

## Study Guide for Environmental Philosophy (Spring 2018)

### — Exam 2: Non-Human Animals, Biodiversity, Valuing Nature, and Economics —

In preparing your answers for these questions, remember that **I'm not interested in uninformed opinions**. Please develop your answers in the context of the readings, based on arguments and evidence. The exam will involve a set of essay questions (perhaps six or so) drawn from the following questions (in some combination or other, and probably not *verbatim*). You will need to write just **three essays** and may use **one sheet of notes** (both sides) to help you in writing these. The more you incorporate ideas, arguments, and facts from the readings, the stronger your essays. Study collectively but **prepare your own sheet of notes**.

#### Non-Human Animals

1. What is moral standing? What is moral significance? How are these determined? Sentience is often listed as a morally relevant property that confers moral standing; what is sentience? Are there other morally relevant properties?
2. What is the difference between a moral agent and a moral patient? Why is this difference important?
3. What is speciesism, and what role has this concept played in the animal rights discussions? How might one argue for or against speciesism?
4. Be able to compare and contrast Singer and Regan on the moral standing of non-human animals.
5. Why does Regan find fault with “contractarian” moral theories and with utilitarianism?
6. What are “marginal human beings” and what is the relevance of this group of beings for this discussion of the rights (or moral status) of non-human animals?
7. What are Warren’s criticisms of Regan’s view? Do you agree or disagree with her? Be able to describe what she calls “the strong animal rights position” and “the weak animal rights position.”
8. Be able to discuss some of the human activities that affect non-human animals. Which activities affect the greatest number of animals? Which do you find most questionable regarding moral permissibility? Why?

#### Species, Biodiversity, and Valuing Nature

9. What is biodiversity and why is it important?
10. What is a species? Be able to discuss the past mass extinction events? About how long does it take before the previous level of biodiversity is re-established? How do the extinction rates of the past compare with the current extinction rate?
11. How does Russow explain the extra value we give to endangered species? Does this commit us to speciesism?
12. Christopher Stone claims we should grant legal rights to natural objects like trees. What does he have in mind here? What does it mean to “have a right”?
13. Is the conferral of rights to natural objects just a further step in the moral progress that Stone recounts at the beginning of his essay? What do you think?
14. What are the advantages of conferring rights to natural objects? Do you see any problems with Stone’s proposal?

#### Economics and the Environment

15. What is the basic problem that economics is trying to solve? Classical economic theory assumes that human preferences are substitutable and unlimited. Discuss each of these assumptions.
16. What is an externality and how are these relevant to environmental policy?
17. What is a cost-benefit analysis (CBA)? Is CBA an appropriate tool for developing policies for the environment or workplace safety? How does it compare with a cost effectiveness analysis (CEA)?
18. What does Baxter mean by “an optimal level of pollution”?
19. Describe and evaluate Sagoff’s distinction between the citizen and the consumer. What value theories lie behind each of these roles? How might we overcome this conflict between the citizen and the consumer?
20. Roderick Nash wrote that wilderness is “just a state of mind.” What implications does Krieger draw from this understanding of wilderness?
21. What’s wrong with plastic trees? Be able to discuss Krieger’s claim that “our ability to manipulate preferences and values tends to lead to systems that make no sense.”