

# *Environmental Ethics Essay*

(based on your term-long research)

## **Required Written Essay:**

For the major research exercise and final paper in this course you are to submit an essay on a topic of your own selection in the realm of environmental ethics and land management. The specific topic you chose is up to you, but in the essay you are expected to research and write one of two different types of essays. The two different types are described below.

In either case, for the purposes of this course an essay is a written expression of opinion based on substantial documentary evidence that leads through logical argumentation to a conclusion. It is expected that all four of these elements will be clearly present in your papers. That is, your papers will be expected to express **an opinion** that is based upon **substantial documentary evidence from primary source material** that has been properly cited. Further, the evidence presented will need to be forwarded through **logical arguments** that build persuasively toward your **conclusion**.

## **Two Types of Essays are Possible:**

1) The first type of essay requires that you examine a selected dilemma in environmental ethics. These essays are to be about 15 to 20 pages in length (not more than approximately 5,000 words), with bibliography and note apparatus appended in additional pages. You should start the essay with a brief encapsulation of the conclusion you have reached about the ethical dilemma you have chosen. This can be presented in the form of an initial question, followed by what represents, in effect, the “executive summary” of your over all essay. This statement should be clear, succinct and stated without reference to notes or bibliographic sources.

This introductory material should be followed by the presentation and discussion of the evidence you bring to bear on the ethical dilemma you wish to discuss. As you have learned, ethics involves the principles of choice that are deployed by individuals and whole cultures to make decisions and guide collective behavior. In addition to clearly stating the ethical problem and identifying the various parties to the ethical debate, you should pay particular attention to the various principles that are explicitly or implicitly employed by the different parties in the ethical dilemma you are examining. In cases where there is an apparent clash of different interpretive paradigms or worldviews about reality/morality, you should explain and account for the occurrence of the different paradigms that are manifest in the moral dilemma you are examining.

In the final pages of your paper you are expected to come to a conclusion. Here you will state clearly why in your judgment one or another of the discussed positions is most convincing to you based on the evidence you have presented. Further, you should state what in your view are the potential policy implications of the ethical judgment you have reached.

2) A second and alternative type of essay consists of a case-study of what we can call a “biography of a paradigm shift.” You are to choose one individual who has self-consciously identified themselves as having experienced a paradigm shift in their lives *or* someone who others have regard as a

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spokesman for an identifiable new paradigm or worldview, and in a well documented and clearly presented research paper you are to write a “biography of a paradigm shift” for the person concerned.

Research for this second kind of paper will focus upon the biography, the public and private statements and reported actions of the particular individual chosen for study. You cannot use yourself as the subject of this “biography of a paradigm shift.” Speeches, writings, interviews and personal memoirs or autobiographical comments constitute the primary research material for this second type of essay.

With this second type of essay you are also expected to come to a conclusion, based on the evidence you have assembled. In this case, however, the conclusion you reach should represent a judgment on your part about the relative value of the paradigm or worldview embodied in this individual in reference to the longer-term goal of achieving ecosystem sustainability.

**Expectations for both types of essay:**

- You will draw upon primary sources for the evidence you present.
- Your paper will exhibit proper scholarly writing and citation conventions. (See: [Writing with Internet Sources: A Guide for Harvard Students](#) [Downloadable RTF format - Zip file])
- Your paper should be double-spaced, and approximately 15-20 pages (or 5,000 words) in length using Times or Ariel 12 point font, with 1-inch margins. (NB: no less than 15 and no more than 20 pages).
- Your paper will include a standard bibliography of your resources in APA or MLA citation Style.