

Module # 1 – Component # 1



Introduction to the Hunting Debate

The content that follows was written by **Charl F. Badenhorst**, and was derived from his Masters Degree Thesis in Philosophy (Applied Ethics) completed under the Unit for Environmental Ethics at the University of Stellenbosch. The views of Charl Badenhorst **do not necessarily represent** those of WildlifeCampus, it's management or staff.

Foreword by WildlifeCampus

This course **differs in a number of respects** from the usual format employed by WildlifeCampus. Firstly, as the above note explains, it's origins is a Masters Thesis, and not a specific training course. Thus the **format of writing** (deliberately not adapted) is frequently one of the **1st person** expressing the authors own viewpoints as he attempts to clarify certain arguments and issues.

The **style of writing is also quite different** from what you may have previously read in other WildlifeCampus courses. Since the author does not come from a natural science background and the fact that the material **has not been materially changed from it's Masters Degree format**, some students may find the material challenging.

WildlifeCampus **does not take a specific viewpoint or position in this course**, and **we do not attempt to influence or sway the reader** in any specific direction. The subject matter is **emotive** and **controversial**, but important. Hunting, in many of its forms is frequently mentioned throughout a variety of our other courses, and thus **a thorough exploration of the topic is relevant** to the WildlifeCampus student.

The course itself attempt to portray a **balanced view of the hunting debate**. Both the **pro-hunting** and **anti-hunting** perspectives are examined in their own words and on their own terms. We trust that you'll be able to reach **your own informed conclusion**.

Introduction

In few other environmental debates is the **moral ambiguity surrounding choices of ethical responsibility toward nature and non-human beings more palpable than in the debate surrounding Trophy Hunting**. An overview of this debate reveals the epicentre of environmental conflict between what are broadly defined as the main categories of **preservationism** and **conservationism**¹, and exposes the plurality of environmental values inherent in what is essentially a moral debate.

Arguments from a preservationist (also **referred to as protectionist**) perspective may be regarded as entailing elements through a spectrum from deep ecology to ecocentrism (having a focus on environmental concerns), which characteristically **require a certain purist approach to preserving ecosystems and habitats, with minimal or no human interference**.² Preservationism assumes a notion of intrinsic preciousness, fragility and eternity that needs to be preserved without disturbance, and **assumes that the actions of humans have an intrinsically harmful effect for the environment** if not curtailed in some way, by excluding certain areas or putting them off limits to human activity. It therefore implies a distinction, or dualism, between nature and man, purity and impurity.³

Conservationism, on the other hand, while similarly **recognizing the harmful effects of human activity on the environment**, argues from an anthropocentric (Interpreting reality exclusively in terms of human values and experience) perspective and **assumes that the best way in which to safeguard the environment is to treat it as sustainably as possible given that humans are less likely to completely destroy ecosystems if they see them as a valuable resource which is able to bring immediate and practical benefits to them**. It assumes that the best way to do so is through direct human action in the form of management and **sustainable use of natural resources**.

Within and under these two main categories, I identify sub-categories of views and theories from the perspectives of sustainable utilisation, animal rights, animal liberation, the natural sciences of biology and ecology, utilitarianism, economics, religion and sociology, all of which are expressed and used to justify or condemn hunting on a moral and/or ethical basis.

¹ MacLean (1993: 171-179) explores the moral aspects of the conflict between preservationism and conservationism. The types of environmental conflict I have in mind are those identified by Schmidtz (2000: 397-408). There are according to Schmidtz three kinds of environmental conflict, namely conflicts in *use*, *values*, and *priorities*. Accordingly, the conflict between preservationism and conservationism thus revolves essentially around conflicts in *use*, *values* and *priorities*.

² The degree of "purity" being dependent on the extent of human interference, i.e. the less interference, the "purer" the ecosystem/habitat/biosphere etc.

³ Stephens 2000: 267-269.

The Arguments

The motivation for writing a course on trophy hunting was born out of recognition of the **validity, in context, of certain points and arguments on both sides of the hunting debate**. I say in context because an argument in favour of trophy hunting based on projected economic benefits for the environment and local communities presupposes an acceptance of the **utilitarian** (having a useful function) context within which the argument is put forward. As soon as one begins to question the basic assumption of the argument, namely that **purely economic consequentialism** (specifically profit maximisation as opposed to lesser lucrative options) is a priority when making decisions affecting wildlife, the force of the argument diminishes. This questioning leads to the idea that **other values have an equal claim to consideration when making decisions affecting wildlife** and our relation to the environment, at least on the theoretical level.

Similarly, an **argument against trophy hunting on the grounds that it is morally objectionable to kill for recreation presupposes a uniform acceptance of a theory of natural rights** (for example, one that is grounded in an ethical theory such as Humane Moralism)⁴ as the context within which the objection is made, as well as an assumption surrounding the motives behind trophy hunting.

An exploration of the **cultural significance and objectives of trophy hunting** against the weight of human history reveals that while hunting in general has been for eons a vital, and necessary, component of human survival, there **are varying types of hunting that take place today**, some of which cannot be explained as a mere desire for recreation; nor should they be seen in isolation from their cultural emergence and significance. Therefore, **blanket moral arguments against all forms of hunting either ignore certain aspects of what constitutes human cultural development**, or they assume certain (morally objectionable) human psychological characteristics to be self-evident in all acts of trophy hunting.

This line of questioning is important and vital against the backdrop of increasing **challenges facing conservation efforts and natural wildlife refuges in Africa today**. Arguments against hunting based on strict preservationist views do not adequately address the practical implications of what history and experience leads us to conclude is fallible human nature, with its destructive consequences for the environment.

Preservationism as yet does not seem to offer an adequate and workable solution to environmental conflicts in Africa that takes the main human, ecological and economic factors into account (these are namely: poverty, hunger, education, ecosystemic integrity, ecological balance, sustainability of ecological processes in enclosed areas, exorbitant costs of preserving wildlife etc.). Proponents of hunting make a **strong pragmatic case for it on the basis that it potentially offers a**

⁴ Callicott 1995: 239; King 1991: 66.

tangible solution to human/wildlife conflicts, as it offers an economic incentive for people, landowners and rural communities in particular, to protect wildlife.⁵

Sustainable utilisation of natural resources is fast becoming the norm in developing African countries, while **regulated hunting practices are able to provide a vital boost to local economies and wildlife populations** as a whole, particularly in countries where lack of infrastructure fetters potential income from tourism. **By giving animals an economic value**, regulated and sustainable hunting serves to make wildlife an attractive and economically viable resource to be protected, which may serve to cultivate cultural values in relation to wildlife as well.⁶ However, **economic determinism** is also largely the cause of **environmental problems**, which naturally causes a certain amount of caution and scepticism towards claims that an economic approach be used as the basis to solve environmental conflicts.

Habitat loss and hunting are generally accepted as being the **two greatest threats** today to wildlife populations,⁷ whilst **illegal hunting** remains a major source of income for poor rural communities adjacent to some national parks, such as the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania for example.⁸ As a sub-set of the arguments against hunting in general, **arguments against Trophy Hunting, then, are fuelled both by concerns over the sustainability of ecological processes, as well as questions about the integrity of human action deemed to be detrimental to wildlife populations and the interests of individual animals and species.**

The long-term synopsis of continued unregulated hunting and exploitation of wildlife populations, if taken in context with an increasing human population and resultant pressure on wildlife areas through habitat degradation, is one of small, restricted and increasingly fragile ecosystems less able to sustain and recover from detrimental human action. This is unless a determined course of beneficial human action is undertaken which negates the damage done. **A central point of debate is whether Trophy Hunting is the most morally and ethically pragmatic method of offsetting harmful human action.**⁹

⁵ Baldus 1990: 362. I use the term “economic” in broad terms here, which is not confined to financial revenue alone, but includes all of the material benefits, such as employment, education, housing, land ownership, and food, which can arise out of the financial benefits hunting may provide.

⁶ DeGeorges 2001b.

⁷ Bennett, Milner-Gulland, Bakarr, Eves, Robinson and Wilkie 2002: 28-29. This includes all types of hunting, such as subsistence hunting or market hunting for the bushmeat trade etc. and not only tourist or recreational hunting.

⁸ Loibooki, Hofer, Kenneth, Campbell and East 2002: 394-397.

⁹ For example, utilitarian value theory is used to justify hunting on the basis of beneficial side effects: namely of increased numbers of game farms and animals, economic benefits to game parks and reserves, and economic empowerment of local communities thereby reducing the impact of poaching on wildlife populations. This cost/benefit approach entails accepting the killing of individual animals - a ‘moral evil’ - if it results in a ‘moral good’ for the greater number of animals and species.

In broad terms, humans and the consequences of human activity are pitted against the non-human natural world, living, non-living, plant and animal alike; but in essence, the environmental conflict has its seat between humans themselves. It is to be found in the disparate views and moral theory over “what is the right thing to do” as a human being. The environment cannot speak for itself nor voice its opposition to certain human activities – those who speak on behalf of the environment do this.

Environmental conflict therefore lies in the disparaging views of people over “what is the right thing to do” concerning the environment, and is therefore in essence found to be between people with differing views over use, values and priorities.¹⁰ This is largely characteristic of the hunting debate, as **those taking a fundamental stand for or against a conservationist or preservationist viewpoint differ extensively over values, priorities and use when the killing of animals for sport is concerned.** This is particularly evident in the emphasis often placed by preservationist approaches on the **rights of individual animals and species**, as opposed to the more holistic approach of conservationism and its **emphasis on ecosystems and ecological processes.**

¹⁰ Cf. Leopold (1970: 262) for the famous postulation of his land ethic: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise”. List (1997: 405-416) offers an argument *for* hunting based upon the principles of Leopold’s Land Ethic in “Is Hunting a Right Thing?”

Hunting Agendas

The debate over Trophy Hunting remains **highly contentious** in the *public domain* precisely because the **opinions both for and against trophy hunting are held with such a depth of conviction that it becomes very difficult to acknowledge the validity of some of the other side's claims**. This may be for fear of relinquishing ground to these claims and compromising the strength of one's own position, even though **there may be a certain truth to the opposing claims**.¹¹ These strongly held views and opinions, on both sides of the debate, therefore seem at times to be propped up more by the person's absolute conviction that they are right than the absolute rational truth and validity of their claims.

It is **very clear that in everyday discussion of this topic certain arguments, both for and against hunting, are based upon rather shaky premises**, many of which can be shown to be indefensible in certain contexts.¹² This may be because of individual/collective interests and agendas that may reinforce certain ideological stances, both on the part of those for and against hunting, with the result that these interests and agendas outweigh immediate moral and ethical concerns on certain levels.

If those in the pro-hunting lobby had a different agenda to those in the anti-hunting lobby (which they undoubtedly do), then the obvious enquiry would be to try and **discern what these respective agendas could be**, and to what extent these agendas reinforce or negate the beliefs or ideological stance of the parties involved in the debate.

Concerns are therefore raised about the **consistency in which personal values**, reinforced by certain ideological stances and beliefs, **are applied and adhered to** in the argumentation of a position for or against hunting, as well as the consistency of theoretical arguments and moral positions themselves.

This serves as a basis for my questions about the arguments surrounding trophy hunting and integrity. As mentioned briefly, certain agendas and interests, influenced by belief and ideology, may outweigh immediate moral and ethical concerns on some levels, resulting in inconsistency and therefore a lack of integrity in terms of the holistic application of moral principles through action. **Answers to questions about integrity and consistency may therefore help to bridge the gap between agenda, actions and interests** on the one hand, and **belief and ideology** (influenced by culture) on the other in terms of the quality of the moral justifications of hunting.

¹¹ Someone closely involved in the hunting industry, and who wished to remain anonymous, made this observation in a private correspondence. It is important to note that this observation is from an individual with an obvious personal interest at stake, and is enlightening in that it reveals an awareness of the contextual validity of arguments against his own position.

¹² Curnutt 1996: 65-89.

The interpretation of integrity has a **direct bearing on the management of game populations and ecosystems as far as hunting is concerned**, because it entails the idea that by protecting the integrity of community processes (ecosystems) one is essentially protecting the plurality of values exemplified in nature. And it follows that **by protecting the integrity of ecosystems, one also protects the animals and species** that are sustained by them.¹³

This goes to the heart of the debate surrounding the sustainable utilisation of wildlife through activities such as hunting – **especially where claims are made that trophy hunting is ecologically sustainable** – as it recognises the inherent complexity of ecosystems and the fact that an integrated, systems approach to environmental management is required to address and manage these complex ecosystems,¹⁴ **considering that species do not exist as separate units in isolation from one another but rather exist interdependently**. Game management practices¹⁵ that are geared towards determining carrying capacities and **appropriate levels of off-take for hunted animals are intended to be mindful of this consideration, as short-term financial considerations often take precedence over sustainability and wildlife concerns** in instances where natural resources are exploited.

The “shortsighted economic reasoning that ignores the scientific evidence that intensive management often leads to gradual decline in productive systems”,¹⁶ has been symptomatic of many wildlife conflicts. Approaching environmental decision-making and management issues with the aim of preserving ecological integrity is thus intended to reduce the risk of this occurring.

An obvious response to this would be: firstly, how does one quantify integrity and **what sort of indicators could be used to denote the integrity of ecosystems?**¹⁷ The seasonal rainfall and climate of biospheres and ecosystems change, populations fluctuate, plant encroachment and succession takes place, all in line with the dynamic nature of complex ecosystems. Furthermore, human intervention or interference is inevitable in enclosed ecosystems, so a notion of integrity needs to **include the human factor where the changes in the ecosystem are brought about by human action**. This is admittedly difficult to answer, and Norton’s interpretation attempts to provide for one: namely, that the two concepts of “stability” and “beauty” be employed as additional criteria in the search for integrity.¹⁸

¹³ Norton 1996a: 117.

¹⁴ Norton 1996a: 117.

¹⁵ Also called “adaptive management” as practiced in South Africa, and as seen in Botswana in efforts to determine acceptable quotas of animal offtake for certain areas (as in Peake 1999, for example). Briefly, adaptive management entails a formal trial and error approach to conservation, in that the management of wildlife incorporates the complex relationships between ecology, sociology, and economics where the outcome of certain actions is uncertain. Wildlife managers therefore need to adapt (hence “adaptive management”) to these uncertainties (Adams and McShane 1992: 99).

¹⁶ Norton 1996b: 99.

¹⁷ This question is also raised by King (1991: 66-67).

¹⁸ Norton 1996a: 117.

However, as integrity, stability and beauty are themselves value-laden concepts open to interpretation, which in management approaches inevitably imports human preferences as to what is beautiful, stable etc.,¹⁹ a second question arises: namely, does an emphasis on the notion of integrity in relation to the *management* of ecosystems need to take cognisance of other values and considerations, such as the notion of duties and **obligations towards individual animals within the ecosystem, and how would such a cognisance influence the broader objectives of biodiversity preservation?**

The hunting debate thus centres around the above considerations, as well as the **separation of the notion of the rights of animals and species**, through the **emphasis on ecosystems and the biotic community, which is a common characteristic of most management approaches to conservation**. I aim to therefore explore different notions of integrity and how they relate to each other within the broad issues which characterise the hunting debate, namely the integrity of moral action, ecosystemic integrity, the integrity of integration (i.e. the integration of moral views within human life), and the logical integrity of certain arguments themselves.

¹⁹ King 1991: 67.

Public Opinion

One of **the main aims for both sides in the hunting debate is undoubtedly to win public support for their views**. A large portion of the public can be considered uninformed, uninterested, or even ambivalent **regarding the morality of hunting or killing for recreation**.²⁰ Pro-hunting parties are therefore pitted against anti-hunting groups in a **fierce battle over public opinion and sympathy for their agendas and interests**.

This is because the **weight of public opinion** will be an important factor in **determining the future of trophy hunting**, as enhanced public awareness about conservation issues inevitably brings a lot of **pressure to bear on decision-making bodies in conservation**.²¹ Conservation organizations, governmental and non-governmental alike, whilst by no means contingent on public opinion for their decision making process, do need to be **mindful of the interests of the public** at large in the transparent nature of a developing democracy in South Africa particularly, and in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa²² and environmental legislation.²³

No wonder, then, that the issue of trophy hunting has been so fiercely and vigorously contested between the two positions. For years, hunters have been under fire from what they termed **were “naïve” and “hypocritical” “bunny-lovers”, “tree-huggers”, “greenies”, “bleeding hearts”** etc.,²⁴ and had perhaps been reluctant to continually defend their views and lifestyle from what they may have perceived to be “intolerant extremists”. For example: *“The emotionally and ideologically founded attacks of the animals rights industry against the sustainable use of nature, and in particular against sustainable hunting practices is increasingly considered as*

²⁰ Causey 1996: 81.

²¹ Sowman, Fuggle and Preston 1995: 51-52. An example of this was when Cape Nature Conservation implemented the decision to cull the invasive Tahr species from the slopes of Table Mountain. A huge public outcry caused them to put the culling on hold, largely due to pressure from the interest group called “Friends of The Tahr” (Zintl 2003: 32-34). This was even after an exhaustive public consultative process was undertaken before the decision to cull was reached. Although Cape Town is a metropolitan centre and any environmental decisions are inevitably scrutinised more closely than in more remote areas, the example does serve to illustrate the potential influence of public opinion and emotion on environmental decision-making processes. The Tahr’s were eventually culled.

²² Act 108 of 1996, as amended on 11 October 1996 (Cf. South Africa 1996).

²³ Particularly in line with the South African Bill of Rights, Chapter 2, section 24: “Everyone has the right a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation; ii) promote conservation; and iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development”); and the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), Act 107 of 1998, Chapter 1, section 4 b, c and d (as it appears in the *Government Gazette*, No. 19519, 27 November 1998, p. 12.). (South Africa 1998).

²⁴ Nel 1995: 31.

*interference in the sovereign rights of developing countries and as a subtle form of neo-colonialism ...*²⁵ In South Africa, some have even gone as far as calling for **society to “purge itself of the social canker (A source of spreading corruption or decay) of animal rightism”**.²⁶

Similarly, anti-hunters condemned hunters for being **“cold-blooded immoral killers”, “brutish”, “bloodthirsty”, “arrogant” and “selfish”**. Hunters have also been labelled as **“inhumane”, “uncaring”, “irresponsible” and “unjust” in their approach and activities towards wildlife**.²⁷ These moral judgements stem largely from sceptical assumptions surrounding hunters’ motives and intentions (and their views towards wildlife), which is hinted at by generalised statements such as the following: **“Killing for fun, status or profit is ethically unjustifiable and must be condemned by all responsible people.”**²⁸

A common response by some hunters, when faced with criticism from anti-hunting groups, often took the form of a declaration that: “if you don’t hunt, you don’t know”; meaning **that in order to understand hunting, you need to be a hunter, and once you are a hunter, you will know what I know and realize that I am right.**

Although this is not representative of most of the **pro-hunting groups who were striving to put forward legitimate defences of hunting**, it does serve to highlight the personal frustration that can be generated by discussions of the topic, as well as the unwillingness to abandon a particular position when faced with arguments to the contrary. This could also be because **hunting holds considerable cultural value as “a way of life” to the people who practice it**, and has contextual significance to them and their daily existence. Indeed, pro-hunters state that, “[Hunting] is more than our heritage and culture, it is our essence”.²⁹

²⁵ Damm 2001d.

²⁶ Thomson 2002: 27.

²⁷ Nel 1995: 31; Horning 1999: 55; HSUS 2003d.

²⁸ Steve Smit, spokesman for FALCON, as quoted in Nel 1995: 31.

²⁹ Conservation Force 2003d.

Organised Proponents

Moral arguments, without context, against hunting by **animal rights and liberation groups** therefore do not always consider, as King says, that: “hunting is a sign of a particular way of looking at the nonhuman world”.³⁰ Whilst it may be true that this way of life *itself* may be the object of moral inquiry,³¹ it does not follow that **moral arguments (without context)** against the practice of hunting **necessarily lead to an appraisal of the moral character of hunters**, something which anti-hunters often do.

In the past, anti-hunting groups have arguably been more successful than pro-hunting groups in winning over public opinion and garnering sympathy for their cause, largely because of the pro-active nature of their campaigning; whereas pro-hunting groups took a more reactive approach, only responding to criticisms when it felt it was necessary, and begrudgingly so.

This has **changed in recent years, however, as pro-hunting groups have made a more concerted effort to offer an organized and collective response to the allegations and arguments against hunting**. By collectively campaigning for greater understanding of their position and views, the pro-hunting groups have undertaken a pro-active position in the debate: “As tolerant citizens we have to live with these fringe movements, but we certainly do not have to suffer their attacks without reaction. As a matter of fact, the time of reactive play is past. **Hunters and conservationists have finally woken up and are ready to put facts straight and to open the eyes of a sadly gullible public to the harsh realities of life in the new millennium.**”³²

The battle lines have been clearly drawn as it were, and the battle, generally speaking, is between two groups: **people arguing from a preservationist perspective (anti-hunting), and those from a conservationist perspective (pro-hunting)**.

Reports, articles, books and papers dealing with the topic of the ethics and morality of hunting are numerous and varied in scope, with new publications appearing continuously. Within this body of literature, many attempts have been made to try and clearly posit the relevant problems inherent in taking a specific fundamental stand for or against hunting, and some of the arguments both for and against hunting have been shown to be far from infallible.³³ Moral arguments from the perspectives of animal rights,³⁴ animal liberation,³⁵ utilitarian value theory,³⁶ scientific

³⁰ King 1991: 70.

³¹ King 1991: 70.

³² Damm 2001a.

³³ Notably by Bekoff and Jamieson (1991: 375-378); Curnutt (1996: 65-89); Loftin (1984: 241-250); and Moriarty and Woods (1997: 391-404).

³⁴ Regan, T. 1983. *The Case for Animal Rights*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

³⁵ Singer, P. 1976. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Avon Books.

ideology and ecology (ecosystem integrity)³⁷ are just some of the theories that are drawn on in the debate, and thrown into the mix as it were.

The choice of values and viewpoints expressed seem to overlap and the line between sub-categories of conflicting values inherent in the debate is by no means clearly defined. As such, there is a **distinct lack of consensus both within and between those groups for and against trophy hunting over criteria for establishing the moral and ethical validation of hunting**. The result is that within the theoretical and philosophical sphere of debate surrounding the issue of hunting, there is a valid concern that the pluralism (The belief that no single explanatory system or view of reality can account for all the phenomena of life) that is characteristic of the debate lapses further into an “indecisive form of relativism”.³⁸

I offer a **theoretically holistic and contextually sensitive alternative to approaching environmental decision-making and the hunting debate, with integrity as the founding conceptual criterion**. In this approach, as such, I don't offer one moral theory, position or criteria over another, or seek to replace one with another as far as the moral criteria for the validation of hunting is concerned, but rather to adopt an approach and “cultivate an attention to the conditions under which things become ‘evident,’ ceasing to be objects of our attention and therefore seemingly fixed, necessary, and unchangeable”.³⁹ This is in order to help further an understanding of the contexts in which arguments for and against hunting function, as well as the role the act of hunting plays in societies.

³⁶ Gunn 2001: 68-95; Vitali 1990: 69-82.

³⁷ Wenz 1983: 183-197.

³⁸ Light and Katz 1996: 4.

³⁹ Rabinow 1994: xix.

Fundamental questions which I raise and attempt to answer are:

- ❖ What is it about the act of hunting, and the experience, that is so appealing to many people yet at the same time so abhorrent to so many others?
- ❖ What does hunting mean?
- ❖ What does it mean *to hunt*?
- ❖ How do the interpretations of these meanings affect the debate?
- ❖ How are these meanings reinforced in the debate, and how are certain notions emphasised, whilst others are marginalized?
- ❖ What do the stories and rituals surrounding hunting, and ethical restraints imposed on organised trophy hunting reveal about the state of being of individual hunters vis-à-vis their motives, desires and intentions?
- ❖ How does the concept of integrity affect the way in which arguments for and against hunting could be viewed?
- ❖ How does an examination of the historical emergence of the concept “hunting experience” influence the way we see trophy hunting in present day terms?
- ❖ Is hunting primarily a cognitive and sensory *experience* which enables those who practice it to “return” to the land and nature, being able to exercise a degree of individual autonomy and freedom in the experience of interacting with nature on a primal and equal footing?
- ❖ Or does *to hunt* mean an expression or exercise of domination over the natural world, as is evident in the *killing act* central to, and the culmination of, a hunt?
- ❖ What symbolic phenomena can be identified in the debate (i.e. theories, concepts, texts, narratives, statements etc.), how do these phenomena function as ideological “tools” within the debate, and to what purpose?
- ❖ What are the power relations within the debate, and what is at stake?
- ❖ How are relations of domination maintained, or created?
- ❖ How does the concept of the hunting experience function (as an ideological symbol) within the ideology of pro-hunting groups?
- ❖ What symbolic appeals are made by anti-hunters in their objections to trophy hunting, and
- ❖ How do they marginalize the beliefs of hunters, and vice versa?

Methodology

There is a **vast field of reference** to consult before one is able to **gain a clear idea of where the crux of the problem lies**. This is by no means easy, and a fair amount of “conceptual unpacking” needs to be done before a **coherent description of the moral and ethical problems inherent in the debate can be formulated** which encapsulates them sufficiently. Central to this is an understanding of **the meaning of hunting both as an individual experience, and as an ideological construct**. It is important to understand the social, political, historical and economic contexts within which hunting originates and finds its expression. In line with this, the concepts of *integrity*, *hunting*, *experience*, *intention*, and *desire* will require further clarification.

Many justifications of hunting revolve around the meaning of the hunting experience to individuals. Moral theories about hunting, however, do not convey the meaning of the experience of hunting (and they are rightly not intended to either, nor can they). Moral philosophical theories are a reflective, objective discourse *about* the moral quality of actions resulting from ethical choices, and are intended to semantically explore and **clarify the rightness and wrongness of human action**. An experience however is a singular, immediate, lived-through immersion in the present by an individual and is by nature highly subjective and impossible to empirically quantify.

With this in mind, namely that it is impossible to grasp *absolutely* the *essence* of an experience through language, it would help to examine the *articulation* of experience through narratives in order to overcome this. An examination of the hunting experience as related by individuals through hunting narratives (stories), the historical and cultural context of the emergence of these narratives, and the significance of their impact on individual ideological stances may serve to highlight different conceptions of what the hunting experience entails. If more than one essential kind of hunting experience can be shown to exist, then to what extent do they differ? How do these differences affect the moral justification of a hunting experience? Furthermore, **by which criteria do we accept or reject the validity of a hunting experience – in terms of integrity?**

An ideological critique of the hunting experience, therefore, may help to identify or **clarify, firstly, the reasons why people are able to have such divergent views**⁴⁰ and believe that they are right (an examination of intentionality); and secondly, to examine the essence of hunting and what it entails.

⁴⁰ This may fall under the banner of Moral pluralism (Hinman 1997).

In undertaking an ideological critique of the hunting experience, the methodology used will be to briefly examine the hunting experience as it is revealed through different narrative perspectives. By taking examples of these hunting narratives, I aim to explore their ideological character, and how “the hunting experience” may function within the debate as a historical and symbolic construction, by analysing:

- 1) the historical context of the *emergence* of the narratives,
- 2) how they are *articulated*,
- 3) how they were *circulated* and received, and
- 4) their *effect* in terms of constituting the meaning of hunting.⁴¹

This will be done after a discussion of the **political climate surrounding the hunting debate**, and will help to contextualise certain ideological notions of the hunting experience within the debate. The following specific texts and narratives will therefore briefly be examined with the above aim in mind: hunting narratives in the form of **traditional San folklore and hunting tales**, which may offer an insight into a pre-modern and perhaps authentic conception of the hunting experience of certain hunter-gatherer communities; the writings of **Ernest Hemingway**,⁴² which chronicle his big game hunting adventures in Africa and serve as a good example of a modernist perspective on the meaning of the hunting experience; and the hunting experience propounded by José Ortega y Gasset.

Hemingway’s book, *The Green Hills of Africa*, chronicling his hunting trip to Africa, **will be examined** for the reason that (as Carlos Baker wrote): “Anyone interested in the methods by which patterns of experience are translated to the purpose of art should find abundant materials for study in the three stories – nonfiction and fiction – which grew out of Hemingway’s African expedition.”⁴³

The famous Spanish existentialist philosopher Ortega y Gasset, on the other hand, writes from a discernible postmodern perspective in his famous treatise ***Meditations on Hunting***.⁴⁴ He states that: “Just as the leaping stag tempts the hunter, the topic of hunting has often tempted me as a writer. My intention is to try to clarify a little this occupation in which devoted hunters engage with such scrupulousness, constancy, and dedication”, and: “I ask myself, what the devil kind of occupation is this business of hunting?”⁴⁵ *Meditations on Hunting* is also a landmark text in the philosophical explorations of the meaning of hunting, and because it is extensively quoted by pro-hunting groups, it would be useful to examine the role it plays in the pro-hunting debate.

⁴¹ Cf. Michel Foucault – Rabinow, P. 1994. *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*. London: Penguin Books; and Rabinow, P. (ed.). 1984. *The Foucault Reader*. London: Penguin Books.

⁴² Hemingway, E. 1994. *The Green Hills of Africa*. London: Arrow Books.

⁴³ Baker 1956: 196.

⁴⁴ Ortega y Gasset, J. 1972. *Meditations on Hunting*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.

⁴⁵ Ortega y Gasset 1972: 21-22.

Besides the above texts, I consulted the **extensive body of philosophical literature** dealing with the issue of hunting and animal rights, and also **conducted interviews**, formal and informal, with people on **both sides of the debate**. I found the **Internet** useful in reliably gleaning the various positions of the parties involved and their arguments as they present themselves publicly, in cases where I was not able to do so through interviews or private correspondence; it was also useful in getting an idea of the variety of arguments used by individuals not officially affiliated to the main groups in the debate, and to see how language is symbolically used to sustain certain ideological “truths”.

To a certain extent, the **Internet offered an up to date and current reflection of the status of the debate**, particularly in the informal public arena, which may have to do with the fact that the World Wide Web is a useful medium in disseminating information quickly, and serves to efficiently saturate the debate with a particular point of view. Other forms of popular media, such as weekly/daily newspapers, and magazines served the same purpose, and are used extensively by both groups to enforce or affirm their viewpoints.

Furthermore, the **focus of this course will primarily be on Trophy Hunting in Africa of the “Big Five”** species (Lion, Leopard, Rhinoceros, Elephant, and Buffalo). Doing so will allow for the **motives and desires which drive individuals to hunt, to be examined against a contextually sensitive ethical framework**, as the hunting of each animal species respectively entails ethical considerations. This is because the different social structures and behaviour patterns of the respective species require varying methods of hunting them. For example, **leopard** are normally “baited” at night and shot from a concealed blind,⁴⁶ whilst **buffalo** are tracked on foot in daylight; each method therefore **highlights various definitions of the Fair Chase Principle**.⁴⁷ Also, the fact that leopards and lions are themselves predators, and only kill or engage with other predators when threatened, due to territorial disputes, or over food,⁴⁸ etc. raises **ethical considerations regarding the nature of the animal being hunted and the motives behind it; namely, whether for food, conquest, competition, etc.**

The course will attempt to construct a suitable analysis of “what the right thing to do” would be concerning trophy hunting with integrity, or even if this is at all possible.

⁴⁶ Marsh 2001a: 46-48.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this principle, as well as the ethical Code of Conduct of hunting organisations.

⁴⁸ Bothma and Le Richie 1984: 276.

Structure of the Course

In Modules # 2, # 3, and # 4, I aim to **identify the most prominent role players in the hunting debate**, giving an overview of their respective positions regarding hunting in a Southern African context, in keeping with the focus of the course. This is in order to, firstly, provide a detailed orientation to the debate as a whole; secondly, to clarify the levels of influence and links in the debate, and the manner in which certain positions are reinforced by other views and positions; and thirdly, to reveal and map the stalemate as it were.

In Module # 5 I give a **summary of the stalemate between the pro- and anti-hunting groups**, explain some of the sources of it, and give preliminary pointers to overcoming it.

I begin Module # 6 with an **exploration of the act of hunting**, and aim to offer definitions of the different conceptions and forms of hunting, in seeking to conceptually clarify the usage of the term. I look at and examine certain **common usages of the word** in literature, and define certain categorical types. I also examine the **historical origins of hunting from anthropological, cultural, traditional and economic perspectives**.

Once we have an idea of the commonly accepted usages of the term hunting, its various definitions, and its historical emergence and significance, we will be in a position to **examine the hunting experience as an ideological construct and as a philosophical and psychological phenomenon** in Module # 7. There I discuss the political climate within which the debate takes place, and the political characteristics of the debate itself. I examine hunting narratives relating an immediate hunting experience from a pre-modern, modern and postmodern perspective and explore their historical emergence, the way in which they were received and articulated, and their effect and influence.

Module # 8 is devoted to a discussion of the **concept of integrity and its importance as applicable to individual hunters** (the hunting experience as a psychological/philosophical phenomenon) and the ideological construct of the hunting experience; with a final analysis of the relevance of the concept of integrity to modern day trophy hunting against the backdrop of ideology and experience.

Course Synopsis

Module # 1: - Introduction to Hunting

Component # 1 – Introduction to Hunting

Module # 2: - Pro-Hunting Organisations

Component # 1 – Safari Club International

Component # 2 – Code of Ethics and Fair Chase

Component # 3 – Trophy Hunting & Local Associations

Module # 3: - Silent Pro-Hunting Role Players And Interested Parties

Component # 1 – NGOs, World Bodies, Treaties & Govt. Organisations

Component # 2 – Industry Stakeholders and the Hunting Economy

Module # 4: - Anti-Hunting Role Players

Component # 1 – International Anti-Hunting NGOs

Component # 2 – Moral Philosophy

Module # 5: - Mapping the Stalemate

Component # 1 – Contours of the Stalemate

Component # 2 – Clashing World Views

Module # 6:-Historical Emergence of Trophy Hunting & its Place In Africa

Component # 1 – The Emergence of Hunting & the Primitivist Defence

Component # 2 – The Historical Emergence of Trophy Hunting in Africa

Component # 3 – What Hunting “is not”

Component # 4 – What Hunting “is”:

Component # 5 – Trophy Hunting and “True Hunting”

Module # 7: - The Politics and Culture of Hunting

Component # 1 – The Political Nature Of The Hunting Debate

Component # 2 – Hunting And Culture

Component # 3 – The Hunting Experience as a Historical Symbolic Construction

Component # 4 – Hemingway and Ortega Meet Naess

Component # 5 – Hunter-Gatherer Symbolism

Module # 8: - Integrity and the Hunting Experience

Component # 1 – Integrity and the Trophy Hunting Experience

Component # 2 – Integrity and Anti-Hunting Positions

Component # 3 – Integrity and Trophy Hunting of The Big Five In Botswana & RSA

Component # 4 – Pondering the Conclusion

Importance of the Study

Trophy hunting in Africa is a human activity that directly affects lives of individual animals and species, as well as the complexity of ecosystems and biodiversity as a whole. **It entails the killing of animals in situations where it is not absolutely necessary to do so in terms of survival for the individual hunters.** However, trophy hunting has the **potential to pragmatically effect positive change** in the lives of rural African communities, and their cultural values towards wildlife. This obviously raises many concerns about the sustainability of the practice, and the ethical and moral basis of undertaking such an activity; and many arguments and rationales are put forward to justify or condemn the practice.

The trophy hunting debate therefore offers a prime example of an environmental conflict that combines social, political, economic and ecological arguments relevant to concerns over the preservation of biodiversity, in line with the concerns expressed in landmark international treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Against the backdrop of increasingly fragile and threatened ecosystems, habitat degradation, loss of biodiversity imposed by human pressures, and the increasing rate of anthropogenic extinction,⁴⁹ any human tendencies that further threaten the life sustaining natural processes of the planet need to be critically analysed and evaluated in order to minimise any risk of needless exploitation.

The necessity of the activity of trophy hunting is therefore continually questioned against this backdrop, and the importance of this study lies in examining the role of contextual approaches to environmental issues, and particularly the development of certain arguments and justifications for the sustainable use of natural resources; as well as the manner in which these arguments are applied.

By using integrity as a founding conceptual criterion, an appeal to a universal and moral virtue is made, one that is hopefully able to bridge the ideological stalemate inherent in the hunting debate.

⁴⁹ Aitken 1998: 393-395.