

Teaching Observation  
PHIL 3200: Environmental Ethics  
Instructor: Manny Rodeiro  
Date of Observation: 2/26/18  
Time of Observation: 12:50pm  
Observer: Eric Mandelbaum

I observed Manny's class at 12:50pm on 2/26/18. The conditions were not ideal: I found out about the observation schedule 5 days ago and this was the next available class. As I am about to travel, I had to observe his very next class. Manny was kind enough to let me come to the next possible class without any fretting, postponing, or complaining. The class itself was non-ideal for observation purposes, as there were two student presentations (this wasn't a surprise—Manny was upfront about this in his email, and responded immediately). Additionally, their last class was canceled, as there was a snowstorm for which Baruch was closed. So the set up should be clear: this class was being observed in extremely non-ideal conditions for the instructor. With that all said we should be understanding if the class was subpar. And yet the class was \*excellent\*, better than almost any class I've observed under any circumstances. The students were amazing, the presentations were great, the topics gripping, and the instruction was fantastic. The class was so good I wish I could take it as a student. It was so engrossing that I'd consider sitting in on it as a colleague. I cannot stress enough how good the class was. I learned a ton in this class. The role of indigenous people in being part of the ecosystems they embedded in was a moral that was driven home through a variety of real world examples. It was a bravura performance. I would have Manny teach environmental ethics every semester. He did such an amazing job I'd have him teach anything he felt passionate about.

Manny has his own style, and it was so effective, I'm wary of making any constructive criticisms (though the one tiny one I have: "nuclear" not "nucular"—an error I'm sure I make too sometimes when speaking extemporaneously). What Manny does that is so amazingly potent is a combination of listening closely, being present, and having a wide range of knowledge on the tip of his tongue. He can speak extemporaneously and has an enormous variety of facts not just memorized, but embedded in a rich web of inferentially connected theories. He was so in the moment that his students were too—they were all rapt, and it was just this fantastic, seamless production. This was clear in the quality of the presentations which were so much better than what one might expect from any undergraduate class. These were not presentations for time-wasting sake—they were an excellent teaching tool. The presentations weren't just some prepared statement and that was that—Manny (and the other students!) really asked difficult, insightful, awesome questions. Some instructors garner the affection of their students by being push-overs. Manny garnered it by being an absurdly insightful instructor. After a presentation he asked "What is the best way of preserving the land if even the indigenous people are hunting endangered animals as part of their cultural conditions?" This is a difficult question! And the student handled it like a pro. What a class!

I want to stress that I do not know Manny at all. To my knowledge, we've never been introduced and I know next to nothing about who he is. His excellence is not due to his being funny or just deeply charismatic (though he was occasionally funny too, summarizing "Colonialism" as "God and

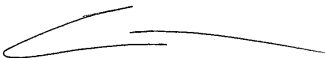
glory” on the whiteboard made me giggle. Ditto for “if you’ve never seen tree kangaroo they basically look like kangaroos that live in trees. Look ‘em up!” Also this example was so so good—it was about how the indigenous people didn’t care about the biodiversity per se, they were upset with the death of tree kangaroos because they were so delicious! [Side note, they don’t really look like kangaroos]). Instead his humor and charisma was secondary to his extreme mastery of the material and his profession.

To be plain: I see far too many lectures and talks. Almost every talk I see is boring. Sometimes I also learn something. Often I’m bored and don’t feel like I learn anything. Manny’s class was just an undergraduate lecture yet it may have been my favorite talk of the semester. It was probably the most I’ve learned in an undergraduate classroom since I was an undergraduate. If he had taped the lecture I would listen to it at home. The amount of places discussed as examples—both from Manny and his students--were astounding (and the follow ups on the examples were amazing too. Getting students to compare the differences between indigenous populations in Papua New Guinea and Columbia? Amazing). It served as an appetizer—it made me want to learn more about each of these places. I cannot stress enough how awesome the class was. And that’s before we talk about the syllabus, which was amazing. The students are asked to do a bunch of different types of structured writing, of increasingly formal rigor. It is such a smart idea—he clearly cares deeply about the students. And the readings themselves are fascinating enough that I asked Manny to provide me a link to his Dropbox folder.

We at Baruch are lucky to have him.

Eric Mandelbaum  
Associate Professor

Manny Rodeiro  
Instructor



# PEER OBSERVATION FORM

(adapted from Department of Psychology)

## SYLLABUS REVIEW

Checklist	Yes	No	Needs Clarification
Instructor contact information -- including office hours	✓		
Course time/location	✓		<i>Location unspecified</i>
Course description	✓		
Text/resource information	✓		
Learning goals		✓	
Grading system	✓		
Schedule of topics	✓		
Policy on attendance and whether there are excused absences	✓		<i>Should clarify whether there are excused absences</i>
Policy on late/missed assignments		✓	
Policy on makeup exams (if relevant)			<i>Not relevant</i>
Academic integrity Policy		✓	<i>None is provided</i>
Special needs statement		✓	
Additional Instructor policies and procedures (Optional)			

# PEER OBSERVATION FORM

(adapted from Department of Psychology)

## OBSERVATION REPORT

Date of observation \_\_\_\_\_ 6 May 2019 \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Manuel Rodeiro \_\_\_\_\_

Course/Section \_\_\_\_\_ PHI 3230 Political Philosophy \_\_\_\_\_

Class Size: ~20                      Class Level: Upper Level

Observer's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Hagop Sarkissian \_\_\_\_\_

Observer's Knowledge of Course Subject Area (circle one): High

What was the topic of the observed lesson? Student presentation of multiculturalism and feminism

**Brief Summary of Lesson:** The class began with a student presentation on an argument from Susan Okin against multiculturalism (from a feminist perspective). Okin highlights that pluralism can lead to continued oppression of women, and that it might be better for cultures to assimilate to liberal ones. After a brief segue, another presentation focused on Amartya Sen's on human rights. This followed with a lecture on Sen's well known 'capabilities' approach, which contrasts ends or results (functioning) with means or capabilities (opportunities). Finally, there was a presentation on Martha Nussbaum on liberalism, feminism, and the family.

**1. Instructor's knowledge of subject matter:**

a. Poor \_\_\_ b. Fair \_\_\_ c. Adequate \_\_\_ d. Good \_\_\_ e. Excellent \_\_\_ ✓ \_\_\_

**2. Were there errors in presentation of information?** \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**3. Was the content of the presentation appropriate to the class level?**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ No, too difficult for class level.  
b. \_\_\_ ✓ \_\_\_ Yes, appropriate.  
c. \_\_\_\_\_ No, too easy for class level.

**4. Level of interaction with students;** High \_\_\_ ✓ \_\_\_ Average \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_

**5. Level of student attentiveness:** High \_\_\_ Varied \_\_\_ ✓ \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_

**6. Breadth of coverage (# of topics):** Too little \_\_\_ Adequate \_\_\_ Too much \_\_\_ ✓ \_\_\_

**7. Depth of coverage:** Too much detail \_\_\_ Appropriate \_\_\_ ✓ \_\_\_ Too superficial \_\_\_

**8. How well organized was the instructor's presentation?**

a. Highly organized \_\_\_

# PEER OBSERVATION FORM

(adapted from Department of Psychology)

- b. Adequately organized   ✓
- c. Somewhat disorganized
- d. Highly disorganized

**9. Specific comments on instructor's presentation (indicate major strengths and weaknesses.)** Major strengths included the instructor's energy level, enthusiasm, clarity, and rapport with the students. I've observed Rodeiro one a couple of occasions in the past and he has been consistently great with presenting material and classroom management. He handled all questions respectfully and gave them all satisfactory answers.

I think that there was quite a lot covered in one class. There were three separate presentations, as well as a short lecture by Rodeiro himself. After class, Rodeiro noted that an extra presentation was tacked on to the beginning of class so as to make up for a previous student absence. However, the topics were all related to one another, and Rodeiro was great at linking them together, showing how the thinkers were engaged in an extended discussion with one another on similar topics. I've also found that pushing the pace a little can be helpful in keeping students energized and focused. So... I guess this is a long-winded way of saying that while a lot was covered, it may have been an advantage rather than a disadvantage?

**10. Suggestions to instructor for improving presentation.** Perhaps the use of the whiteboard could have been a little better organized and less ad hoc.

**11. Overall evaluation:** a. Excellent   ✓   b. Very Good    c. Good    d. Needs improvement   



**Signature of Observee**

**Date** 1 May 2019

**Signature of Observer**

**Date**

## Teaching Observation

**Instructor:** Manny Rodeiro

**Course:** PHI 3200 - Environmental Ethics, Law, and Public Policy

**Date of Observation:** 10 November 2016

The class began with a discussion of the presidential election. It was a constructive session discussing the virtues of the electoral college, epistemic issues in predicting elections, and possible ways to move forward for those students disillusioned.

The class proper began with a student presenting a summary of the reading, including discussion of seminal court cases pertaining to environmental policy. A key issue concerned the legal standing of non-human aspects of the environment. For example: Under what conditions can a lake, pond, or river be represented in court? Do natural features of the environment have rights? Can a person represent, or be a guardian for, such entities? What role do organizations such as the EDF and the Sierra club play, and what roles *ought* they play?

To answer these questions, Rodeiro notes that one must first clarify the nature and scope of rights. In the ancient world, rights were limited to a narrow slice of humanity (male heads of family, say), and over the years the notion of rights has expanded. Now, of course, the idea that each person is entitled to basic human rights is taken for granted. Things previously considered unimaginable are now considered obvious, perhaps even trivially so. This allows us to think of rights in a more expansive way.

Rodeiro pointed out a number of questions that are important in shaping discussion of the rights of the environment, or entities in the environment:

- What does it mean for, say, trees to have rights?
- Are we already doing this?
- Is it a good idea (to give trees rights)?
- If damaged, will the court hold that it can be compensated? Can compensation be delivered?

There are two broad ways to protect the rights or interests of trees. One way is to affirm the extrinsic value of trees (because, say, it is useful for us). This is perhaps most straightforward to understand, but requires there to be parties motivated to establish the utility of the entities concerned. (This can be understood as a case of expanded liability, and can preserving indirect benefits for the entity itself.)

Another way (less intuitive) is to affirm their intrinsic value (say, through representation by a guardian). This would entail that the entity's interests can trump our own, or have a rightful claim against our own. The problem with this model is that any actual (or potential)

guardians for such entities (e.g. indigenous peoples) are likely far removed from the legal system (if they are individuals). This problem can be mitigated, of course, by having committed NGO's or other organizations who can navigate the legal / political system. However, the perspective of such organizations may be very narrow (focusing on a particular animal, say, and not an entire ecosystem and how it all hangs together, which indigenous people might be more attuned to). The government can do the work themselves, of course, but they are open to sways in government interests. The exchange with the students was lively. Students were very vocal and outspoken, and seemed genuinely interested in the issues. They spoke freely, with many students all having a say.

I've observed Mr. Rodeiro in the past. Those observations will show that I've thought well of his promise as a teacher, and this impression was only strengthened on this occasion. I think he's an exceptionally promising instructor. He is relatable, thorough, and evinces passion for his vocation. It would be great for him to teach at Baruch as long as we can have him.



Hagop Sarkissian  
Associate Professor



Manny Rodeiro  
Instructor

<b>OBSERVATION REPORT</b>	<b>PHI 1700: Global Ethics</b>
<i>Observer: Thomas Teufel</i>	<i>Observation Date: 05/16/2016</i>
<i>Observee: Manuel Rodeiro</i>	<i>Observation Report: 05/25/2016</i>

Mr. Rodeiro started his class on the ethical treatment of animals promptly at 2:31pm with several housekeeping matters. The class consisted of two student presentations concerning arguments by Peter Singer and Mary Midgley. Mr. Rodeiro's role on the day of the observation was to introduce the two speakers, to set up their topics, and to lead the discussion after each presentation. While the format was thus not ideal for an observation of Mr. Rodeiro's teaching (scheduling difficulties prevented an observation at an earlier date in the semester), it was nevertheless possible to arrive at very positive estimation of Mr. Rodeiro's instructional style and classroom management, his command of the subject matter, as well as of his ability to engage his students.

To begin with, not a single of Mr. Rodeiro's roughly 30 students arrived late to class—a first in my 10 years of observing teachers at Baruch College. Moreover, it soon became clear that Mr. Rodeiro's students operated at an unusually high level of discourse for an introductory philosophy class. It would have been easy to mistake Mr. Rodeiro's class for an honors section. Following the first presentation on Peter Singer, several students readily provided a range of probing questions for the speaker as well as for Mr. Rodeiro—ranging from an impromptu thought experiment about engineered steak to a question about whether Singer's position entails that no special ethical consideration can be extended to human infants. It was the sort of classroom discussion that does not happen out of the blue but that requires intelligent contributors who trust that their points will be taken seriously. It was the sort of discussion that reflects a semester's worth of probing, intelligent communal inquiry.

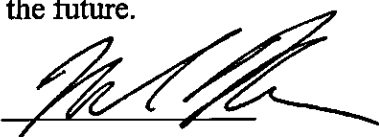
Perhaps even more impressive than the quality of the discussion was the quality of the presentations themselves. Most undergraduate presentations I have seen over the years do not combine the kind of grasp of the topic, organization of the material, as well as passion for the subject matter that I observed in Mr. Rodeiro's class. The first speaker, in particular, gave an expert overview and defense of Peter Singer's position in *Practical Ethics*. The second presentation by a non-native speaker was a little harder to follow, but in its own power-pointed way reflected the same high standards for what counts as an acceptable presentation that had clearly been set by Mr. Rodeiro throughout the term.

Based on Mr. Rodeiro's relaxed and witty management of the proceedings of the day as well as on the kind of intelligent contributions he was able to elicit from his students, I have little doubt that he has genuine instructional talent and will make considerable contributions to our classrooms in the future.

Observer:



Observee:





## Observation Report

**Course:** PHI 3200 - Environmental Ethics, Law, and Public Policy

**Date:** 12 November 2015

**Instructor:** Manuel Rodeiro

The session was concerned with one overarching theme—namely, how do we negotiate conflicting values? In particular, the session sought to answer the following question: how do we balance the value of protecting or preserving the environment with competing values such as economic development or even aesthetic concerns?

In addressing this broad question, Rodeiro engaged in class discussion of prominent attempts to ground concern for the environment in other considerations. For example, Singer argues that all sentient creatures (i.e. those who can suffer pain or enjoy pleasure) ought to be given consideration whenever our policies or actions affect them, regardless of their membership in a particular species. While arguing for consideration, Singer also denies that all sentient creatures should be afforded rights, because a bearer of rights must acknowledge and respect the rights of others—a capacity nearly all sentient creatures lack.

Stone, by contrast, thinks that what we should protect ecosystems by giving them legal rights. How can a stream (for example) have legal rights? Stone uses the notion of guardianship to ground such rights. Individuals or corporations can be the guardians of natural spaces and sue others on their behalf for disruption or destruction. Thus, whereas Singer focusses on suffering to ground consideration, Stone focusses on the inherent yet incalculable value of preserving biodiversity and the diversity of ecosystems. These diverging ways of protecting the environment can align on any particular issue. However, when they diverge there can be very real conflicts.

As someone not well versed in this literature I found the topic to be well motivated and Rodeiro's finessing of the discussion very capable. What stood out was that the students seemed at home in these theories, by which I mean conversant in them and able to use them in launching objections against them or in foreseeing potential problems in their application to specific cases. For example, students were able to think through new problems that were brought up during the course of discussion, such as the ethical issues with confining animals in zoos, from the perspective of these theories.

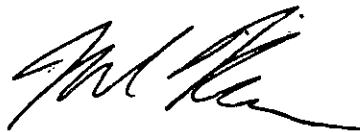
The class ended with a presentation by a pair of students on the question of whether and to what extent dolphins may be considered persons. The presentation was well prepared and delivered. And while I cannot say whether this particular student presentation was an exception or closer to the rule in its quality, I think instructors merit some praise when their students excel at presentations (and, likewise, deserve some blame when they go poorly).

I observed Rodeiro a few semesters ago, and at the time had a positive impression of his potential as a teacher of philosophy. That impression was confirmed during the current class session. Rodeiro was animated, energetic, and on top of the material, effective at being encouraging and supportive while also correcting misstatements and falsehoods. The class was engaged and many of the students participated in discussion (even more so than my previous observation). From what I gathered, Rodeiro even seemed to be using Reddit to disseminate class information online, an intriguing use of this platform that I'd like to consider myself.

In sum, having observed Rodeiro twice now, I feel comfortable saying that the department is well served by his instruction.



Hagop Sarkissian  
Associate Professor



Manny Rodeiro  
Instructor

## Observation Report

**Instructor:** Manuel Rodeiro

**Class:** PHI 1700 – Global Ethics

**Date of Observation:** November 24, 2014

The topic of the class was abortion—specifically, whether and under what circumstances it might be considered permissible. Roderio had assigned two classic papers on the topic. The first is by Philippa Foot, discussing the permissibility of abortion by drawing on the Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE). The second is by Judith Jarvis Thomson, arguing that abortion may be permissible in nearly all cases in spite of the fact that we might grant that the fetus has a right to life.

### **Content**

These articles raise a host of conceptual distinctions that are crucial in understanding their respective claims, and Rodeiro explained these distinctions clearly and conveyed their importance. This was done in a relaxed, easygoing style that made the thread of discussion easy to follow. However, Rodeiro's use of terminology in explaining these conceptual distinctions was at times unnecessarily confusing, and might be easily corrected in future iterations of this course.

For example, an important distinction Foot draws is between *actions* on the one hand, and *omissions* on the other. There are many ways to characterize this distinction, for example action/omission, action/inaction, and doing/allowing. Rodeiro at times used the action/inaction distinction, but settled on talking about actions as 'positive acts' and omissions as 'negative acts'. On its own, this choice of terms is fine (though not optimal). However, it overlapped with a completely separate distinction from the very same article. For elsewhere in the article, Foot also discusses actions as having either a morally good or a morally bad valence (e.g. helping vs. harming), and here again Rodeiro used the terms 'positive acts' and 'negative acts'. When discussed serially this might be acceptable, but in a class where there was much (and wide-ranging) discussion on the topic, deploying separate terms would have been preferable in order to avoid confusion.

Besides this, the articles were well represented.

### **Classroom technique**

Roderio had assigned two students to summarize the two articles (one article per student). During their presentations Rodeiro struck a nice balance between allowing them to develop their ideas and present the material as they had prepared it while also, when necessary, reining them in, clarifying their claims, and correcting errors. The exchanges in this regard went well, and Rodeiro proved to be a capable mediator.

Given that this wasn't a lecture class, Rodeiro didn't have the opportunity to present the material himself but was rather confined to correcting / commenting during the presentations. At a couple of points the presentations really left out key details, and it may have been helpful to stop the class and make sure the others students were on the same page. For example, the presentation on the Thomson article tackled two intricate cases from it—case of the human seeds and the case of the

violin player. These cases—and their details—are crucial for Thomson's argument, yet neither case was described in sufficient detail. Students seemed to be familiar with the cases from the assigned reading, and so one may have taken for granted that they were all familiar with the details of the cases. Yet taking a minute or so to quickly summarize them, and what we are meant to draw from them, would make sure that everyone was in sync. The seed case, in particular, was discussed in an inaccurate way. The case is meant to analogize to unplanned or accidental pregnancies, yet students seemed to take it to be a case of self-defense (which it is not).

Thus, my final suggestion regarding classroom technique would be to use the board from time to time to outline important arguments, draw important distinctions, or otherwise illustrate points under discussion. Once clearly outlined, these can be referenced. I think Rodeiro can make judicious use of the board (even during student presentations) without interrupting the flow of conversation.

### Conclusion

At the end of class I had some time to talk with Rodeiro and was surprised to learn this was his first semester teaching a course. I think this was a strong showing for a first-time instructor (especially given the loose structure that attends classes involving student presentations), and believe that he can quickly build upon this solid foundation.



Hagop Sarkissian  
Assistant Professor



Manny Rodeiro  
Instructor

Teaching Observation  
Manuel Rodeiro  
Environmental Law, Policy, and Ethics, PHI 3200  
11-29-17

It was my pleasure to observe Manuel Rodeiro teach Environmental Law, Policy, and Ethics (PHI 3200), a course devoted to studying philosophical questions that arise at the intersection of those titular domains. On the day I visited, Rodeiro discussed the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and international climate negotiations. He focused on questions of environmental justice, particularly studies that show that, whereas minorities and disenfranchised communities in the U.S. tend to make a lesser contribution to harming the environment, they nonetheless experience greater suffering as the result of environmental harm. This raised the question of what would be a just way to both recognize that we have a common responsibility for the environment, yet allow for differentiated levels of that responsibility for different groups. Rodeiro exhibited an easy going but professional manner in discussing the material with his students—calling on each of them by name and successfully encouraging them to productively explore their disagreements with one another. It was clear that Rodeiro had a full mastery of the assigned subject matter; he readily covered the assigned reading in a way that was both authoritative and eminently clear. Manuel Rodeiro is a superior teacher of philosophy and Baruch College's students are fortunate to have him as their instructor.



Jonathan Gilmore  
Assistant Professor of Philosophy  
Baruch College and The Graduate Center, CUNY