

Philosophy 290H
Environmental Ethics
Guevara & Campagna

Winter 2015

Revised December 19, 2014

Background

The idea for this seminar grows out of a collaboration between Professors Campagna and Guevara, who have argued recently that the concept of species conservation, and many centrally related concepts, such as the concept of sustainable development and even of the environment itself, are not well understood, and perhaps not understood at all. For all the well-intentioned efforts of excellent thinkers and activists in the species conservation and environmental movements, the environmental discourse seems deeply confused and ineffective. There is a failed attempt to express certain fundamental, deeply felt ethical principles of the highest value, because the intellectual basis for conservation is everywhere tied up with language that undermines the felt, or intuitively understood, meaning many are groping for when they try to give expression to the loss in the destruction of the diversity of species, or of a pristine ancient forest, or to the barbarous disregard for the well being and integrity of a great variety of species—all for the routine and questionable tradeoff of satisfying optional human preferences and tastes.

Objective

This seminar is aimed at advanced students interested in becoming conservationist, in studying the conservation movement and in understanding the principles behind the practice of conservation in the context of science, policy or management. Our objective will be to discuss the foundational values of the conservation movement, focusing particularly on the philosophical basis for the idea that Nature requires protection from humans. Professor Campagna will, among other things, focus on some current issues in the conservation movement, such as the controversy between conservation biology and conservation science, the faith in techno-solutions to restore, re-wild or de-extinct species, and the dominance of a capitalist-driven foundation of conservation values. As a scientist with extensive experience in the field, and many years of service as a conservation practitioner for the 1895-founded Wildlife Conservation Society (one of the oldest conservation societies in the world), he will provide some expert assessment of the current state of conservation. Professor Guevara—who specializes in moral philosophy, including applied ethics—will help with the necessary background issues in traditional moral theory, and will focus on the difficulties involved in the commonly accepted extension of traditional ethical terms (like "rights" or "equality") to non-human nature. Finally, Guevara and Campagna share an interest in the thought of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and are interested in the application of Wittgenstein's ideas—including that of a language game—to the intellectual crisis of understanding and language that seems to be at the root of many of the difficulties in the conservation and environmental movements.

Enrollment

This is a graduate seminar in philosophy, and so presupposes some knowledge of philosophy (especially moral philosophy). But we very much encourage attendance of graduate students, with the proper background, from a wide variety of fields including environmental studies, ecology, politics, and sociology, among others. The course is an attempt to build bridges among these fields.

Required Work

Faithful attendance
Participation in class discussion
Short weekly writing assignments on the reading material
Term paper

Readings (Partial list)

(Complete list forthcoming)

All readings will be posted on Ecommons as pdf files, except for *Keeping the Wild Against the Domestication of Earth* (edited by George Wuerthner, Eileen Crist, and Tom Butler), which can be obtained at the Literary Guillotine, downtown Santa Cruz (204 Locust Street, (831) 457-1195).

January 5: Introduction. No readings. First class.

January 12: Some philosophical themes and background.

(i) L. Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics" (*The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 1, 1965, pp. 3-12)

(ii) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: "Consequentialism,"

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/>

(iii) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: "Deontological Ethics,"

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-deontological/>

(iv) Conniff, Richard, "Useless Creatures," http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/author/richard-conniff/?_r=0

January 19: Holiday (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

January 26: Classic and Contemporary Sources in Conservation: What is conservation biology, conservation science, and conservation?

(i) Michael Soulé, "What is Conservation Biology?" *BioScience*, Volume 35 (December 1985), pp. 727-734

(ii) Marvier, M., Kareiva, P. & Lalasz, R. (2012). "Conservation in the Anthropocene." *Breakthrough Journal*. Available at: http://www.rightsandresources.org/documents/files/doc_5337.pdf (May 2013).

(iii) From *Keeping the Wild Against the Domestication of Earth* (edited by George Wuerthner, Eileen Crist, and Tom Butler):

Chapter 6. "Conservation in No-Man's-Land," Claudio Campagna and Daniel Guevara

Chapter 7. "The 'New Conservation'," Michael Soulé

Epilogue: "The Road to Cape Perpetua," Kathleen Dean Moore

February 2: The language of the environmental movement: Sustainability, Animal Rights, Rights for plants and beyond?

- (i) Brundtland Report on Sustainability: "Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future," United Nations. 1987, Part #, Sections (On sustainability).
- (ii) Singer, Peter, Equality for Non-human Animals: TBA
- (iii) Nussbaum, Martha, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, and Species Membership*, Chapter 6, "'Beyond Compassion and Humanity' Justice for Non-Human Animals," Sections vi-xiv
- (iv) Guevara, On the language of rights and equality in the environmental ethic.
- (v) Campagna, On the language of sustainability

February 9: The status of the environment and species.

- (i) The crisis of biodiversity.
- (ii) A reversal of roles in the Anthropocene
- (iii) Defaunation and deforestation. Why conservation is failing?
- (iv) Playing God: reintroductions, rewilding, de-extinction, synthetic biology

February 16: Holiday (President's day)

February 23: Wittgenstein

- (i) Selections from *Blue and Brown Books*
- (ii) Selections from *Philosophical Investigations*
- (iii) Secondary literature and commentary on Wittgenstein

March 2: Wildness, Beauty, Sublimity. Seeking a new language game for conservation and an environmental ethic.

- (i) Gary Snyder, *The practice of the wild*
- (ii) Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*
- (iii) Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty*

March 9: TBA

March 16: TBA