Course Description
This seminar will focus on the ongoing destruction of nature from anthropogenic planetary climate change. This catastrophe poses a problem for which traditional ethical theories have left us ill-prepared, and attempts at dealing with it in the form of “applied ethics” have proved unhelpful. A productive engagement needs to start from a willingness to radically rethink the categories that we use to describe this historical moment and the resources we have to respond to it meaningfully. We will talk about how climate crisis has challenged not only engrained metaphysical understandings of the relation between nature and culture but also received understandings of moral notions such as justice, responsibility and blame. We will also consider how it brings into question familiar conceptions of political institutions such as markets, property, states. We will attempt this kind of transformative approach to climate crisis by reading widely—and in a fully interdisciplinary manner—in the literature. Seminar topics will include the Anthropocene, ecocide, ecofeminism, environmentalism and animal ethics, anthropocentric/biocentric/ecocentric environmental ethics, responsibility (i.e., who is responsible for change?), global justice, justice vis-a-vis future generations and questions of mitigation/adaptation/celebration of collapse (or collapsology).

Learning outcomes
At the end of this course, you should be able—at a graduate-level—to (1) describe what climate change is and discuss senses in which it represents a moral and political problem, (2) describe and critically assess some of the most influential theoretical approaches to environmental ethics, (3) describe and critically assess some of the most influential accounts of the Anthropocene, (4) discuss practical implications of prominent theoretical approaches to environmental ethics, (5) develop well-grounded, independent views of key issues and problems for environmental ethics in the Anthropocene, and (6) discuss your views clearly orally and in writing.

Required texts
All required and recommended materials for this course will be available either on our seminar Canvas site, in the public domain online or in seminar.

Course requirements
All enrolled students must:

• write three (no longer than) 2-page—ungraded—response papers, and
• write one (no longer than) 15-18-page seminar paper,

Response papers. At our second seminar meeting (January 29th), you’ll be assigned to one of four groups, members of which will be responsible for producing short response papers on three
occasions during the term. Response papers will be due by 8am on the day of the relevant class meeting, available to your professors in time for them to work your ideas into the day's presentation. You will be encouraged to comment further, in seminar, on the themes developed in your response papers. *Seminar papers.* Your seminar paper will be due before the seminar, on the day of our last meeting, Thursday, May 6th. There will be no penalty for late papers, but, if your paper is late, you will have no guarantee of having it commented on, graded and returned to you quickly.

**Reaching us**

Our contact information is at the top of the first page of the syllabus. Professor Bernstein’s regular zoom-office hours are Thursdays 4:15 – 6:00 and by appointment. Professor Crary’s regular zoom-office hours are Wednesday 2:45-3:45, Thursday 12:30-1:30 and by appointment. (Links for Professor Bernstein's & Crary’s google calendar and zoom meeting places are listed with their contact information, above.) You should feel free to contact us about any course-related issue, no matter how small. We will try to respond to emails as quickly as possible. If you write to us about a substantive issue, we will very likely write back and suggest that we meet to chat over zoom.

**Fairness, grading methods and disputes**

There is good evidence to suggest that implicit or unconscious bias is a serious issue in academic settings, and that it puts members of underrepresented groups at a substantial disadvantage. One recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to do anonymous assessment. This is not possible in a relatively small research seminar in which we will be in close conversation with you about your individual writing projects. A second recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to attend carefully to how one interacts with students (e.g., what form of address is used, how often speaking time is granted and to whom, and how much time individual students spend speaking). Throughout the semester, we will monitor our own practice with an eye to being fair to all. A third strategy is to get anonymous feedback on pedagogy and methods well before the end of the course, and we will arrange for an anonymous survey before midterm with an eye to making improvements in the running of the seminar.

If you believe that there is something amiss with the evaluation of your work, we urge you to let us know. We are open to discussion and willing to re-read papers.

**Course policies**

This course will adhere to New School academic policies, as appropriate for remote learning. As far as possible we have integrated new policies into what follows:

1. **Policy on attendance and lateness**
   * Please see the university’s new policy here: [Meaningful Participation in Online Courses 2020-2021](#).
   * Absences may justify some grade reduction and a total of four unexcused absences mandate a reduction of one letter grade for the course.
   * More than four absences mandate a failing grade for the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the following:
     - an extended illness requiring hospitalization or visit to a physician (with documentation)
     - a family emergency, e.g. serious illness (with written explanation)
     - observance of a religious holiday
The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students. If registered during the first week of the add/drop period, the student is responsible for any missed assignments and coursework. For significant lateness, the instructor may consider the tardiness as an absence for the day. Students failing a course due to attendance should consult with an academic advisor to discuss options.

2. Policy on academic honesty and integrity. For details, you should go to the list of New School policies here https://www.newschool.edu/Components/Wireframes/TwoColumnWireframe.aspx?pageid=591 and click on the link for “Academic Honesty and Integrity”.

3. Of particular importance is the policy on plagiarism, which you can find and click on by following the same link (i.e., https://www.newschool.edu/Components/Wireframes/TwoColumnWireframe.aspx?pageid=591). Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc.), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26-29.

Academic resources for students

Please bear in mind that the following information may need to be adjusted for the remote learning situation. Important resources include the Learning Center (66 West 12th Street, 6th floor) and the office for Student Disability Services. In keeping with the university’s policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with the office staff privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to your instructors. At that point, we will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course. Student Disability Services is located at 63 Fifth Avenue, room 425. The phone number is (212) 229-5626. Students and faculty are expected to review the Student Disability Services webpage. The webpage can be found at https://www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/, and the office is available to answer any questions or concerns.

Comment on course readings

A great deal is listed on the schedule (below) for many of our seminar meetings. Within the readings listed for each week, we will focus on a smaller selection, identified by asterisk. (We may adjust our focus as the semester proceeds.) Any readings listed as “other resources” for specific seminar meetings represent, as the label suggests, further resources for anyone interested in exploring a particular topic more deeply. If you have questions about any of the course materials or requirements, please reach out and talk to us.
Tentative list of seminars and readings

Week One (Jan 21st)—Course Introduction and Biocides, Ecocides, and Extinctions

Readings
* Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, Chapters 1, 2 and 17 (“A Fable for Tomorrow,” “The Obligation to Endure” and “The Other Road”)
* Elizabeth Kolbert, “The Sixth Extinction” (The New Yorker 2009)

Week Two (January 28th)—Introduction to Climate Ethics: The Deep Inadequacies of Present-day Moral Philosophy

During today’s class, you’ll be assigned to groups for response papers

Readings
* Dale Jamieson, “Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming” (1992) in Climate Ethics
Stephen Gardiner, “Introduction” to Climate Ethics

Week Three (Feb 4th)—The Idea of the Anthropocene (I)

Readings
* Paul Crutzen, Eugene F. Stoermere, “The Anthropocene”
* Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History”
* Andreas Malm, “The Anthropocene Myth”
Jeremy Davies, “Versions of the Anthropocene” (Chapter 2 of The Birth of the Anthropocene)
Bruce Smith, Melinda Zeder, “The Onset of the Anthropocene” Anthropocene 4 (2013)

Other resources
Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Human Condition in the Anthropocene”

Week Four (Feb 11th)—Respect for Animals (II)

Readings
* Peter Singer, Chapter 1 of Animal Liberation, “All Animals Are Equal…”
* Cora Diamond, “Eating Meat and Eating People” in The Realistic Spirit
Other resources

Week Five (Feb 18th)—Respect for all Life (III)
Readings
*Kevin Goodpaster, “On Being Morally Considerable”

Week Six (Feb 25th)—Respect for Land (IV)
Today in class we will do a brief, anonymous midterm survey
Readings
*Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac (complete), with particular attention to the sections “Thinking Like a Mountain” and “The Land Ethic”, “Wisconsin” and “Wilderness.”
Other resources
J. Baird Callicott, Chapter 1 of Thinking Like a Planet, “A Sand County Almanac”

Week Seven (Mar 4th)—The Value of Species? (I)
Required reading
*Holmes Rolston, Chapter 4 of Environmental Ethics: “Life in Jeopardy: Duties to Endangered Species”
*Ronald Sandler, Chapters 3 and 4 of The Ethics of Species
Other resources
Ronald Sandler, Chapter 2 of The Ethics of Species

Week Eight (Mar 11th)—Future Generations (II)
Readings
*Janna Thompson, “Identity and Obligation in a Transgenerational Polity” from Intergeneration Justice, Axel Gosseries and Lukas H, Meyer (eds.)
*Stephen Gardiner, “A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption” in Climate Ethics
Other resources
Samuel Scheffler, Death and the Afterlife Lecture I
Week Nine (Mar 25th)—Nature Reconsidered: Mastery and Mechanism (III)

Readings
*Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “The Concept of Enlightenment” and “Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment” from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Week Ten (Apr 1st)—Nature Reconsidered: Ecofeminism (IV)

Readings
*Valerie Plumwood, Chapter 1 of *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*
Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis”
Linda Vance, “Ecofeminism and the Politics of Reality.” In Greta Gaard, *Ecofeminisms*

Other resources

Week Eleven (Apr 8th)—Ecological Marxism (I)

Readings

**Week Twelve (Apr 15th)—Facing Gaia (II)**

*Readings*
Andreas Malm, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 of *Progress of the Storm.*

**Week Thirteen—Climate Change and Global Justice: Adaptation, Mitigation, and Prevention (III)**

*Readings*
*Henry Shue (1992), “The Unavoidability of Justice”*
*Stephen M Gardiner, “Geoengineering: Ethical Questions for Deliberate Climate Manipulators.”*
*Dale Jamieson, “Adaptation, Mitigation and Justice”*

*Other resources*

**Week Fourteen (Apr 29th)—Climate Change, Global Justice and Responsibility and the Poor (IV)**

*Readings*
*Simon Caney, “Cosmopolitanism, Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change,” in *Climate Ethics*
*Gardiner (2011), “Is no one responsible for global environmental tragedy”*
*Steve Vanderheiden, “Human Rights and the Environment” from *The Oxford Handbook*
Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s not my Fault: Global Warming and Individual Obligations,”

*Other resources*
Ronald Sandler, “Environmental Virtue Ethics: Value, Normativity and Right Action”
Joan Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (Edward Elgar 2003), Chapters 1 and 4-6

**Week Fifteen (May 6th)—Climate Hope and Politics of Liberation**

*Readings*
*Henry Shue, “Climate Hope: Implementing the Exit Strategy”*

*Other Resources*
Alyssa Battistoni, “Red Environmentalism: A Low Carbon Socialist Future is Possible,” *Jacobin*
Kate Aronoff, Alyssa Battistoni, Daniel Aldana Cohen, Theo Riofrancos, *A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green New Deal*

*Final papers due before class today*