

# Destination 2017: Education for Sustainability Lesson Plan

Name: Peter Furlong  
Campus: West  
Discipline: Philosophy

## Week 1

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1. Course Prefix and Name (select a course you wish to incorporate sustainability, ex: *ENC 1101*):  
**PHI 2600**
  
2. Needs Assessment
  - a. What is the CIM [course outcome](#) that you plan on teaching during your sustainability-focused lesson?  
**Evaluate moral arguments in the public debate for coherence, consistency, and plausibility, using understanding of moral theories**
  
  - b. What is a particular lesson, activity, or unit you already use that you wish to incorporate sustainability? Or, if you will be creating a new lesson, which concepts might align with sustainability?  
**I will create a new lesson in which we analyze ethical arguments about protecting the planet to see whether they presuppose a particular meta-ethical position (and if so, which ones), and whether they entail particular other claims in normative and/or applied ethics (especially concerning whether they take a stand on what things have moral standing).**
  
  - c. What [sustainability topic](#) might it cover?  
**We will examine popular (that is, produced by and for non-ethicists) arguments, pronouncements, and slogans aimed at motivating and defending the idea that humans should alter their behaviors to avoid harming other living things and other ecosystems. (For example, arguments and claims about preserving rainforests and nursing endangered species to healthier numbers.)**

For more resources see,

- Sample Valencia lesson plans ([English](#), [New Student Experience](#), [Mathematics](#)),
- [Tips on integrating sustainability into existing courses](#)
- [Arizona State University's archive of sustainability lesson plans](#)

## Week 2

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### 3. Student Learning Outcomes

What is your end learning goal with the lesson? What should the [students be able to do/understand/care about](#)?

- a. Students will be able to analyze lines of reasoning advocating sustainable practices to discover whether they commit one to claims about the non-instrumental value of non-humans.
- b. Students will be able to analyze lines of reasoning advocating sustainable practices to discover whether their force depends upon an acceptance of moral realism.

## Week 3

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### 4. Lesson Title: Bringing ethical coherence to popular environmental debates

5. Lesson Summary: This lesson will begin with an overview and discussion of the way in which environmental ethics relates to other areas of applied ethics, as well as how it fits within debates in meta- and normative ethics. We will discuss how certain views within meta-ethics (for example, moral error theory and emotivism) make environmental ethics straightforward, but perhaps leave us with unwelcome results. Moral realism will be more welcome, but much less straightforward. We will then discuss how the question of what entities have moral standing comes to the fore in environmental ethics, and how ethicists divide into two broad camps, depending upon their claims about what has moral standing. This will be background for an activity in which we turn to several claims, arguments, and slogans. We will examine these to discover what sorts of background presuppositions they make about meta-, normative, and applied ethics, most importantly, whether they are committed to the non-instrumental value of non-humans.

### 6. Lesson Overview/Background:

- a. How will your lesson connect to the [3 pillars of sustainability](#): environmental, social, and economic issues?
  - i. This lesson will bring up questions about the independent value of each of the pillars. Environmental ethicists disagree about the moral status of non-humans (and even those who endorse the moral status of non-humans disagree about the extent of the entities that possess such moral status). For this reason, they disagree about the basis for defending the environmental pillar.
- b. How will your lesson address at least one of the [5 key concepts](#)?
  - i. It will bring to light the question of how we should evaluate tradeoffs. In particular, it will provide both the tools and the opportunity to discover what sorts of moral goals (and with them substantive moral claims) come along with various sorts of arguments/claims/slogans in popular discourse.

### 7. Assessment

- a. Identify the [type\(s\) of assessment](#) (*experiential, inquiry-based, project-based, place-based*) strategies you will use to assess content mastery ([summative](#)) and write out the instructions that will be given to students.
- i. I will use a project-based activity as a summative assessment.
  - ii. Directions: Look at the particular popular text you have been assigned [different students will be assigned different texts]. Please take on the role of ethicist in constructing an ethical framework within which the text could be defended. This will require stating an meta-ethical position on the meaning and possible truth-value of moral claims. It will also require some explanation of a normative ethical view (although an entire such view need not be presented, students should indicate whether they are using a consequentialist, deontological, or virtue-ethics approach) and how this connects to the moral status of non-humans. (Students must indicate whether their view requires the claims that non-humans have non-instrumental value, and if so, which ones. Most importantly, students must defend the claim that such entities have non-instrumental value in a way that coheres with the normative-ethical position that has been chosen.) Students must address their work to other ethicists, and may do so in one of the following three formats:
    1. Oral presentation with powerpoint
    2. Video
    3. Poster presentation with Q/A
- b. Identify the strategy or strategies you will use to assess student learning and provide ongoing feedback ([formative](#)) and write out the instructions that will be given to students.
- i. After first encountering environmental ethics, we will look at a number of popular claims/arguments/slogans in environmental ethics and discuss together what sorts of assumed commitments they rely upon in ethics more broadly. We will discuss a few examples as a class before they break into groups to do a brief collaborative version of the activity that will produce the summative assessment.
  - ii. Directions:
    1. Directions: Look at the particular popular text you have been assigned [different student groups will be assigned different texts]. Please take on the role of ethicist in constructing an ethical framework within which the text could be defended. This will require stating an meta-ethical position on the meaning and possible truth-value of moral claims. It will also require some explanation of a normative ethical view (although an entire such view need not be presented, students should indicate whether they are using a consequentialist, deontological, or virtue-ethics approach) and how this connects to the moral status of non-humans. (Students must indicate whether their view requires the claims that non-humans have non-instrumental value, and if so, which ones. Most importantly, students must defend the claim that such entities have non-instrumental value in a way that coheres with the normative-ethical position that has been chosen.) Students must work together to prepare to give a 2 minute overview to the class. Each student should be prepared to provide this overview, since the reporter will be selected randomly.

## 8. Lesson Activities

- a. What will students need to know or do prior to the lesson activity or activities (readings, items to be prepared, prior knowledge)?
  - i. Before this lesson begins, students will have had several weeks in which they read and discussed foundational issues in meta- and normative ethics. This lesson will build upon this foundational knowledge, but it will not presuppose specific knowledge about environmental ethics. This lesson will begin with an overview and discussion of the way in which environmental ethics relates to other areas of applied ethics, as well as how it fits within debates in meta- and normative ethics. We will discuss how certain views within meta-ethics (for example, moral error theory and emotivism) make environmental ethics straightforward, but perhaps leave us with unwelcome results. Moral realism will be more welcome, but much less straightforward. We will then discuss how the question of what entities have moral standing comes to the fore in environmental ethics, and how ethicists divide into two broad camps, depending upon their claims about what has moral standing.
- b. Describe the activity or activities students will be doing.
  - i. Write out the instructions that will be given to students. These are detailed above in the assessments section. My activities are the very things that students will be assessed on.
  - ii. How will you keep students engaged throughout this activity.
    1. In the in-class activity upon which the formative assessment is based, I will select texts that require students to work together and build upon previous readings and discussions to creatively work towards a coherent (and hopefully minimally plausible) ethical framework to support popular sustainability claims. I will also monitor the room, individually interacting with groups that seem to be having a tough time sustaining(!) a dynamic group atmosphere.

## 9. Materials and Resources

For the questions below, include links to resources you plan to use with a summary of how you plan to use the resource.

I don't have any specific resources at this time for the activity itself. I have the foundational texts (on meta and normative ethics), but I have not worked up the specific excerpts I will give students for the activities. (If you wish for links to the foundational texts, let me know; I have left them off since they are not directly tied to sustainability issues.)

- a. What content do you already have? I already have the background, foundational materials in meta- and normative ethics.
- b. What new materials will you need to create? I will need to select a number of short pieces to give to students for the activities themselves. When do I need to have these selected?

## Week 4

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### 10. Reflection

- a. Explain how your outcome(s), learning activities, and assessments are aligned and connected.
  - i. My learning activities are the work upon which the assessments are based, so these are connected quite closely! The outcomes involve developing the ability to analyze claims and arguments in just the way that the activities requires them to do. By scaffolding these assignments, I hope to assist students in developing these skills through actively practicing them.
- b. How will you [evaluate the effectiveness of your lesson](#)?
  - i. I will do this in two ways
    1. Student perspective: by following the suggestions in the link above, my students will report on what they found engaging, affirming, puzzling, and surprising
    2. Faculty perspective: by evaluating the quality of their work, especially with regard whether their assignments demonstrate increased competence in the skills targeted in the learning outcome