

Phil 3309 Environmental Ethics

M,W 3:30-4:45

Dr. Michael Menser

The 21st century has brought with it a range of environmental problems that humanity (and the rest of the earth) have never encountered so what's Brooklyn College gonna do about it? Global warming gets much of the press but mass extinction, soil degradation, water scarcity, and atmospheric and oceanic pollution pose problems potentially as catastrophic and NYC is feeling the impacts especially since Superstorm Sandy. Relatedly, a global economy heavily reliant upon oil, coal and gas threaten to further destabilize the global ecology as do further processes of economic development, urbanization, and population growth. And NYC is in the midst of a rebuilding effort which will spend 10s of billions to make us safer, but who is us and what kind of city do we want?

MISSION of this class: 1) to become familiar with a range of ethical theories including human-animal rights, participatory democracy, environmental justice, and virtue ethics. 2) to be able to apply these theories to real world environmental cases both global and local and critique them; 3) to understand the historical, cultural, political and economic dimensions of environmental issues; 4) to critically assess the role(s) of the state, market, businesses, technologies and social movements for achieving sustainable development and "resilience"; 5) to understand the meanings of key terms in the debates: ecological footprint, sustainability, resilience, environmental racism/justice, food sovereignty, global warming, climate justice; green capitalism, "organic," commons. 6/ of special focus this term will be the food system and NYC's future given climate change and so much economic inequality.

So what should be done and who should do it? This is a central question in applied ethics.

We shall be especially focused on the issue of "sustainability" and sustainable development and related issues of agriculture, food, and democracy as they apply to both rural and urban areas. Brooklyn and Brooklyn College itself will be of particular focus as we look at activities and proposals to make the campus and the borough more "sustainable" and resilient and fights over just what that means. Also, students will be required to morally evaluate their own consumption practices and construct a project to make BC more sustainable/resilient.

Requirements: 2 short papers, quiz, midterm, 10 page paper, final.