Exploring Ethical Issues Over Time

ENVS 305 Winter 2014. Third essay, 1500 words, 20 points.
Paper copy rough draft due in class Feb 25.
Final draft due Feb 27.
Turn in rough draft and re-drafting outline with final paper copy.

Assignment: Identify a current or recent issue whose content and/or ethical dimensions relate closely to a concern identified in 1962 by Carson in *Silent Spring*. Describe the issue in Carson’s time (using her book and its references as your main source) and describe the contemporary case. Then compare and contrast the recent and the past expressions of the issue.

Some notes for consideration:

1) Identifying a current issue may require some outside research. You are welcome to use something that you already know about or have studied in another course, so long as it expresses an important theme related to *Silent Spring*, and so long as your ethical or historical thinking is new for this course.

2) Here are some possible contemporary issues related to dimensions raised by Carson, and/or the response to her book; each has ethical implications:

- Pesticides (and other “biocides”) and their current use and regulation, presence in food webs, etc., in the US or abroad.
- Expansion of public health concerns to include synthetic toxics in the environment.
- The role of science and scientists in the public construction of environmental issues.
- Endocrine disruptors, body burden, carcinogens, teratogens, mutagens or another aspect or class of toxins.
- Environmental justice and related movements in the US, another country, or globally.
- Public ecological literacy in everyday life.
- Women (or gender) in environmental science, or movements.
- The framing or rhetoric of environmental issues as public ethical issues versus the domain of technical or professional experts.
- Harm to wildlife and harm to humans: separate or unified environmental concerns?
- Public relations and issue management by environmentally impactful industries.
- Emergence & adoption of alternatives to pesticides.
- The emergence, organization, and/or effectiveness of environmental advocacy groups or movements.

3) In comparing and contrasting you might try to answer one or more of these questions: What is similar or different about the ethical frameworks governing the issue then and now? How is the matter addressed, constructed, or framed at the two general time periods? Does the current shape of the issue reflect Carson’s influence? How? Do the changes in the issue reflect productive or unproductive compromises among different values, interests and players?
After receiving peer feedback on your rough draft, create an outline that shows how you will organize your final draft to be more effective. Turn this in with the final paper copy.

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.third 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/