Identifying Ethical Dimensions in a Specific Situation


Assignment: What are the ethical dimensions of climate change? They are not always made explicit in writings and discussion of the subject. Detecting them, making them explicit and identifying them, and describing them is a first step towards ethical decision. This assignment asks you to identify and describe three ethical issues that are touched on (even if only implicitly) in Lord’s book, *Early Warming*.

Some comments, hopefully helpful:

1) Ethics concern matters of obligation, duty, non-permissible actions, negligent omissions, or generally right and wrong, or morally good or righteous versus bad or vicious, as well as “beyond the call of duty” acts. (Ethics concerns not only these categories but why we should look at a choice in such a way). So first, it will be helpful to survey for yourself the ethical aspects of climate change, particularly as we have read or discussed.

2) In reading Lord’s book, what ethical dilemmas or underlying ethical stakes are the main actors we meet concerned about? You may have to read beyond the lines to identify these, and showing that you have learned to do this is an important part of this assignment.

3) Once you have identified several issues, choose three that you will describe in more detail. You do not need to use the same concepts in describing ethical aspects of the three examples. Description may concern the risks, costs, and benefits born by different actors. It may concern duties or obligations – in which case what is at stake may be less concrete than “costs” or “benefits” but equally or more valued. The ethical description may concern competing or incommensurate values and belief systems, including the historical roots of these. It is up to you to decide how to describe the ethical dimensions in compelling language.

All papers should be turned in electronically AND on paper. For the electronic copy, put your name, the class and assignment in the filename (ie, “Jones.ENVS305.second essay.docx”). Electronic submission: email to Gene.Myers@wwu.edu

See general instructions on papers in syllabus, and rubric on last page of syllabus or Canvas. Additional general paper writing resource: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/