

Religion and the Environment

Religious Studies

RLST 3820-003

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Location: Environmental Design 122

Meets M-W-F 1:00-1:50

Office Hours: Noon – 1:00 or by appointment

Course Description

The texts and practices of many religious traditions articulate beliefs and responsibilities regarding the relationship of humans and the natural world. Concerns about climate change, resource depletion, species extinction, genetic engineering and biodiversity have intensified in recent years.

This course will examine the historical and contemporary attitudes and actions of religion in responding to environmental concerns. We will investigate four worldviews in particular: Native American traditions, Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism and also consider how these traditions interact with public policy debates and their position on current environmental issues. Religions both create and mitigate conflict. This course will consider ethical and moral approaches, philosophical principles and movements including ecofeminism to provide tools for dialogue and critical thinking around ecological challenges.

Course Goals

In this course, students will gain an understanding of diverse religious traditions' approach to the environment, both in theory and in practice. Students will examine different ethical and moral approaches to valuing the environment and gain a broad spectrum understanding of diverse theoretical approaches including ecofeminism and deep ecology. Students will learn to see multiple sides of an issue and consider diverse worldviews and perspectives.

Grading

Attendance and Participation- 10%

Three Short reflection papers – 30% **(Due Wed. Feb. 15, Mon. Feb. 22, Mon. March 28)**

Mid-term take home essay assignment -20% **Due Monday March 17**

Presentation of final paper 10%

Final paper - 30% **Due May 5**

Required Texts

Gottlieb, Roger (editor). *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment* (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge, 2004.

Sponsel, Leslie. *Spiritual Ecology*, Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

The schedule of readings and assignment is tentative and subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and by email prior to any class assignment.

Assignments not listed in the readings or not contained in required books will be posted to D2L.

Wednesday Jan. 18- Introductions

Friday Jan. 20- Religion in Age of Environmental Crisis –

Reading: Gottlieb, p. 3-20

Religion and Challenge of Environmental Crisis – Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

<http://fore.yale.edu/publications/books/cswr/the-challenge-of-the-environmental-crisis/>

Monday Jan. 23: [Water is Life](#) – Dakota Access Pipeline and Indigenous Rights

Reading: Race, Sacrifice and Native Lands in Gottlieb, pp.716-720

Wed. Jan. 25-

Intro to Scholars of Religion and Ecology

Reading: Chapter 12 Supernovas in Sponsel, p. 83-97

Fri. Jan 27

Reading: Ethical Theory and the Environment - from Joseph DesJardins, Environmental Ethics, Chapter 2 p. 17-41

Mon. Jan. 30

Reading: Responsibilities to the Natural World - Joseph DesJardins, Environmental Ethics, Chapter 5 p. 94-121

Eco-Kosher and Jewish Approaches

Wed. Feb. 1

Reading: Eco-Kosher – Arthur Waskow in Gottlieb, p.273-276

Friday Feb. 3

Reading: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabbi-arthur-waskow/tu-bishvat-rebirthing-trees-and-the-tree-of-life_b_2421947.html

Read two more articles here: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/eco-judaism/>

Literature and Film

Mon. Feb. 6

Reading: Desert Spirituality- Burning Man in Sponsel, pp. 131-136

Wed. Feb. 8

Reading: Sponsel – James Cameron (Creator of Avatar), p. 137-146

Fri. Feb. 10

Reading: Watch Avatar film

Mon. Feb. 13- Work on response paper

Ethical and Philosophical Approaches

Wed. Feb. 15 Response Paper 1 Due

Reading: Thoreau, Emerson, Muir, Leopold in Gottlieb, p. 29-38

Chapter 7- Thoreau p. 51-56 and Chapter 8- John Muir, p.57-63 in Sponsel

Friday Feb. 17

Reading: from DesJardins, “The Land Ethic,” p. 176-201

Mon. Feb.20

Reading: Reading: David Abram, Thomas Berry, Joanna Macy, Paul Shepard in Gottlieb, p.476- 508

Wed. Feb. 22

Reading: Joanna Macy – Reconnecting in Sponsel, p. 107-114, John Seed in Gottlieb, p.550-557

Friday Feb. 24

Reading: “No Place to Hide: Spirituality, Avoidance and Denial” in Gottlieb, pp.361-382

Buddhist Approaches

Mon. Feb. 27

Reading: Chapter 5- The Buddha in Sponsel, p. 31-42

Wed. March 1-

Reading: Dalai Lama in Sponsel, pp. 161-168

Friday March 3 Response Paper 2 Due

Tibetan Buddhist leaders Dalai Lama and HH Karmapa on Environment

Mongolian Buddhism and Bon – Tibetan Indigenous Religion

Mon. March 6-

Reading: From Believers to Bodhisattvas – Khenpo Tsultrim Lodro – Part 2 beginning with “Why Vegetarian?” – PDF online, Blog on “Why Buddhists Should be Vegetarian” (Link Below)

<https://sujato.wordpress.com/2012/01/28/why-buddhists-should-be-vegetarian-with-extra-cute/>

Wed. March 8-

Reading: To Save all Beings- Stephanie Kaza in Gottlieb, pp. 330-350

Friday March 10-

Christian Approaches

Monday March 13

Reading: Gottlieb, Lynn White and Pope John Paul II, p. 192-209 and Sponsel- Challenging Christians, p. 75-81 and Sponsel, St. Francis of Assisi p. 43-48-

Wed. March 15

Reading: Pope Francis Encyclical Laudato Si online at:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Friday March 17- Mid –Term Essay exam

Reading: - Sponsel- Green Patriarch, p. 115-120, Bartholomew Address in Gottlieb, pp. 227-231

Monday March 20-

Reading: Crunchy Cons –Rod Dreher – Chapter 6 The Environment and Chapter 7 Religion, pp. 151-218.
Posted online

Indigenous and Native American Approaches

Wed. March 22- Reading: Chapters 2-4, Animism and Indigenous Peoples in Sponsel p. 9-29, Selling off Apache Holy Land- NY Times – posted on D2L

Friday March 24- Luther Standing Bear in Gottlieb, p.39-42, The Creation – Ray Fadden in Gottlieb, pp. 56-60 Native Hawaiian Philosophy – Dudley in Gottlieb, pp.124-129, Aboriginal Perspective – Stan

McKay in Gottlieb, pp. 175-179 and Learning to Connect – Rippling Water Woman in Gottlieb, pp. 186-188

Week of March 27 – SPRING BREAK!

Mon. April 3

Reading: Black Elk in Gottlieb, pp.536-545, Brooke Medicine Eagle in Gottlieb, pp. 462-465, Mt. Graham Controversy in Gottlieb, pp. 647-650, Race, Sacrifice and Native Lands in Gottlieb, pp. 716-720, Linda Hogan in Gottlieb, pp. 46-49

Wed. April 5

Issues: Malheur Wildlife Refuge Land Dispute **Response Paper 3 Due**

Ecofeminism

Friday April 7

Reading: “Ecofeminism and Social Justice- Introduction,” Karen J. Warren in Environmental Philosophy, p. 139 -154.

Monday April 10

Reading: To Plant a Tree- Wangari Maathai in Sponsel, p. 123 – 130; Ruether, Gebara, Riley, Baker-Fletcher, Diamond and Seidenberg and Eisler in Gottlieb, pp. 388-461

Wed. April 12

Reading: “Impoverishment of the Environment- Women and Children Last” Vandana Shiva p. 178-193 in Environmental Philosophy, Chipko Women’s Concept of Freedom in Gottlieb, pp. 466-469

Friday April 14

Alternate Views from Islam,

Reading: “Islamic Response,” Gottlieb, pp. 285-299

Mon. April 17 Hinduism, Confucianism

Reading: “Hinduism and Deep Ecology,” “Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality,” Gottlieb, p. 300-329

Wed. April 19

Reading: Saving the World: Religion and Politics in Gottlieb, pp. 568-595, Environmental Justice in Gottlieb, pp. 596-612

Friday April 21

Reading: Reinhabiting Religion in Gottlieb, pp. 613-633, Globalization in Gottlieb, pp. 688-694

Mon. April 24

Reading: "Sacredness and Sustainability" (Religion and Theology 18 (2011) 77-92) posted on D2L

Wed. April 26 Issues: America has been duped on climate change

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2016/01/06/america-has-been-lied-to-about-climate-change/?tid=pm_opinions_pop_b

Friday April 28- Final paper presentations

Monday May 1- Final paper presentations

Wed. May 3- Final paper presentations

Friday May 5- Final paper presentations-**FINAL PAPER DUE – UPLOADED TO D2L**

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