Moral Responsibility in the Climate Crisis

Room F 003, Tuesdays, 10.15 – 12am
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Course Description

Human-made climate change raises a number of difficult moral issues. One such issue concerns moral responsibility: Who is responsible for climate change? Who causes it? Who can prevent or mitigate it? And whose obligation is it to do so?

These questions can be raised on an individual as well as a collective level. What should individuals (like me and you) do in the face of a looming climate catastrophe? Do we have an obligation to reduce our personal greenhouse gas emissions? Do we have an obligation to engage in climate activism? What about collective agents such as nation states and corporations? What are their obligations in the climate crisis?

This seminar will focus on the relation between individual and collective moral responsibility and obligation in the climate crisis. We will read and discuss recent papers on this topic.

Course Requirements

Attendance

- Please do not miss more than two sessions!
- Additional absences can be compensated by sending me discussion questions on the required reading.

Term Paper

- You will need to write a **term paper of about 8000 words** on a topic (loosely) related to the course's topic.
- You can choose the topic yourself. Please discuss the choice of topic with me before starting to write! If you need help finding a topic, we can consider together.
- I strongly advise to finish the paper before the start of next term (18/09/2023)!

Preliminary Schedule

1	21/02	Introduction
		Topic I: Individual GHG Emissions
2	28/02	Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (2005): It's Not My Fault. Climate Change and Individual Duties
3	07/03	Anne Schwenkenbecher (2014): Is there an obligation to reduce one's individual carbon footprint?
5	21/03	Christian Baatz and Lieske Voget-Kleschin (2019): Individuals' Contributions. The Fair Share Argument Restated
4	14/03	Melany Banks (2013): Individual Responsibility for Climate Change
	28/03	Adriana Placani and Stearns Broadhead (2022): Moral Dimensions of Offsetting Luxury Emissions
7	04/04	TBA
		Topic II: Activism
8	18/04	Monica Aufrecht (2011): Climate Change and Structural Emissions. Moral Obligations at the Individual Level
9	25/04	John Lemons and Donald Brown (2011): Global Climate Change and Non-Violent Civil Disobedience
10	02/05	Dan Boscov-Ellen (2020): A Responsibility to Revolt? Climate Ethics in the Real World
11	09/05	Eugene Chislenko (2022): The Role of Philosophers in Climate Change
		Topic III: Responsibility of Collectives
12	16/05	Tracy Isaacs (2017): Responsibility, Obligation, and Climate Change

13	23/05	Henry Shue (2015): Historical Responsibility, Harm Prohibition, and Preservation Requirement: Core Practical Convergence on Climate Change
14	30/05	Anne Schwenkenbecher (2018): Why Business Firms Have Moral Obligations to Mitigate Climate Change

All papers are available on ILIAS: http://ilias.unibe.ch/ksl/481976-FS2023-0