

culture: The overall ensemble of knowledge, beliefs, values, and learned ways of life shared by a group of people.

worldview: A way of looking at the world that reflects a person's (or a group's) beliefs about the meaning, purpose, operation, and essence of the world.

ethics: The academic study of good and bad, right and wrong. The term can also refer to a person's or group's set of moral principles or values.

relativists: An ethicist who maintains that ethics do and should vary with social context.

universalists: An ethicist who maintains that there exist objective notions of right and wrong that hold across cultures and situations.

ethical standards: A criterion that helps differentiate right from wrong.

instrumental value: Value ascribed to something for the pragmatic benefits it brings us if we put it to use. Also called utilitarian value.

intrinsic value: Value ascribed to something for its intrinsic worth; the notion that the thing has a right to exist and is valuable for its own sake. Also called inherent value.

environmental ethics: The application of ethical standards to environmental questions.

anthropocentrism: A human-centered view of our relationship with the environment.

biocentrism: A philosophy that ascribes relative values to actions, entities, or properties on the basis of their effects on all living things or on the integrity of the biotic realm in general. The biocentrist evaluates an action in terms of its overall impact on living things, including—but not exclusively forcing on—human beings.

ecocentrism: A philosophy that considers actions in terms of their damage or benefit to the integrity of whole ecological systems, including both living and nonliving elements. The well-being of an individual is less important than the long-term well-being of a larger integrated ecological system.

John Muir: Scottish immigrant to the United States who eventually settled in California and made the Yosemite Valley his wilderness home. Today, he is most strongly associated with the preservation ethic. He argued nature deserved protection for its own intrinsic value (an ecocentrist argument) but also claimed that nature facilitated human happiness and fulfillment.

preservation ethic: An ethic holding that we should protect the natural environment in a pristine, unaltered state.

Gifford Pinchot: The first professionally trained American forester, he helped establish the U.S. Forest Service. Today, he is the person most closely associated with the conservation ethic.

conservation ethic: An ethic holding that people should put natural resources to use but also have a responsibility to manage them wisely.

Aldo Leopold: American scientist, scholar, philosopher, and author. His book *The Land Ethic* argued that humans should view themselves and the land itself as members of the same community and that humans are obligated to treat the land ethically.

environmental justice: The fair and equitable treatment of all people with respect to environmental policy and practice, regardless of their income, race, or ethnicity. This principle is a response to the perception that minorities and the poor suffer more pollution than the majority and more affluent.

economy: A social system that converts resources into goods and services.

economics: The study of how we decide to use scarce resources to satisfy demand for goods and services.

classical economics: Founded by Adam Smith, the study of the behavior of buyers and sellers in a capitalist market economy. Holds that individuals acting in their own self-interest may benefit society, provided that their behavior is constrained by the rule of law and by private property rights and operates within competitive markets.

Neoclassical economics: A mainstream economic school of thought that explains market prices in terms of consumer preferences for units of particular commodities and that uses cost-benefit analysis.

cost-benefit analysis: A method commonly used in neoclassical economics, in which estimated costs for a proposed action are totaled and then compared to the sum of benefits estimated to result from the action.

external costs: A cost borne by someone not involved in an economic transaction. Examples include harm to citizens from water pollution or air pollution discharged by nearby factories.

discounting: A practice in neoclassical economics by which short-term costs and benefits are granted more importance than long-term costs and benefits. Future effects are thereby “discounted,” because the idea is that an impact far in the future should count much less than one in the present.

economic growth: An increase in an economy’s activity—that is, an increase in the production and consumption of goods and services.

Cornucopian: A worldview (or a person holding the worldview) that we will find ways to make Earth’s natural resources meet all of our needs indefinitely and that human ingenuity will see us through any difficulty.

Cassandra: A worldview (or a person holding the worldview) that predicts doom and disaster as a result of our environmental impacts.

environmental economics: A school of economics that modifies the principles of neoclassical economics to address environmental challenges. Most environmental economists believe that we can attain sustainability within our current economic systems. Whereas ecological economists call for revolution, environmental economists call for reform.

ecological economics: A school of economics that applies the principles of ecology and systems thinking to the description and analysis of economics,

steady-state economy: An economy that does not grow or shrink but remains stable.

nonmarket values: A value that is not usually included in the price of a good or service.

contingent valuation: A technique that uses surveys to determine how much people would be willing to pay protect a resource or to restore it after damage has been done.

Gross domestic Product (GDP): The total monetary value of final goods and services produced in a country each year. It sums all economic activity, whether good or bad, and does not account for benefits such as volunteerism or for external costs such as environmental degradation and social upheaval.

Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI): An economic indicator that attempts to differentiate between desirable and undesirable economic activity. It accounts for benefits such as volunteerism and for costs such as environmental degradation and social upheaval.

full cost accounting: An accounting approach that attempts to summarize all costs and benefits by assigning monetary values to entities without market prices and then generally subtracting costs from benefits. Examples include the GPI, the Happy Planet Index, and others. Also called true cost accounting.

market failure: The failure of markets to take into account the environment's positive effects on economies (for example, ecosystem services) or to reflect the negative effects of economic activity on the environment and thereby on people.

ecolabeling: The practice of designating on a product's label how the product was grown, harvested, or manufacture, so that consumers can judge which brands use more sustainable processes.

socially responsible investing: Investing in companies that have met criteria for environmental or social sustainability.

greenwashing: A public relations effort by a corporation or institution to mislead customers or the public into thinking it is acting more sustainably than it actually is.

sustainable development: Development that satisfies our current needs without compromising the future availability of natural capital or our future quality of life.

development: The use of natural resources for economic advancement (as opposed to simple subsistence, or survival).

triple bottom line: An approach to sustainability that attempts to meet environmental, economic, and social goals simultaneously.