MATERIALS FOR INTRADEPARTMENTAL CLIMATE CONVERSATION

Charles Goldhaber / cgoldhaber@gmail.com

This packet contains materials that were used to announce and run a 90-min intradepartmental climate conversation at the University of Pittsburgh in October 2019, open to all faculty, grad students, undergraduate majors, and staff connected to the philosophy major.

The **goals** of the conversation were to:

-- get members of the university's philosophical community thinking and talking about sustainability issues.

-- introduce Philosophers for Sustainability to community, and recruit members

-- spread the PfS sustainability guidelines, and discuss what items could acted on at our university

The packet contains the following **materials**:

The **format** of the meeting was: 25-min going through the handout, 25-min reading through the guidelines, and 40-min of open discussion.

Please feel free to use or adapt any of these materials!

M Gmail

Chuck Goldhaber <cgoldhaber@gmail.com>

Final Reminder: Forum on Philosophy and Climate Change, this Fri Oct 25, 1:30–3:00

5 messages

Chuck Goldhaber <cag109@pitt.edu>   Wed, Oct 23, 2019 at 4:04 PM

Hi everyone,

Here's a final reminder that we'll have a Forum on Philosophy and Climate Change **this Friday, October 25, 1:30–3:00 pm** in 358 CL. Please consider joining in—this a chance for us to support one another in thinking about our role in an issue that will drastically affect many of our lives. Plus, the time commitment is low.

Again, RSVPs appreciated. But drop-ins are very welcome, too.

Best,

Chuck

> On Mon, Sep 23, 2019 at 8:36 PM Chuck Goldhaber <cag109@pitt.edu> wrote:
> Dear Philosophy and HPS grad students,
>
> As climate change worsens, more of us have started to ask ourselves what we as scholars and philosophers can do to counteract its damage. How do we integrate climate change into what we learn, teach, write, and do? How might our lives as philosophers be about to change, and how can we prepare for those changes? How can we use our skills as teachers, students, researchers and administrators to advocate for sustainable practices on campuses and in the world at large?
>
> I'm a member of a newly formed international group called Philosophers for Sustainability. We recently advocated for The American Philosophical Association (APA) to develop and distribute sustainable practices guidelines for philosophers. The APA has responded by asking us to draft sustainability guidelines for inclusion in its widely read Good Practices Guide, pending approval by the APA.
>
> As part of this process, we are holding a series of informal discussions in philosophy and HPS departments to solicit broad input from philosophy and HPS students and faculty at all levels. These discussions serve both to bring together philosophers who care about sustainability, and to work toward a set of guidelines. We want to know: what would you like philosophers everywhere to do to combat climate change and ensure a sustainable future?
>
> Please join us on **Friday, October 25, 1:30–3:00 pm** in 358 CL. This event is open to anyone connected to Pitt's Philosophy and HPS communities, including faculty, grad students, staff, visiting scholars, and undergraduate majors. If you'd like to come, it is helpful to take a look the working draft of the sustainability guidelines in advance. RSVPs to cag109@pitt.edu are appreciated, but not strictly required. If you have any questions, feel free to ask them over email or in person.
>
> Best,
> Chuck

Forum on Philosophy and Climate Change

Chuck Goldhaber — `cag109@pitt.edu`

I. The bad news

Scientific consensus: 99.94% of the 54,195 climatology papers from 1991 to 2015 agree that human activity is raising the global temperature. (James L. Powell 2017, "The Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming Matters")

> *Main mechanisms*: greenhouse gas emissions (CO_2, methane); deforestation.
> . . . by extraction, energy, manufacturing, agriculture, transportation industries.

American Association for the Advancement of Science (2014): "pushing global temperatures past certain thresholds could trigger abrupt, unpredictable and potentially irreversible changes that have massively disruptive and large-scale impacts. . . We can think of this as sudden climate brake and steering failure where the problem and its consequences are no longer something we can control."

Probable effects: Scale with temperature.

> **Already**: Glacier melt; hottest global temperatures; + natural disasters; die off.

> **+4°C**: Regular catastrophic heat waves; storms; continent-wide droughts; the melting of Antarctica and the Arctic ice; 1–2 meter sea level rise; acidification of ocean; loss of biodiversity; feedback loops exacerbating warming.

> IPBES: 95% of world's arable land may be degraded by 2050 (`https://bbc.in/2RT6P5v`)

> > → *effects on humans*: tens of thousands killed by extreme weather events; global famines leading to massive migration, political tension, and war; flooding of major coastal cities such as NYC, LA, Shanghai, Mumbai, etc.

> **+ more?**: Runaway warming → unstoppable extinction of most life on earth.

International Energy Agency and others: We are on track for **6°C** (10.8°F).

Climatologist Lonnie Thompson: "Virtually all of us are now convinced that global warming poses a clear and present danger to civilization."

Our reactions: Not enough!
– Climate change summits set dangerous targets (2°C) that are non-binding.
– Global emissions increased 3.4% per year in 2000s; the increase is increasing.
– Various kinds of denial (cf. Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*).

II. The good news

More and more people are taking climate change to be a serious issue.
Many environmental organizations are growing, esp. youth led ones.
Some US politicians are making environmental concerns more central to their platform.

The most recent global climate strike was attended by more than 6 million people.
    (The strike rally here in Pittsburgh was easily 50x as big as the previous one!)
    When 20 million people protested on Earth Day in 1970, Nixon created the EPA.

Political change will follow, as we help people see that climate change is a priority.

As philosophers we are skilled in arguing for and explaining the importance of things.
We have access to student's ears and experience with administration. We determine
what many people read. We can help with reform, in- and outside of organizations.

III. Resources

Philosophers for Sustainability

A newly formed, international group of philosophers that aims to encourage our
profession to take leadership on climate change and environmental sustainabil-
ity. Writing the Sustainability Guidelines for the APA's Good Practices Guide.
Monthly online meetings. Membership is low commitment.

Projects: (1) Strike support; (2) Social media; (3) E-conferencing; (4) On-campus
advocacy; (5) Resource gathering; (6) Public philosophy; (7) Teaching hub.

Eastern APA 2020 Session: Sustainability in Philosophy, Friday, 1/10, 11:00–1:30.

Central APA 2020 Session: The Role of Philosophers in Climate Change, TBA.

`www.philosophersforsustainability.com/`

Fossil Fuel Free Pitt

Pitt students calling on our university to divest its endowment fund from fossil
fuel industries. They are happy to do 5-min classroom presentations.

`fossilfreepitt@gmail.com`   `www.facebook.com/FossilFreePitt`

Sunrise Movement, Pittsburgh

A highly effective and quickly growing youth-led, climate change activism orga-
nization. Many projects spreading information and pressuring local politicians
to adopt sustainable policies. The Pittsburgh chapter is relatively new, and is
looking to recruit. They are happy to do 5-min classroom presentations.

`sunrisemovementpgh@gmail.com`   `www.facebook.com/pittsunrisemovement/`

Guidelines for Sustainable Practices in Philosophy

(To be revised for a few months and then included, pending approval, as part of the American Philosophical Association Good Practices Guide -- Section 9: Sustainability)

Draft, July 2019; comments welcome to philosophersforsustainability@gmail.com

Sustainable practices are practices that meet the needs of a human community in ways that are consistent with the flourishing of the ecosystems on which we depend. Although many philosophers are not explicitly concerned with sustainability, it is also true that many current practices in philosophy are unsustainable, contributing to irreversible environmental harms that are expected to greatly increase global temperatures, "natural" disasters, political instability, war, disease, drought, and famine in this century. Animal and plant species are now going extinct at a greatly increased rate, and there is a credible risk that mass extinction is already underway. In many domains of life, human-caused climate change presents an urgent threat; the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change sets the year 2030 as a deadline for the implementation of widespread changes to institutions to reach carbon neutrality and to reduce other forms of pollution and land use to curb the most catastrophic effects of climate change. According to the United Nations, "Climate change is the defining issue of our time and now is the defining moment to do something about it."

Professional philosophers often contribute disproportionately to large environmental harms, even for citizens of wealthy nations, through practices such as high-frequency air travel. Philosophers can also play a particularly beneficial role in mitigating climate change through effective teaching, research, administration, advocacy, and community engagement. These practices are crucial to diversity, inclusion, and justice, as climate change disproportionately impacts communities of color and other marginalized populations. Like academic freedom and academic integrity, sustainability is a part of fair institutional practice and of nurturing the next generations of philosophers and members of society at large. Adopting sustainable practices as a department or institution also has a significant direct impact, and can send a powerful message. Philosophy departments and other academic units should maintain a commitment to sustainability and consider its implications for their policies and codes of conduct, keeping in mind a wide range of individual and collective activities.

Events

Food

Good food is an important component of many professional and community events. Philosophers ought to recognize that the goodness of food extends beyond taste, aesthetics, and nutrition, to its origins and production as well as the treatment of food waste. We can aspire to provide sustainable, equitable, and humane foods which are culturally and religiously inclusive and serve the individual needs of all members of the philosophical community. In many cases, sustainable food practices are also more inclusive and cheaper or of comparable cost. In other cases, event organizers face the task of balancing expense and individual needs or preferences with environmental damage.

Environmentally sustainable food practices include the following:

- Consult with your catering or university food service to avoid excessive ordering when planning for catering.
- Have a plan for the use of leftover food and beverages, such as donation to other events or to students, organizers, a nearby lounge, or a shelter or food recovery program. Provide means of repacking leftover food for transport.
- Recognizing that diverse communities have different dietary needs, consider whether it is feasible to eliminate meat, as well as other animal products and carbon-intensive foods, entirely. In other cases, it can be appropriate to limit or eliminate a narrower range of foods, such as beef, that are particularly closely linked to climate change, and/or include a higher proportion of plant-based foods.
- Consider factors involved in the source and distribution of provided food, including the treatment of animals and the transportation of food across great distances.
- Consider using tap or filtered water as a typical beverage. This may include purchasing a pitcher and using or installing a nearby bottle filling station or drinking fountain.
- Avoid food that requires large amounts of packaging (e.g., individually wrapped sandwiches or creamers) in favor of food that uses less packaging (sandwich platters, reusable pitchers). Avoid single-use plastics, styrofoam, and coffee capsules or pods whenever possible. When feasible, provide compostable or reusable dinnerware and compost bins for food and waste disposal.
- When possible, develop relationships with sustainable catering services.
- Promote interest in sustainable food choices by selecting options that are tasty and appealing to community members.
- Share and discuss food options and choices with members of the community. Broader discussion helps to ensure sustainable and appealing food choices, and food is an excellent opportunity for discussion of sustainable practices. In particular, animal

agriculture emits more greenhouse gases worldwide than the entire transportation sector. It is often worth discussing how to weigh the resulting harms against individuals' food preferences.

Conferences and Travel

At many colleges and universities, up to one third of greenhouse gas emissions come from faculty travel. Air travel is particularly high in emissions, with a typical roundtrip transcontinental flight in economy class releasing a metric ton of CO_2 per coach passenger; this is the entire annual per-person amount consistent with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels. Both individual philosophers and institutions now face increasingly difficult choices with respect to travel. Environmentally sustainable practices offer large and sometimes unexpected benefits, including a great deal of saved time and expense, which should be carefully weighed against the benefits of in-person interaction and increased travel.

Sustainable practices for organizers and participants of conferences, colloquia, and other events can include the following.

- Consider encouraging, allowing, or requesting digital participation using video conferencing technology. When a combination of formats is most feasible or appropriate, consider what fraction of talks or participants can be included by video conferencing.
- Consider instituting a lower or waived registration fee or a higher honorarium for digital participants, or contributing part of the saved costs to sustainability efforts.
- Videoconferencing can be more accessible to audiences who have difficulty attending academic conferences physically, including academics in the developing world, students with limited funds, academics with mobility impairments, highly sought-after guest speakers with full schedules, and members of the general public. Maximize its accessibility by using and testing appropriate audio and video technology, including aids such as closed captioning, and consulting with participants with hearing and visual impairments and other accessibility needs.
- When physical travel is necessary, prioritize events at, or inviting speakers from, a short travel distance. Encourage rail and coach travel over air and single-occupancy car travel. When possible, combine multiple events in one trip.
- Consider whether it is appropriate to include carbon offsets as a part of your budget for conferences, colloquia, faculty travel, prospective student visits, and any other travel.
- When selecting a venue, consider public transportation and a venue's sustainable practices.

- In your communication with event participants, publicize public transportation options and make available information on the carbon footprint of your event, including the methods used to calculate the carbon footprint.
- While making sure that event materials are accessible, look for ways to cut down on paper waste such as programs and handouts.
- When feasible, provide ways to reduce, reuse, or recycle paper, plastic, and common conference items such as name tag holders. Keep in mind that reducing and reusing are often preferable to recycling.
- For large conferences, consider organizing regional remote hubs for participants to gather to watch sessions and network with others in their regions.
- When feasible for smaller events, offer support in organizing shared accommodations and/or accommodations in hosts' homes, while also considering participants' safety.
- When commuting, consider using, and encouraging the use of, public transit and/or carpooling in place of driving alone.
- Consider making sustainability a theme of one or more events or parts of an event.
- Consider issues of diversity and inclusion in making changes to existing practices. For example, video-conferencing can greatly increase inclusion of philosophers with limited access to events, but event organizers should take care not to create a two-tiered system in which well-funded philosophers travel by airplane while others participate digitally.

Facilities

Many philosophers and academic units have access to and influence over facilities, including offices, meeting rooms, and kitchens. Greenhouse gas emissions and other sustainability concerns should be carefully considered when planning construction and renovation, including both initial needs and planning details. When feasible, kitchens can be stocked with reusable dishware and cutlery, and avoid or limit individually packaged items such as plastic water bottles and single use coffee capsules. More generally, it is good standard practice to consider environmental impact in all significant changes to the existence and use of facilities.

Teaching and writing

Environmental sustainability presents some of the most pressing and challenging problems of our time. Climate change in particular combines a global tragedy of the commons, scientific uncertainty, major economic impacts, unequal vulnerabilities, and crises for current and future generations, nonhuman animals, and the rest of nature. These issues bear on many academic disciplines, including many branches of philosophy, and on our work as teachers and writers. They are already a key issue for students, most of whom are, as young people, among the frontline populations most heavily impacted by climate change. Moreover, teachers and writers

of philosophy are particularly well positioned to lead others in addressing the challenges of climate change and the relation of humans to the environment.

Course content

Sustainability is closely connected to the content of many courses, often in surprising ways. These connections offer valuable opportunities to address these issues, recruit students, demonstrate the relevance of philosophy to contemporary concerns, and train generations of students to think critically about their role in the environment.

Philosophy departments should consider the feasibility of adding or maintaining courses on environmental ethics and/or environmental philosophy more broadly, and allowing these courses to count toward major, minor, general education or core curriculum, and other requirements, as well as cross-listing courses in other departments. In some cases, it may even be appropriate to require a course on sustainability or the environment of all philosophy majors or all undergraduate students, as a few institutions currently do.

On the other hand, it is often particularly useful to integrate environmental issues into smaller components of courses that are not entirely concerned with the environment. These courses can reach a broader range of students, and encourage critical thinking about sustainability in many philosophical contexts. For example:

- Introductions to philosophy, introductions to ethics, and courses in contemporary ethics or political philosophy can include a unit on philosophical issues about climate change, raising central problems about the demands of morality on individuals, climate justice, and/or the relation of human beings to nature.
- Courses on underrepresented philosophical traditions can often highlight those traditions' contributions to an understanding of the natural world and humans' place in it.
- Epistemology, philosophy of psychology, and philosophy of science courses can use climate change as an entry point into considering scientific consensus as a standard for knowledge.
- Courses in philosophy of mind, philosophy of action, moral psychology, or freedom and responsibility can cover human-caused climate change as an example of collective agency and collective responsibility, or consider the nature of and responsibility for climate change denial.
- Courses on diversity or oppression can cover biodiversity, environmental racism, the trivialization of the environment as "women's work," and the position of younger people as a frontline population disproportionately impacted by climate change.
- Courses on philosophy and literature can discuss fiction or poetry as a way of raising philosophical issues about the environment.

- A logic course can use examples of fallacious reasoning in arguments about climate change, helping to show the relevance of logic to contemporary life.

In all these cases and others, instructors should remember that issues of sustainability are often highly personal and emotionally charged, and take care not to dismiss the views of students or alienate students who do not see environmental issues as a priority. Nevertheless, the complexity and variety of contemporary environmental challenges, and climate change in particular, offer a wide range of excellent opportunities for integration into current and new courses.

Course methods and policies

Integration into course content goes naturally with integration into course methods. Instructors should consider what pedagogical methods are best suited to their topics. Teaching sustainability may or may not call for a different approach. It may in some cases be useful to invite guest speakers from related disciplines or centers on campus, or presentations by climate change activists, or to bring in physical materials from the natural world or organize a field trip. Other creative pedagogical methods may be useful as well. For example, assignments that require or encourage students to think for themselves, or apply course content to their own lives, can in some cases be more useful than testing for memorization or reading comprehension.

Moreover, all philosophy courses can address sustainability in ways that may be entirely unrelated to course content. Instructors should consider environmental concerns in, for example, setting syllabus policies with regard to food, printing, waste, and opportunities for electronic purchasing and/or use of course materials. Discussion of these policies in an introductory meeting can set a lasting tone of care for the environment.

Advising

When appropriate, philosophers should support and advise students who are interested in issues of sustainability. Whether they are engaging in a research project or building a student organization, students can be greatly benefited by faculty who care about their work and are willing to help them navigate the challenges of research and/or advocacy.

Research

What holds for teaching holds for writing: a surprisingly wide range of philosophical topics have a significant connection to sustainability and climate change. It is good practice to consider what those connections may be, and consider discussing them in writing. These discussions can help

make philosophical writing successful, and can help one take leadership in the field or, in some cases, avoid falling behind. Incorporating sustainability into teaching can be one way to discover connections to current and future research. Interdisciplinary contact and collaboration can also be a useful way to learn from past and ongoing sustainability efforts and to contribute to those efforts as a philosopher.

Governance and Public Advocacy

Philosophy departments and other academic units regularly face decisions in which considerations of sustainability play a role. All departments, and most smaller department committees, do work that has an environmental impact. That impact should be considered, at least briefly, in deciding on procedure. Can large files be viewed electronically, without printing? What course offerings cover the environment? Are there funds for carbon offsets for travel by visiting speakers or prospective students? At what points and in what ways should sustainability be considered in offering recommendations to the department?

In particular, departments as a whole should consider whether to adopt or revise explicit department policies, mission statements, a statement or resolution on sustainability, and general website and publicity information with respect to sustainability in courses, event planning, faculty travel, and other topics discussed in these guidelines. Whenever feasible, a department should make its policies clear to its members, explain the rationale for them, and use them as a starting point for further discussion and revision. Department chairs may wish to appoint an official or unofficial committee, ask an existing committee, or decide, by themselves, to review the department's practices and make recommendations, gather and share useful resources, and/or hold a workshop or other event for the department to discuss sustainability. Many colleges and universities have an office, officer, committee, or task force devoted to sustainability that can send a representative to speak at such an event or at part of a faculty meeting. Colleagues in other departments may also have valuable experience in indigenous traditions, climate science, or other related areas.

Academic philosophers and departments may also decide to take a position with respect to the practices of their institution. Some colleges and universities are in the midst of bold initiatives designed to achieve total carbon neutrality as soon as 2025. Others prioritize sustainability much less or not at all. Some initiatives, such as the construction of a new stadium, may serve key institutional goals while also facing controversy and public protest over their environmental impact. Students often organize campaigns advocating for larger changes on campus, such as divestment from fossil fuels. Such campus events raise complex issues, and have a large impact on the environment. They often provide excellent opportunities for advocacy and fruitful

discussion. It is a good practice to discuss them with students and colleagues, think through one's own views about them, and collaborate in advocacy efforts when appropriate.

Philosophers may also become involved in public advocacy and community engagement efforts beyond the campus setting. Many years of training in assessing arguments, leading discussions, offering and evaluating examples, drawing connections between seemingly disparate topics, anticipating and responding to objections, articulating compelling rationales, and organizing events can often put us in a good position to make a valuable contribution as individuals and, more specifically, as philosophers. When feasible, these contributions should be recognized as service to the community, complementing academic service to the department and university.

In all of these contexts, it is worth remembering that the largest environmental harms come from collective activities by governments and corporations. Although individual and departmental choices have highly significant impacts, in many cases philosophers can make the most effective environmental contribution by taking on larger collective issues of sustainability and doing what they do best: generating discussion, presenting arguments, seeking insight into larger human experiences and struggles, and challenging others to think critically. Individual choices should be made in tandem with encouraging others to treat sustainability as a priority, both in its own right and in connection to many central human values.

Sample Resources

- The United Nations website on climate change: https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/.

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018). "Global Warming of 1.5°C." www.ipcc.ch/sr15.

- Ken Hiltner, "A Nearly Carbon-Neutral Conference Model" (2019). https://hiltner.english.ucsb.edu/index.php/ncnc-guide/.

- Tyler John and Carolina Flores (2018). "Moving Beyond Meat in Philosophy: The How and Why." https://philosophersagainstfactoryfarming.wordpress.com/2018/01/13/moving-beyond-meat-in-philosophy-the-how-and-why/.

- The International Society for Environmental Ethics syllabus collection: https://enviroethics.org/syllabi/

- The resources page at Philosophers for Sustainability: http://www.philosophersforsustainability.com/resources/.

- The American Psychological Association's report on psychology and global climate change: https://www.apa.org/science/about/publications/climate-change

- The University of California Carbon Neutrality Initiative, pledging full carbon neutrality by 2025: https://ucop.edu/carbon-neutrality-initiative/index.html

Written by members of Philosophers for Sustainability