

Climate Change Ethics (Summer 2017)

It is a common sentiment in today's society that faith in the broad scientific consensus concerning climate change incontrovertibly favors the adoption of strong climate change abatement policies. In philosophical discourse, this sentiment is often supported with the idea that the potentially disastrous impact of climate change demands special precaution. Next, it is often argued that rich nations such as the United States ought to bear most of the expenses. In this course, we will try to understand and scrutinize these arguments. In doing so we will put special emphasis on the following questions: Does future harm have less moral significance than present harm? Should the expenses be distributed according to the "polluter pays" principle? (To what extent) should expert disagreement within science affect policy making? How do shared responsibilities relate to individual responsibilities?

Readings

Part I – Climate Science

Emanuel – *Climate change and climate risk: a primer*
IPCC report (summary for policy makers)

Part II – Worst Case Scenarios

Stern – *Ely lecture*
Gardiner – *A perfect moral storm*

Part III – Precautionary Principle

Shue – *Deadly delays, saving opportunities*
Sunstein – *Laws of fear*, chapter 1 & 2

Part IV – Valuing Lives

Sunstein – *Laws of fear*, chapter 2 & 6
Broome – *Life and death*

Part V – Discounting

Heath – *Climate policy: justifying a positive social time preference*
Parfit – *Energy policy and the further future: the social discount rate*
Moller – *Should we let people starve – for now?*

Part VI – Disagreement

Lindzen – *Petition to Trump to leave the Paris climate accord*
MIT faculty reply to Lindzen's petition
Christensen – *Disagreement as evidence*

Part VII – Tragedy of the commons

Hardin – *Tragedy of the commons*

Part VIII – Responsibilities and policy

Singer – *One atmosphere*

Singer – *Is the Paris accord unfair to America?*

Posner & Weisbach – *Climate change justice*, chapter 2 – 5

Frisch – *Climate change justice*