



**S F S**

THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# Environmental Ethics & Development SFS 3820

## Syllabus

The School for Field Studies (SFS)  
Center for Sustainable Development Studies (CSDS)  
Atenas, Costa Rica

This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.

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## **COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

***Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.***

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that they may present. In other words, the elephants are not always where we want them to be, so be flexible!

## Course Overview

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Linking environmental justice to sustainability is an emerging field that combines the important dimensions of economic and social rights with the environmental underpinnings of sustainability. There are few places as well suited to examine the intersection of these rights and the environment as Costa Rica, which is home to the InterAmerican Court of Human Rights and a national political system that has fostered strong environmental protection policies. Although Costa Rican development efforts have improved many lives, areas of unregulated growth have created obstacles to political participation and limited access to livelihoods for marginalized groups and rural communities.

The foundation for ending such inequality is an examination of rights and their application, from the most fundamental, such as the right to life among and between species, to more contested guarantees like that of clean water. In this course, we will investigate fundamental questions like: what duty do we have to protect the biodiversity of the planet for future generations? What rights of use do indigenous people have to protected land in their territories? What duty does the government have to keep people safe from agrochemicals? How do our consumption choices impact those at the site of production and how can we change our consumption and travel habits to be more sustainable?

A main objective of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals is to shift from compartmentalized conceptualization to learning and implementing development solutions that focus on integrated solutions. In this course we will use a multidisciplinary methodology, including ecology, economics, sociology and law, to consider how social policy and poverty, demographic change, development funding, agriculture, indigenous rights and climate change fit within the matrix of sustainable development.

These issues are then brought to life in the Costa Rica context through field labs, site visits and local research. Meeting with park rangers, farmers, and other specialists is essential to course objective of forming a complete understanding of rights and development issues first hand. On-site studies of tourism's impacts, waste reduction strategies and community participation in creating multifunctional green spaces are key to conceptualizing solutions that balance development needs. Fieldwork will incorporate socioeconomic principles with scientific methodology, in order to gather and analyze feedback from various stakeholders on issues ranging from tourism impacts to responses to climate change. Class and fieldwork are designed to enhance students' understanding of the challenges and opportunities prompted by developing in a more sustainable manner within the Costa Rican context.

## Learning Objectives

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The core skills students will learn in this course are critical thinking and analysis, field techniques, communication skills as well as collaboration and time management. The specific objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To become acquainted with concepts and methods of ethics that apply to issues regarding development, public policy making, environmental laws, public attitudes regarding humankind's dealings with the natural world.
2. To critically analyze the complexities in environmental issues, including the responsibility to future generations, the problem of moral standing of human and non-human species,

sustainability regarding human development, global environmental challenges, and environmental justice.

3. To examine stakeholders and events in the historical development of Costa Rica and how they impact present day development strategies and rights protection.
4. To critically assess alternative approaches to a code of responsibility to nature (i.e., an environmental ethic). To differentiate sustainable and non-sustainable practices in agriculture including social and environmental effects.
5. To identify the socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism at the individual and community level and use data to recommend effective means of facilitating sustainable tourism.
6. To compare the development and protection of related rights in Costa Rica with the Panama situation on an extended field trip.
7. To formulate your own environmental ethic and to articulate and defend these ideas with clarity and consistency.

All trips, discussions, materials, movies and readings are part of the course so please come prepared to enjoy *and* learn throughout the program! You will learn and develop experimental design, interviewing techniques, basic descriptive statistics, proposal writing and communication skills.

## Assessment

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We expect active participation in all aspects of the course, including discussions and analysis of the assigned readings, to the review of literature, classes and fieldwork. Part of the course experience is a group effort; others represent your individual work.

Student performance in this course will be evaluated based on the assessment items and their proportional weight to your final grade described below.

Assessment Item	Value (%)
Field Lab (FLAB)	15
Field Exercise (FEX)	20
Midterm Exam	20
Final Exam	20
Sustainable Solutions Assignment	15
Participation and Reflections	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

**Field Lab (FLAB) (15%):** Creation of urban/nature interactions: The municipal counsel of Ciudad Colon, a small town to the west of San Jose, has approved the creation of a park along the town's main river. The objective of the project is to create multiuse green spaces that encourage strengthened connections between community members and the environment. We will partner with A-01, the sustainable design firm that is planning the park, to gather data from community members to inform the design and functions of the park. Using surveying techniques, students will collect information on community-identified public facility gaps and how park spaces could be organized to meet their needs. The river park will also include waste and bio filtration systems so we will map solid waste contamination sights along the river to evaluate improvements over time. This baseline data can be used to compare community satisfaction with services and water quality improvements longitudinally. This lab aims to facilitate the incorporation of community ideas in this innovative sustainable urban development project.

**Field Exercise (FEX): SWOT Analysis of Panamanian Indigenous Tourism (20%):** For the SWOT analysis project students will evaluate a policy, business, or tourist practice experienced on our visit to a Ngobe village near Boquete, Panama. This exercise is designed to understand and evaluate sustainability of tourism practices in relation to their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). Data collection methods will include observations, field lectures and conversations with stakeholders. The objective is to identify and analyze an aspect of the indigenous tourism experience to assess the potential positive and negative cultural, social, economic impacts. Students will make recommendations on how stakeholders, surrounding communities and the government can facilitate more positive outcomes of indigenous tourism offerings. The project offers students the chance to think critically about the impacts of indigenous tourism in the context of educational tourism. Another objective is to develop new skills they can be used in environmental and community evaluation more generally and can be applied to future directed research projects.

**Sustainable Solutions Community Project (15%):** This activity highlights the application of intersecting social and environmental sustainability concepts covered in the course. Will we work with one of our community partners to assisting in ongoing efforts to collect and analyze data on community initiatives to improve environmental health including eliminating plastic use by local business and improve water quality and river health. Final group projects will include analysis of data collecting in the field as well as sharing ideas and suggestions will stakeholders.

**Midterm Exam (20%):** The examination will be based on material covered in lectures, discussions, readings, and field experiences. A review and a chance to ask clarifying questions will be scheduled before the exam.

**Final Exam (20%):** The examination will be an assessment of material covered over the duration of the course, with an emphasis on that taught in the second half. Another review session will be held before the final exam.

**Participation (10%):** A student’s ability to synthesize and share ideas is critical to the individual and classroom learning process. Participation in class and a general high contribution to group learning is expected at SFS. One’s ability to be a strong member of a learning community will enhance the grade assigned at the end of the program. Evaluation will reflect your actual contribution to the analyses, not simply the amount of time you talk. Thus, making thoughtful contributions that build upon topics of discussion are an important element of participation. Participation will also include brief, written reflections on readings and effective leadership of one class reading discussion during the semester.

Grade corrections of any of the above items should be requested in writing or person within 24 hours after assignments are returned. Corrections will not be considered afterwards.

## Grading Scheme

A	95.00 – 100.00%	B+	86.00 – 89.99%	C+	76.00 – 79.99%	D	60.00 – 69.99%
A-	90.00 – 94.99%	B	83.00 – 85.99%	C	73.00 – 75.99%	F	0.00 – 59.99%
		B-	80.00 – 82.99%	C-	70.00 - 72.99%		

## General Reminders

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### Class courtesies:

- Arrive to class on time.
- Come to class ready to participate.
- Do not use computers or other electronic devices for reasons other than note taking. If internet access is too great of a temptation, do not bring devices and computers to class.
- If you cannot come to a class due to illness or other serious issues, email or check with professor to find out what you have missed.

**Readings:** Assigned readings will be provided in a packet before the course begins. It is important that you read all materials before class, since the volume of the material in the class requires a brisk pace. You are expected to have read all of the assigned articles. In each class, two students will lead the group by highlighting important concepts and raising relevant questions for the group to consider and discuss.

**Plagiarism and Cheating:** Using ideas and materials of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. A grade of zero will be assigned to anyone caught cheating or aiding another person to cheat, either actively or passively (e.g., allowing someone to look at your exam). Unless specifically stated otherwise, all assignments should be individual pieces of work.

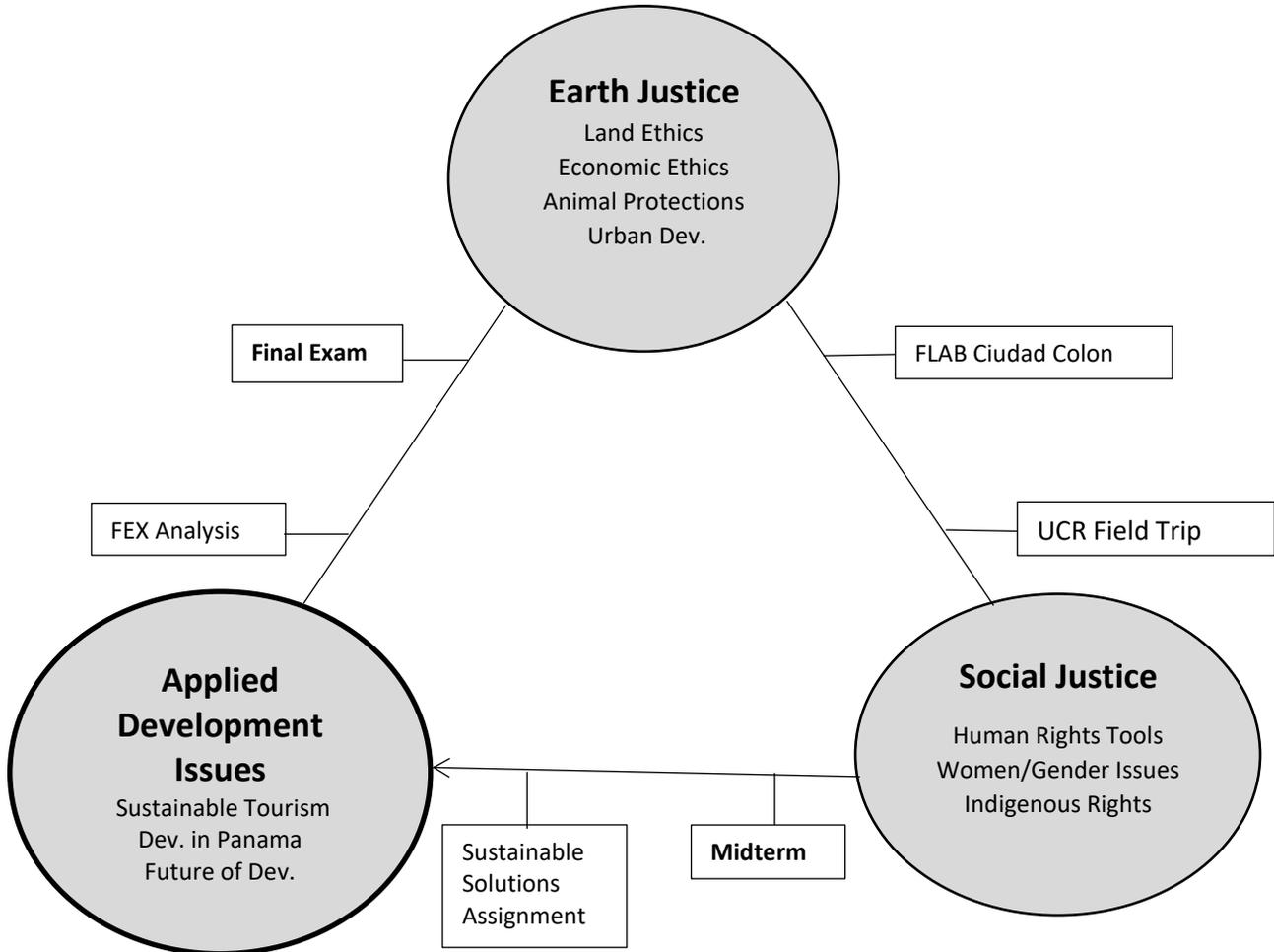
**Appropriate use of technology:** SFS has worked hard to provide internet access to all its staff and students. Inappropriate uses include gaming or excessive video/music downloading and use for non-academic purposes during class. Inappropriate use will result in the loss of this privilege.

### Deadlines:

Activities and assignments are closely and carefully scheduled due to the pace of the program. Since students must not fall behind, deadlines are *firm* and extensions will only be considered under the most extreme circumstances. Late assignments will incur a 10% penalty for every day that they are late. This means an assignment that is a day late will have 10% removed. If an assignment is more than three days late it will receive a grade of zero.

**Course Schedule Diagram**

Introduction – Costa Rica culture & the pursuit of sustainable development



## Course Content

**Key-** L: Lecture, **FL:** Field Lecture, **FEX:** Field Experiment, **D:** Discussion, **GL:** Guest Lecture, **O:** Orientation/Context information, **FLAB:** Field Lab, **LAB:** Lab, workshop

Title and Objective	Time (hrs.)	Type	Required Readings
<p><b>Manu/El Progreso Farm/ Dole</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable farming practices and challenges</li> <li>Social and env. impacts of multinational banana production.</li> </ul>	2	FT	
<p><b>Course introduction: Environmental Ethics and Sustainability</b> Costa Rican culture &amp; the pursuit of sustainable development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental ethics and social justice.</li> <li>Costa Rican social system and development</li> <li>Costa Rica's main social and env. dev. issues</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: What factors have advanced and limited Costa Rica's sustainable development model?</p>	2	L	- Sada, The Curious Case of Costa Rica.
<p><b>Land Ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influence of modern values on ecology</li> <li>Worth vs value of land</li> <li>Outcome of conflicting views on dominance over and integration within ecological systems</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: What historical, cultural and religious world views have influenced our worldview? What are the outcomes of those influences?</p>	2		- White, L. The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis.
<p><b>The social and environmental impacts of agriculture production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tragedy of the commons</li> <li>Right to a clean and safe environment</li> <li>Peripheral production for core consumers</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: How can we meet the humans' needs while reducing environmental harm?</p>	1.5	L/D	- Shiva, Shiva: Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest. - Film: Luxury at what Cost: Pineapple Production in C.R.
<b>Monteverde Field Trip</b>	4	D	

Title and Objective	Time (hrs.)	Type	Required Readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism waste production and local solutions</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Externalities &amp; Community Responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply &amp; demand</li> <li>Externalities</li> <li>Holding businesses responsible</li> <li>Values of consumerism</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: How do we fairly measure an assign accountability to externalities of production? What are the best ways to reduce those externalities?</p>	1.5		Braungart & McDonough, Cradle to Cradle Film: The True Cost
<p><b>Protection of wild spaces and animals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation vs. preservation</li> <li>Aims of Costa Rican's protected areas</li> <li>Animal rights and protection in Costa Rica</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: Do non-human animals have rights &amp; if so, what rights should those be?</p>	2	L/D	- Singer, All Animals Are Equal. - Daniel, Costa Rica's Hunting Ban.
<p><b>Sustainable urban development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight issues &amp; plans in San Jose metro area and Pacacua River Urban Park</li> <li>Schedule and plan for field trip</li> </ul>	.5		
<p><b>Pacacua River Urban Park Field Trip: Creation of urban/nature interactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather data on community members' perception/ use of river plus desired env. &amp; community spaces</li> </ul>	4	FT	
<p><b>Human Rights and environmental justice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International Human Rights instruments and courts</li> <li>The role of human rights in env. justice movements &amp; implications in Costa Rica.</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: What tools are available to fight social and environmental injustice?</p>	1.5		B. Levy, et al., Climate Change, Human Rights and Social Justice J. Knox, Climate Change & Human Rights Law

Title and Objective	Time (hrs.)	Type	Required Readings
<p><b>Food production, population &amp; GMOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social implications of food choices</li> <li>• Costa Rica’s production history and choices</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: What role should GMOs play in meeting the nutritional needs of a growing population?</p>	1.5	L/D	- L. Fendt “Following court ruling, anti-GMO activists ask for map of transgenic farms.”
<p><b>UCR Field Trip</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field trip to UCR – Lecture on urban habitats</li> </ul> <p>Walking tour of San Jose, urban development</p>	4	FT/GL	
<p><b>Women and gender in development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of gender in colonialism and development</li> <li>• Genders perceptions of work and care</li> <li>• National and regional protection mechanisms</li> <li>• Gender roles in C.R., past and present</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: How do historical gender expectations influence society and specifically environmental sciences?</p>	1.5	L/D	- Patel & Moore, “Cheap Care”. - Anders, Women’s Development: Costa Rica Continues to Fall Short Says UN
<p><b>Indigenous rights and contributions to environmental protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous cultures in Costa Rica</li> <li>• Concepts of nature and identity</li> <li>• Conservation objectives and indigenous people’s roll in land management</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: How can indigenous people protect their lands and cultures within existing frameworks?</p>	2	L/D	- McPhual, Costa Rica Struggles with Indigenous Land Rights - Sylvester, O. et al. The Protection of Forest Biodiversity can Conflict with Food Access for Indigenous People.
<p><b>Sustainable community solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss community sustainability initiatives</li> </ul> <p>*Meet w/ professor about sustainable solution project if needed</p>	2.5		

Title and Objective	Time (hrs.)	Type	Required Readings
<b>Sustainable solutions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection</li> <li>• Discuss community sustainability initiatives</li> <li>• Continue to work on assignment</li> </ul>	2.5		
<b>Review March 4</b> <b>Exam March 7</b>	2		
<b>Tourism as a development tool</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism</li> <li>• Objectification of the <i>other</i> or cross-cultural learning?</li> <li>• Sustainable Tourism Certifications</li> <li>• Community participation in tourism</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: Can tourism be economically, socially and culturally sustainable?</p>	1.5	L/D	- Honey, "Costa Rica: On the Beaten Path" in <i>Ecotourism and Sustainable Development</i> .
<b>Regenerative tourism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing new places while spurring positive impacts</li> <li>• Movie: The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg</li> </ul>	1.5	L/D	Smith, Transforming Travel: Realising the Potential of Sustainable Tourism, Introduction
<b>Sustainability and environmental ethics in Panama</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical influence on economic development</li> <li>• Environmental policies and development</li> <li>• Environmental and social impacts of tourism</li> </ul> <p>Ethical Issue: What are the benefits and challenges tourism for various social groups?</p>	2	L/D	THEODOSSOPOULOS, Tourists and Indigenous Culture as Resources: Lessons from Embera Cultural Tourism in Panama
<b>Extended field trip to Panama</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FEX on willingness to pay, sustainable tourism in Panama City</li> <li>• Lectures and discussion on development and social rights in Panama</li> </ul>	13	FT	

Title and Objective	Time (hrs.)	Type	Required Readings
<b>Panama Sustainable Tourism FEX</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignment explanation and data analysis</li> </ul>	1		
<b>Toledo Organic Coffee Farm Field Trip</b> Challenges and benefits of organic production	2	FT	
<b>Future of development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class reflection on a sustainable future</li> </ul> Core questions: What does a sustainable future look like to you? What are the opportunities and limitations in that vision?	1	D	- Friedman, Dancing in a Hurricane
<b>Review – April 4</b> Exam – April 6	2		
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>61</b>		

## Reading List

Anders, W., Women's Development: Costa Rica Continues to Fall Short, UN Says, Costa Rica Star, March 24, 2017.

Batz, A., Climate Change and individual duties to reduce GHG emissions. *Ethics, Policy and Environmental*, 17(1), 1-19.

Daniel, A., Costa Rica's Hunting Ban. NOVA, Sept., 2013.

Fendt, L., "Following court ruling, anti-GMO activists ask for map of transgenic farms." *Tico Times*, Sept. 16, 2014.

Friedman, T., Dancing in a Hurricane, *New York Times*, Nov. 19, 2016.

Honey, M., "Off the Beaten Path" from Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?, Island Press, 2008.

Knox, J. Climate Change & Human Rights Law, available at <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/climate-change-and-human-rights-law-where-we-are-now>.

Levy, B. et al., Climate Change, Human Rights and Social Justice, *Annals of Global Health*, VOL. 81, NO. 3, 2015.

McDonough, W., & Braungart, M. *Cradle to cradle: Remaking the way we make things*, London: Vintage, 2009.

McPhual, J., "Costa Rica Struggles with Indigenous Land Rights", *Tico Times*, Dec. 7. 2015.

Purdy, J., Our place in the world: A new relationship for environmental ethics and law. *Duke Law Journal*, 62(4), 857-932.

Patel, R. and J. Moore, *The History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*, Univ. of California Press, 2017.

Sada, M.J., The Curious Case of Costa Rica, *Harvard International Review*, Sept. 17, 2015.

Shiva, V., "Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest", *Yes! Magazine*, Dec., 2012.

Singer, P., All Animals Are Equal. *Philosophical Exchange* 1, (1974), 103-116.

Smith, *Transforming Travel: Realising the Potential of Sustainable Tourism*, CABI Press, 2018.

Sylvester, O., et al. The Protection of Forest Biodiversity can Conflict with Food Access for Indigenous People, *Conservation and Society* 14(3): 279-290 2016.

Theodossopoulos, D., Tourists and Indigenous Culture as Resources: Lessons from Embera Cultural Tourism in Panama, In: Carrier, James and Macleod, Donald, eds. *Tourism, Power and Culture: Anthropological Insights. Tourism and Cultural Change*, Channel View, Bristol, pp. 115-133.

White, L., Historical Roots of Ecological Crisis, in *Environmental Ethics*, Ed. Schmitz and Willott, 2002.

### **Recommended Readings:**

Banerjee, J and E. Duflo. *Poor Economics*, Chapter 1, 2011.

Colbert, E. "A Reporter's Field Notes on the Coverage of Climate Change", *The Yale Environment* 360, March 11, 2009.

Hardin, G. The Tragedy of the Commons, *Science*, Vol. 162, No. 3859 (13 December 1968), pp. 1243-1248.

Hawken, P. *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2017.

Klein, N. *No is Not Enough*, Chapter 4, *The Climate Clock Strikes Midnight*, 2017.

Koepfel, D. *Banana: The Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World*. Hudson Street Press, 2008.

Klytchnikova, I, and P. Dorosh. How tourism can (and does) benefit the poor and the environment - a case study from Panama, (2009), World Bank.

MacLennan, M. and Perch, L., Environmental justice in Latin America and the Caribbean: Legal empowerment of the poor in the context of climate change, *Climate Law* 3, 283-309, 2012.

National Academy of Sciences, "Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change", 2010.

Paterson, B. Ethics for Wildlife Conservation: Overcoming the Human–Nature Dualism, *BioScience*, Volume 56, Issue 2, 1 February 2006, Pages 144–150.

Pollen, M. *The Botany of Desire*, Chapter 4 Potato, Random House, 2002.

Sachs, J. *The Age of Sustainable Development*, Colombia Press, 2015, Chapters 1 and 2

Schmidtz, D. and Willcott, E., *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

Sen, A. “Development as Capacity Expansion”, *Readings in Human Developments*, 2003.

Van Tassell, D. The Paradox of Ecotourism in Costa Rica: Can Economic Development and Environmental Preservation Co-Exist?, *Development Review of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 2 December 30, 2006.

Vendermeer, J. and Ivette Perfecto, *Breakfast of Biodiversity: The Political Ecology of Rain Forest Destruction*, Chapter 11, 2013.

Weisman, A. *Countdown*. Little, Brown and Company, 2013.

Wise, S. Animal Rights, Animal Wrongs: The Case for Nonhuman Personhood, *Foreign Affairs*, April 28, 2015.