Climate ethics: the theatre of the oppressed meets ethics roundtables

Ética climática: el teatro de los oprimidos se encuentra con mesas redondas sobre ética

R A Y M O N D   A N T H O N Y *

RESUMEN   Las técnicas empleadas en los juegos de rol fomentan el hacer filosofía en el propio sentido de la epistemología de los puntos de vista. El teatro de representaciones interactivas y las tablas redondas de ética potencian el aprendizaje basado en problemas, habilidades comunicativas, compromiso cívico y el análisis de las partes interesadas. Estas técnicas fueron usadas en la deliberación sobre asuntos como el cambio climático y la ética alimentaria, poniendo especial énfasis en las necesidades de los habitantes de Alaska más vulnerables.

ABSTRACT   Role-playing techniques encourage doing philosophy in the spirit of standpoint epistemology. Interactive performance theatre and ethics roundtable enhance problem-based learning, communication skills, civic engagement and stakeholder analysis. These techniques were used to accentuate deliberation around climate change and food ethics issues with particular emphasis on the needs of the most vulnerable Alaskans.

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RÉSUMÉ   Les techniques des jeux de rôle encouragent à faire philosophie dans le sens de l'épistémologie des points de vue. Les répresentations de théatre interactif et les tables rondes sur éthique améliorent l'apprentissage par problémes appliqués, les capacités de communication, l'engagement civique et l'analyse de parties prenantes. Ces techniques ont été utilisées pour accentuer la délibération des questions sur le changement climatique et éthique alimentaire, en mettant l'accent sur les besoins des habitans d'Alaska.

Introduction

Education and interest in both environmental ethics and food ethics at institutions of higher education across the world is growing in importance. Programs and instructors are looking for innovative ways to impart both content and problem solving skills so that students are ready to tackle real world issues deftly and with adequate civic acumen or moral sensitivity. New courses offered at university campuses that deal with the interface between climate change and food issues (such as safety, sovereignty and security) are examples of this significant trend. These courses are increasingly becoming popular with students majoring in ethics and bioethics, environmental studies and professional disciplines that intersect with climate and food. Students at universities are keen to learn about various ethical, ecological, economic and technological perspectives, how to develop integrative research tools for initiatives that emphasize resilience and sustainability in their professional lives, and how to evaluate sustainable environmental policies and trade offs associated with competing policy options.

Many of these courses incorporate and build on recent published research in traditional fields of environmental ethics (Thompson, 2010; Armstrong and Bolzer, 2008; Singer and Mason, 2006; Westra, 2005; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2005), and new experiences and educational materials in the philosophy of food (Baatz, 2014; Sandler, 2014; Kaplan, 2012; Hourdequin, 2010). Further, many of these applied or bio-ethics courses encourage critical thinking, participatory and experiential learning, and are steeped in the Socratic method. Role-playing, i.e., a form of *doing* standpoint epistemology, which offers first-person critiques of dominant or hegemonic structures or of conventional epistemologies in the social and natural sciences (Harding, 2004). Through role-playing, students are invited to interact with each other in real situations with scripted personas or to stand in someone else's position, in order to expose situational vulnerabilities and forms of oppression (UN SPDPMESC, 1994).

It is a lively twist to the Socratic method and is increasingly utilized as a teaching innovation in classrooms. Role-playing aims to excite today's students to develop civic virtues while being challenged to think creatively about complex, multi-actor systems.

Students who participate in role-playing in their ethics classes also learn to develop and strengthen discursive thinking and deliberative skills, which unlike traditional debate (where winning the day and besting one's opponent in an adversarial context often seems paramount (see Scott and Francis, 2011), can help them appreciate the full benefits of multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches to finding real solutions to "wicked problems".

The Environmental Ethics course (PHIL/ENVI 303) that I taught at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) in Spring 2012 centered on stakeholder analysis and ethics in the service of public policy. As a pedagogical innovation, I employed a number of role-playing activities. These activities were designed or chosen because they are conducive to case study research and development aimed at promoting equitable and effective solutions in response to the impacts of climate change and food insecurity on the state of Alaska. Prompted by recent events in Alaska, students were challenged to offer leadership and guidance to the general public by discussing the essentiality of equity, fairness, and justice in guiding policy decisions in Alaska regarding climate change and on food security. More specifically, the students were tasked with developing a framework for assessing the moral health of Anchorage, Alaska through the lenses of food, health, and environmental, social, economic justice (respectively).

The role-playing activities that were employed enhanced students' learning by giving them particular deliberative ethics skills and heightened their moral sensitivities towards those most affected by climate change and food insecurity around the state. Students then employed these skills to examine the extent to which knowledge transfer systems like libraries and their databases promote equity in the delivery of information. Students incorporated content that came out of these activities in their end of semester group case studies and equity reports.

Course design: The nature of PHIL/ENVI 303

Environmental ethics undertakes to examine and articulate, from philosophical and ethical perspectives, our attitudes and responsibilities towards nonhuman animals and Nature. This humanities course, a 300 level, upper division ethics course carries an expectation that students will demonstrate a broad ethics competency on their way to becoming a budding professionals such as a nurse, engineer, biologist, philosopher, environmental scientist or advocate and construction manager. Increasingly, majors who frequent this course from environmental studies, health sciences, construction management, ecotourism and the natural and engineering sciences are required to demonstrate a certain level of proficiency when dealing with normative issues that

intersect science, risk management and policy making and to employ their major field expertise in combination with diverse areas of philosophical reasoning.

This course is designed to provide students with familiarity of some of the main ethical theories in philosophy (such as utilitarianism, deontology, contractarianism, virtue ethics, and feminist ethics), and with the arguments of some important environmental thinkers and scholars. This course is also designed to help students cultivate and hone their own ability to critically evaluate various ethical positions and to help them form, articulate and support their own arguments through oral communication and a thesis driven essay in the form of a case study and equity report.

> ❭ The student learning outcomes for Spring 2012 included:
> ❭ To demonstrate orally and in writing improved critical thinking skill regarding environmental issues
> ❭ To demonstrate understanding of key issues and arguments related to environmental ethics and their multidisciplinary perspectives To demonstrate orally and in writing understanding of influential ethical theories and approaches and how they apply to major issues concerning the environment
> ❭ To develop analytic collaborative research skills and capacity to organize and facilitate two research driven public symposia

The class theme, service learning and course overview

The class embarked on a funded pilot project "To Explore a Framework for Assessing the Moral Health of Anchorage, Alaska, through the lenses of Food, Health, and Environmental, Social, Economic Justice (respectively) and Deliberative Ethics." Approximately 24 students investigated the relationship between ethics, philosophy of science, risk communication and management and public policy-making around climate ethics and food security for the state of Alaska. They considered concepts such as sustainable living, consumerism, the nature of our obligations to our fellow Alaskans and to future generations, pollution, species extinction, the politics of risk management, the role of science in environmental ethics, the intersection of health and climate, the moral status of nonhuman animals, agricultural expansion, food safety and security and land development, and the status of indigenous knowledge. Students were invited to reflect on the effectiveness of local libraries as mechanisms for public discourse and deliberation and consider which local and global policy frameworks and institutions are best suited to address concerns Alaskans have about climate change and food insecurity.

In effect, the research project served as a semester-long service-learning experience. At UAA, service learning is a component of community-based engagement that involves "curricular engagement, where teaching, learning and scholarship

engage faculty, students, and community in mutually beneficial and respectful collaboration. Their interactions address community-identified needs, deepen students' civic and academic learning, enhance community well-being, and enrich the scholarship of the institution"[1].

This particular project and service-learning activity reflects one of UAA's core missions is to serve as Public Square for the community[2]. As part of the service-learning component, students provided leadership to the campus and Anchorage communities by helping the instructor plan and convene two public forums with the goals of informing the public about recent Alaska-based perspectives on climate change and food security and enhancing a sense of civic responsibility among Alaskans. These two forums, namely, "Climate Change and Impacts on Health, Food Security, and Environmental and Social Justice: A Public Conversation," held on March 22, 2012, and "Environmental Justice: The Road Less Travelled," held on April 13, 2012 are available to the public[3].

Through the two public forums and as part of the service-learning component for the course, students had the opportunity to make a difference in how content about environmental justice was communicated to members of the Alaskan community. Service-learning in ethics education is the idea of doing philosophy that informs pedagogy. Students engage in philosophical activity for civic and practical purposes beyond being competent in a specific domain of knowledge. Beyond mastering philosophical lexicon (i.e., merely knowing ethics), students, in a deliberative democratic environment, are able to apply and consider how philosophical content and influential arguments in favor of and against a variety of philosophical positions and critical thinking can make a difference in response to real community needs.

Students also presented their posters, equity reports, case studies and reflections on the process of inquiry and class activities at the Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Symposium in April 2012, at UAA.

In building their research capacity and investigating the extent of bias in the way information and discourses around climate ethics are shaped, addressed, and disseminated, students were challenged to consider two main research questions:

❱ How can we ensure that equity, fairness, and justice guide the policy decisions we make with respect to climate change?

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1   http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/engage/aboutus/UAA_SL_Definition

2   UAA's Strategic Plan is available at http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/strategicplan/upload/Strate gicPlan_12pg.pdf

3   Podcasts available at http://greenandgold.uaa.alaska.edu/podcasts/index.php?id=618 and http://greenandgold.uaa.alaska.edu/podcasts/index.php?id=633

❱ How well are Alaska's public systems of knowledge transfer (e.g., libraries) promoting equity? How can we do better?

After introduction to more general concepts and main contemporary arguments in environmental philosophy and to central ethical theories, the students looked more closely at the normative content behind different conceptions of sustainability. Here, they explored Bryan Norton's (2005) adaptive management text (*Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Management*) and applied his pragmatic approach to the questions at hand. The major deliverable for the students that semester (for which they were assigned group scores) was to design case studies and come up with equity reports (a form of health-welfare assessment) based on the themes of food, health, and environmental, social, and economic justice (respectively) and deliberative ethics. Students also had to sit for three tests, which examined their comprehension of various concepts and their applications, and their ability to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the frameworks highlighted for the research project. They were also graded for attendance and participation and for the service-learning project highlighted above.

Role-playing

Role-playing, through *interactive performance theatre* and *ethics roundtables*, was a crucial element in student learning. The two activities that will be outlined below proved to be highly instrumental in how these students investigated the topic (i.e., the extent to which there is environmental discrimination in Anchorage and Alaska), and how our libraries might help to address climate change and food insecurity equitably.

The role-playing activities were designed to provide the students with exposure to stakeholder analysis and the complexities involved in moral dilemmas around climate change and food insecurity challenging citizens of Alaska, so that they could test the effectiveness of public institutions like Alaska's libraries in responding to these challenges. The role-playing exercises helped to unearth multi-stage investigatory and learning processes, where students were challenged to think about and delineate the relationships between environmental policy and practicable and actionable policies around the state and consider the drivers that could/should influence policy reform and action by the general citizenry.

In what follows, I describe the context and the focus of the inquiry for the semester, and the design and implementation of two role-playing activities. I end with a discussion of outcomes and reflections on the methods that were employed to promote ethics inquiry and students success.

Two in-class role-play activities

Activity 1

In the sixth week of the semester, and after the students had some exposure to basic climate ethics concepts, ethical principles, and to an initial discussion of Bryan Norton's adaptive management framework, they were invited to participate in two role-playing activities, namely, interactive performance theatre and ethics roundtables. The goal of interactive performance theatre is to highlight the importance of stakeholder analysis, forms of oppression, power dynamics between actors in an epistemic and political system, and the complexities associated with climate change and food security. There are two versions of Activity 1 (re-act and time out versions) that are modeled after the "Theatre of the Oppressed".

The class period began with an introduction to central ethical issues regarding climate change facing vulnerable peoples. Students viewed a case involving climate change globally, through a video highlighting Kiribati's response to climate change, the role of the Australian government, and the generational divide (see http://www.npr.org/2011/02/16/133650679/climate-change-and-faith-collide-in-kiribati).

After viewing the video, a few students were asked to help frame the ethical issues by identifying the stakeholders involved and what they may be concerned about. They were also invited to think about the requirements of ethics in addressing this problem vis a vis two questions:

❱ What would a just response look like to climate change and food insecurity, and
❱ Would a just response necessarily be synonymous with an effective response?

Then, the class turned to a case from the home front. In Alaska, about two years ago, a 16-year-old student sued the state of Alaska for not doing enough to prevent climate change. The students watched an 8-minute video depicting how climate change is impacting his 600 person Yup'ik village of Kipnuk in western Alaska[4].

After the video presentation, students were asked to share their reflections of the basic ethical issues at stake in conjunction with a review of different ethical approaches that were reflected in the moral commitments of those in the video and what they heard from their fellow Alaskans facing climate change or food insecurity. The theories of utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, virtue ethics, feminist ethics, contractarianism were reviewed.

For the remaining class period (75-minutes in total), students engaged in their first role-play activity, i.e., scripted interactive performance theatre. This activity

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[4] See http://vimeo.com/33921321

is inspired by the Theatre of the Oppressed, developed by Brazilian director, artist and activist Augusto Boal (see Babbage, 2004) and by Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). In both theatre and pedagogy of the oppressed, participants and audience members are invited to be active "spect-actors": to explore, show, analyze and transform the reality in which they are experiencing, with particular emphasis on promoting social and political awareness and change for the least well of. Reflecting Boal and Freire, students are challenged to consider the position of those most vulnerable stakeholders who are impacted by anthropogenic climate change, who, for the most part have had only a very minor contributing role to it.

A prepared script is handed out to the students based on court documents and interviews. Student volunteers from the class were assigned roles that mimicked *Kanuk v. State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources* (Kanuk v. Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Superior Court No. 3AN-11-07474CI; Kanuk v. Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Supreme Court Case No. S-14776). There were five major actors, which included Mr. Nelson (the plaintiff from the small Yup'ik village, the State's attorney, the plaintiff's attorney, Jim Hansen - amicus curiae, and the judge (from Alaska's Superior Court). Briefly, Mr. Nelson's role is to profile what's going on in his village due to climate change, to focus on environmental mourning and cultural losses already endured, and to raise ethical questions about the future of his village and Alaska if the state does not intervene. The State's attorney's role is to challenge the legality of the suit, i.e., whether the courts or the legislature is the right venue to debate climate change and obligations to future generations. Mr. Hansen, a notable expert on climate change and proponent for more government intervention in managing climate change, provides evidence of anthropogenic climate change as part of his argument for much needed juridical action in propelling the state of Alaska to intervene. The plaintiff's attorney and judge offer reactive accounts to the other three. No judgment is rendered by the judge at the conclusion of the trial in this play (although in reality, the Superior Court of Alaska was not favorable to the plaintiff). In this role-play version, the judge merely indicates what the main issues are from where she sits and the play concludes when she has provided her delineation of these main concerns.

In the *Re-act* version (which was conducted that semester), after the script concludes, the student actors are seated in front of the class. The actors stay in character during this time. The student spectators ask questions about the positions the main characters hold, including the moral reasons for and ethical motivations behind their arguments (e.g., "In this scene you said.... Can you tell us what was going through our mind then?").

Next, the script is repeated. Students can "tag an actor" and "jump in" to substitute for the actor(s), interrupting certain scenes and thus changing the way in which the script unfolds. Students often highlight different concerns that should have been voiced or encourage the "play" to take a different trajectory. When the substitutes what to jump

in, they will call out "freeze", identify the actor they want to substitute and take the place of the actor or actors with a new line or two. This is a chance for the substitutes to highlight moral impropriety and what they take to be instances of oppression. Spectators can substitute the same character multiple times. These substitutes will re-enact the particular dialogue in the way they would like it to unfold. A brief class discussion on central themes follows when time is finally called on the rerun.

Interactive theatre performance is entertaining, fun and edifying. By assuming different roles and interacting with others in these simulated and real situations, students imagine themselves as concerned citizens and also channel how they might respond in their professional roles. Interactive performance theatre is a performance that functions to transform from spectator (one who views) to a spect-actor (one who views and is motivated to take action). Students, presented with instances of oppression seek to represent the world as it should be —"the anti-model"— when they stop the play during its rerun and take the stage to address the oppression, altering the outcome and challenging the status quo.

There is a *Time-out* version that I have used in previous classes. After the script has concluded the first time, the actors are seated and lined up in front of the classroom. Students are invited to ask the actors, initially in character, about their positions and reasons for arguments. Instead of substitutions in the second run of the play, students can ask specific actors for a "time-out" after he/she has spoken. During the time-out, the actor steps out of character and talks to the class about what he/she really thinks, e.g., if the State's attorney gave an answer about the role of the State in passing climate policies, during the time-out, the questioner may ask if that is what he/she really believes about what he or she has said and why.

After the students have exhausted the time allocated for questions, a full class discussion ensues with the instructor serving as moderator. Students are invited to return to the two original questions raised (e.g., what does ethics demand as a just response and is this synonymous with an effective response to climate change and food insecurity). They are asked if their answers have changed as a result of what they've just witnessed and participated in. Students are asked to layout a strong ethical argument defending their view and to challenge one of the premises that would cast doubt on the strength or validity of their argument. Once again, they are encouraged to take the vantage point of the least well off/most vulnerable or marginalized, to highlight issues of power and instances of institutional oppression as per Boal and Freire's work.

Students from different disciplines have a valuable range of opinions and experiences that led to rich discussions during these group exercises. Students get to comment first hand on the interplay between ethics, state and local politics, the science of climate change, cultural issues related to climate change mourning and loss and economic factors.

Outcomes from Activity 1 include:

❱ An important opportunity to highlight the perspectival nature of ethics, which enables students to consider and understand the strengths and shortcomings of ethical approaches in an interdisciplinary setting.

❱ An invitation to students to articulate and specify non-ethical realities (as much as possible from their disciplinary perspectives) that impinge on ethical deliberations and positions taken and the challenges of doing ethics as opposed to merely adopting articulated positions.

❱ Addressing difficult dialogues in a respectful and multidisciplinary setting, fully cognizant of the complexities of the case at hand. Students are able to investigate and delve deeply into different forms of institutional oppression: racism, sexism, colonialism, etc.

❱ Representation of genuine accounts of oppression through interactive performance theatre by student actors and their substitutes.

Further observations, typically reticent students have a forum from which to participate and engage the class. The students indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to acknowledge and correct their assumptions and reasoning mistakes, and to examine any ignorance, assumptions, or overgeneralizations that lurk behind them.

Activity 2

The second activity involves *Ethics Round Tables* and was scheduled for the subsequent class period. This activity is meant to introduce key aspects of sustainability, climate ethics and food security, and reinforce the place of ethics in moral deliberations about food and the environment, and once again, highlight stakeholder analysis. Here, students were organized to participate in a series of focused conversations on the nature of ethical dilemmas involving rights, conflicts of duties and interests, virtues and vices and benefits and harms, and factors that influence their ethically based preferences, such as scientific evidence, technology, law, policy, customs, culture and politics.

Students are broken up into groups of six by the instructor and informed that they will participate in three consecutive ethics roundtable conversations. In their groups, the students began by discussing a case from philosopher Peter Singer (Singer, P. 2006. Ethics and Climate Change: A Commentary on MacCracken, Toman and Gardiner, *Environmental Values* 15 (3): 415-422), involving the application of three principles of justice in deciding about fair distribution of benefits and harms involving climate change policy. Other readings were also previously assigned, including Dale Jamieson's (2007) *The Moral and Political Challenges of Climate Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, and excerpts from Stephen Gardiner's (2011) *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*, that would be addressed in later rounds.

In the roundtables, students trade places as speakers-listeners-respondents and consider Singer's analogy to the atmospheric commons in conjunction with the implications of the polluter pays principle, equal share rule and the better-off principle, respectively. Students must decide how to allocate a scare environmental resource. They are invited to consider the relationship between philosophical reflection on the principles espoused by Singer and practical action and feasibility of a strategic plan they devise as a result of their conversations. Students engage with each other, first in speak-listen-respond dyads. Then, they integrate with other members of their whole group, an opportunity for the dyads to report back to other members so that the rest of the group hears all perspectives. Ideally, each conversation builds on the previous one to deepen and expand understanding of the topics and challenges at hand. Students were given 5 minutes to speak-listen-respond in their dyads followed by an additional 10-12 minutes to brainstorm as a whole group, again modeling the speak-listen-respond format. The group decides on a note-taker to capture 3-4 salient points. He/she will eventually report back to the class.

After this conversation concludes, students return to dyads, this time they are encouraged to partner with different members of their larger group. The students are challenged to consider additional constraints related to Stephen Gardiner's Atmospheric Commons Problem. In his 2011, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*, Gardiner challenges his readers to imagine sources of moral corruption that underpin climate change policy framings as a collective action problem. These include the a) Pure Intergenerational Problem (PIP): "tyranny of the contemporary" over the future (p. 154) and "intergenerational buck-passing" (pp. 148-59), and b) Intergenerational Arms Race (IGAR): "...the current generation will have an incentive to prioritize projects and strategies that are more beneficial to it over those that seem best from an intergenerational point of view" (p. 200).

A larger group discussion ensues followed by note-taking again of 3-4 salient points.

Next, and for the final time, students reconvene in their dyads. They are invited to consider additional features surrounding obligations to future generations. The class focuses on Jamieson's discussion of "moral harm" and its relationship to political will, diffusion of responsibility and psychic numbing. In his 2007, *The Moral and Political Challenges of Climate Change*, Jamieson argues that our understanding of harm to others influences our view of our moral responsibility towards them in climate change debates. The enormity of climate change often results in a moral psychology of denial by many the world over. Jamieson challenges readers to consider the implications of our popular conceptions of moral harm and responsibility vis a vis intellectual, physical, emotional, temporal distance through the following scenarios:

❯ Example 1: Peter steals Anne's bike on purpose: There is an identifiable perpetrator (with the intention to steal); an identifiable victim and effect.

❱ Example 2: Peter is part of group, where he does not know the others and
—independently of each other— They each take a part of Anne´s bike with
the result that the bike disappears.
❱ Example 3: Peter takes a small part of a bike from a large group of bikes. One
of these belongs to Anne.
❱ Example 4: Peter and Anne live on different continents and the loss of Anne's
bike is the result of a long causal chain beginning with Peter ordering a second
hand bike in a shop near his home.
❱ Example 5: Peter lives centuries before Anne and is consuming materials
vital to bike production. As a consequence of this Anne will not be able to
get a bike.
❱ Example 6: Independently of each other Peter and a large group of people
that do not know each other, start a chain of events that leads to that in
the future a lot of people in another part of the world will never have
a bike.

Students engage as a larger group of six one final time and note-takers record 3-4
salient points.

After the third ethics round table conversation concludes, students report back to
the whole class via their note-takers. They are asked to share their 3-4 salient points
and then to consider if their positions on harm, moral responsibility and obligations
to future generations had changed and what persuaded them to change. They are
also asked how they might structure their investigation of the two main questions
for the course:

❱ How can we ensure that equity, fairness, and justice guide the policy decisions
we make with respect to climate change?
❱ How well are Alaska's public systems of knowledge transfer (e.g., libraries)
promoting equity? How can we do better?

At the end of the exercise I ask the students to reflect on:

❱ A caption by Henry Shue (2005, p. 279) and what the future will think about
us: "They were not for the most part evil people... but they were simply preoc-
cupied with their own comfort and convenience, not very imaginative about
human history over the long run, and not particularly sensitive to the plight
of strangers distant in time".
❱ The Brundtland Report's (1987) view of sustainable development and its capa-
city to move Alaska closer to being a more resilient community in the face of
climate change (i.e., how it might inform opportunities and signal limitations
in existing strategies and policies): "Meeting the needs of the present gene-
ration without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their
own needs".

Students are required to provide short responses to these queries via on-line discussion postings on Blackboard and to give feedback to the two role-play activities, the choice of readings and the arguments that they heard and tried to marshal. Students are also required to share the discussion points from these roundtables on Blackboard. Feedback prompts include (inspired by Brookfield and Preskill, 2005):

❱ What is the most contentious statement you heard?
❱ What is the most important point that was made?
❱ What question would you like to have answered regarding any of the arguments that were raised that we did not get to?
❱ What is the most unsupported assertion you've heard during our discussions?
❱ Of all the ideas and points you've heard which is still obscure or ambiguous to you?
❱ At what moment during the activity were you most engaged as a learner?
❱ What action or comment did someone in the class take or make (respectively) that you found most affirming or helpful?
❱ Were the other media items like brief interviews and documentaries helpful in your understanding of the issues and concepts?
❱ How would you assess the quality of the group work of which you were a part?

Ethics roundtables mirror mini-cases and excite students to reflect on real world problems, employ analytic tools and philosophical concepts, develop analyses, and present solutions to stakeholders who may or may not share their philosophical orientations (Olien and Harper, 1994). This activity introduced ideas and methods for case study development and helped students lay the groundwork for their equity reports. This activity also seemed essential in reinforcing basic concepts and exploring different perspectives and frameworks in depth. IT also sparked the integration of research methods in environmental philosophy with the students' own disciplines.

Outcomes from this second activity include:

❱ An appreciation for the intractable nature of climate change dilemmas and the special interface between science and ethics in solving problems and pursuing research questions.
❱ Peer evaluation of the concrete solutions posed by students to the complex problem of climate change.

Discussion: reflections and observations

PHIL/ENVI 303 exposes students to systems thinking, stakeholder analysis and invites them to consider the inextricable linkages between ethical commitments in the private and public spheres and ecological, economic and social systems. This course is a highly recommended offering for UAA's Environment and Society majors and

ethics inclined majors. With the help of funds from three grants (named below), I was able to redesign how I typically would teach it. That semester, I was able to challenge students to revisit their intuitions about the nature of sustainability and agricultural and environmental policy in a time of global food insecurity and climate change. Through subject-matter and pedagogical innovations the students journeyed with me as we paired scholarly inquiry with new student learning techniques.

❱ The opportunity to transform pedagogy and content delivery meant that I could explore a different set of instructional goals. The instructional goals for the course that semester included providing:

❱ Techniques for critical thinking in philosophical and ethical reasoning

❱ Instruction and evaluation of leading ethical theories and approaches, and their application to contemporary moral issues that concern the environment

❱ Learning opportunities for effective communication and engaged learning, with a view towards collaborative research and developing research skills and capacity to organize and facilitate two research driven public symposiums.

❱ Opportunities to draw connections and integrate content with other disciplines particularly environmental science, psychology, political science, and public policy.

These instructional goals support broader teaching objectives designed to help students learn about different ethical approaches and to develop better discursive and deliberation skills that they can employ in a value plural and democratic context. In conjunction with the service learning component of this course and UAA's mission as Public Square, I adopted more role-playing since it facilitates greater moral sensitivity (the ability to recognize morally relevant features or problems); promotes more discerning moral judgment (the ability to reason well and apply moral approaches); enhances moral motivation (the capacity to chose to behave morally and act on principle); and inculcates moral character (the ability to follow through with a moral decision based on one's conviction) (Rest, 1986).

In Alaska, and I suspect elsewhere, there is a societal expectation that ethical integrity be part of a university graduate's resume. Moral sensitivity, adeptness in moral decision-making, and knowledge of and competency in ethics makes for a more competitive graduate, especially when ethical skills in the classroom are tailored towards professional duties and citizenship virtues and if they encourage the propensity for life long learning. Role-playing, was a crucial element in the students' learning that semester since it promoted new learning pathways that accentuated the importance of deliberative ethics for civic participation and as a feature of the students' future professional life.

Many UAA students will live and work in Alaska and engage with Alaska's diverse population. UAA students expect that their upper division course will help them

prepare for the real world. Apart from providing key concepts and knowledge of subject matter, applied ethics courses should also expose them to different types of issues and challenges they will face in a complex and competitive climate of ideas. Critical thinking and deliberative ethics skills become highly valued for they help the students come to terms with their own personal virtues and place own values in the context of their professions and reflect on potential conflicts and ways to judiciously argue through them. Students who acquire these skills tend to feel enthusiastic about their competency in ethics and empowered throughout their professional lives.

Problem-based training, service learning and role-playing are central to learning, offering students the opportunity to research specific problems through different vantage points and to develop practical and meaningful recommendations for public consumption (Salvador *et al.*, 1995). Role-playing can help students, either as individuals or as members of a community, learn more effective communication modalities which will be helpful when they eventually engage with different publics in their professional lives (Fletcher and Branen, 1993). Through these role-playing exercises, students have more natural and authentic forums for integrating discussions, textual material and ethics concepts, thus resulting in better mastery of philosophy and command of their own arguments. Students demonstrate better listening and critical thinking skills, since they have to think on their feet and receive instantaneous peer feedback and evaluation. Quiet and shy students and those not typically accustomed to talking in class cast their reservations and inhibitions aside. They are more comfortable sharing their personal views and preferences after a safe atmosphere has been established through role-playing activities. Students tend to be freer to express their real and reasoned views when they have embodied the discursive skills necessary to participate in ethical discussions they may encounter on a daily basis. These qualities will be invaluable when they have to interact with the public in their professional lives.

Early on in the process, the students modeled best practices for ethical engagement. They quickly developed a class code of conduct, a set of expectations for respectful engagement with each other. This code of conduct helped them to shape the learning community and pacify the unsettling nature of peer-to-peer evaluation and confrontation. The research topics on climate change and food security are imbued with diversity of perspectives that at times can occasion turbulent discourses. Role-playing can open up a panoply of emotions, e.g., doubt, anxiety, passion, excitement, hope, that instructors and students may not always be ready for. Interactive performance theatre and ethics roundtables encourage students to experiment with deliberative processes in a safe place (either through pretending cum acting or the cover of an academic thought experiment). That semester, students persisted in focusing on pressing concerns, how to confront them, and how to initiate change that would motivate themselves as individuals

and their communities toward equity and sustainability. They discovered, while enhancing their awareness of local and global issues (especially towards typically disenfranchised populations), the benefits of promoting healthy discourse communities around complex issues. They have a new awareness of and appreciation for their civic responsibilities in promoting vibrant and balanced ethical discussions in their immediate sphere of influence.

While it is important to assess new research and pedagogical methods tools and to evaluate role-playing as a participatory research methods more comprehensively, it seemed to me that the role-playing and service-learning activities and "conscripting" the class to embark on a research project, had a positive impact on student achievement with respect to meeting the learning goals associated with engaging and doing ethics this way as opposed to merely studying it. I end by giving a couple to three of my PHIL/ENVI students from Spring 2012 the last word:

> Hey Dr. Anthony,
> Thank you for a very enlightening and exciting semester. I just wanted to take the time to thank you for a very enlightening and fun semester! I had a great time exploring the world of ethics and I appreciate the challenge in the different ways of thinking. Thank you, DA.

> Thanks for a fun and interesting semester, I definitely learned a lot of things I can take to work with me and apply. S.

> The class will remain among the most enriching and inspiring I have taken in my college career. I sincerely would like to see our case study/equity report be taken into reality in the future and feel motivated to do so. New paths have been made clear to follow through my participation in the Environmental Ethics class. SS.

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