

# Ethical positions



Ethical positions are most often phrased as questions asking how we, as humans, relate to other humans individually, to other humans as groups, to other humans still to be born, to other forms of life and/or to entire sets ranging from ecosystems to the entire planet. Questions as to humans' relations with nature are often raised as well as the relationship between technology and progress - for example, are gains from technological innovations mainly accrued by the wealthy and often at the expense of poor or dispossessed peoples? To what extent do technological innovations generate serious social and ecological problems?

Is progress in meeting human needs always at the expense of nature? Is the biotechnology revolution in agriculture in the best interest of both humanity and nature? Questions such as these will be dealt with as our course proceeds during the semester. The course is organized around four themes: 1) population, 2) pollution, 3) resources and 4) wildlife and ecosystems. Within each thematic block we will consider our individual and collective rights and responsibilities to others ranging from individuals to groups, nations and other impacted interests.

Population usually leads the thematic approach in that we must inquire as to the interrelationship between population growth and environmental degradation. Is rapid population growth a reality and, if so, to what extent must that growth be curbed even at the expense of individual freedom of choice as to the appropriate family size? Is lowered population growth a panacea for environmental issues or are there likely to be anticipated and unanticipated responses?

What are the short and long term social consequences if lowered population growth is attributable to national policy rather than economic aturity - by what manner is lowered population growth achieved in a society (sanctions for too many or incentives for fewer children, and are the sanctions/ incentives to be applied to the breeders or the progeny)