: 20%
- Final case or book review: 30%

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I reserve the right to assign any student a final grade that is higher than merited by strict calculation based on academic criteria, such as improvement in grades over the semester or atypical and explainable poor performance on a single assignment.

I accept late assignments only in rare circumstances. These include professional conflicts, traveling with a sports team, major and documented illnesses, personal and family crises, etc. Should any of these arise, you are responsible for discussing the circumstances with me ASAP, before the deadline if possible.

Likewise, incompletes will be given only in extraordinary circumstances. To receive an incomplete, you would work with me to prepare a written agreement specifying how and when all work for the course would be completed. This agreement would have to be signed before I submit grades at the end of term.

**Student Conduct and Academic Integrity**

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions, and records. The possible penalties include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure indicated on the transcript as a grade of E, course failure due to academic dishonesty indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE, loss of registration privileges, disqualification, and dismissal. For more information, see http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity. Additionally, required behavior standards are listed in the Student Code of Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedures, Computer, Internet, and Electronic Communications policy, and outlined by the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Anyone in violation of these policies is subject to sanctions.

It would be especially pathetic to fail an ethics course for cheating!

Students are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other members of the class. An instructor may withdraw a student from the course when the student's behavior disrupts the educational process per Instructor Withdrawal of a Student for Disruptive Classroom Behavior.

The Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities accepts incident reports from students, faculty, staff, or other persons who believe that a student or a student organization may have violated the Student Code of Conduct.

**Accessibility Statement**

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended (ADAAA) of 2008, professional disability specialists and support staff at the Disability Resource Center (DRC) facilitate a comprehensive range of academic support services and accommodations for qualified students with disabilities.

Qualified students with disabilities may be eligible to receive academic support services and accommodations. Eligibility is based on qualifying disability documentation and assessment of individual need. Students who believe they have a current and essential need for disability accommodations are responsible for requesting accommodations and providing qualifying documentation to the DRC. Every effort is made to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities.

Qualified students who wish to request an accommodation for a disability should contact the DRC by going to https://eoss.asu.edu/drc, calling (480) 965-1234 or emailing DRC@asu.edu.

**Course Schedule**

**Class 1: Introduction to the Ethics of Biodiversity of Conservation**

ASSIGNED:


**RECOMMENDED:**


**Class 2: Gene Drives**

**ASSIGNED:**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**Class 3: Assisted Migration**

**ASSIGNED:**

Case Study: Assisted Migration


**RECOMMENDED:**


**Class 4: Zoos: Ark or Prison?**

**ASSIGNED:**


Please look over the conservation webpage for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums: https://www.aza.org/conservation

RECOMMENDED:


Class 5: Ecosystem Services: Ecotourism

ASSIGNED:

Case Study: Ecotourism


RECOMMENDED:


Class 6: Biodiversity and Health

ASSIGNED:

Case Study: Biodiversity and Human Health


RECOMMENDED:


Class 7: Conservation in the Amazon: Protected Areas, Deforestation, and Governance

ASSIGNED:
Case Study: Conservation in the Amazon


RECOMMENDED:
