

Religion and Ecology

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Tues/Thur 11:00-12:15
L/L B101

This course reflects a world-wide movement called the "greening of religion", ecotheology, ecospirituality, or religion and ecology. We will explore a diversity of sources and traditions, keeping in mind the powerful role religion can play in shaping everyday habits and in addressing moral issues regarding The course is geared to the introductory level; more materials are available from the professor for those who wish to explore one tradition or approach to ecospirituality in depth.

Course Purpose:

- 1) To explore traditional world religions as resources for ecological beliefs and practices; the environment;
- 2) To understand the important role of religion and spiritual values in everyday ecological choices;
- 3) To gain exposure to new interpretations of religious traditions and ecospiritual alternatives;
- 4) To investigate specific eco-religious concepts and practices as they might apply to one's personal life.

Course Texts:

- 1) WRE Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment, ed. R. Foltz (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003)
- 2) Reader Collected readings to supplement the primary text, available at Bittersweet
- 3) EP Earth Prayers, ed. E. Roberts and E. Amidon (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990)

Useful Websites:

Forum on Religion and Ecology	www.environment.harvard.edu/religion/
Coalition on the Env. & Jewish Life	www.coejil.org/
Nat'l Religious Partnership for Env	www.nrpe.org/
Evangelical Environmental Network	www.esa-online.org/een/

Course Outline

			<u>Assignments</u>
SEPT	2 Tues	Worldviews, Religion, and Environment	WRE preface, intro
	4 Thur	Religion and Ecology: an emerging field	Reader: Gardner; EP xix-xxiv
	9 Tues	Environmental Impact of Culture and Values: Science, Technology, and Economics	WRE ch 1, 2
	11 Thur	Indigenous/Animist Views Indigenous Traditions	WRE ch 3, 14: Potiguara EP 1-35, 137-149
	16 Tues	Indigenous Traditions	Reader: Grim
	18 Thur	Ethical Dilemmas for White Culture	Reader: Smith, Allen <u>DUE</u> : Self-Assessment Paper
	23 Tues	Animist/Goddess Traditions	Reader: Eisler, Keller
	25 Thur	Western Religious Views	WRE ch 8; EP 57, 62, 103, 112,

			Judaism	325, 354, 356, 371
	30	Tues	Judaism	Reader: Tirosh-Samuelson, Plaskow
OCT	2	Thur	Christianity: positive and negative views	Reader: Kinsley, Cobb EP 169-209, 226-233
	7	Tues	Christianity: a range of responses	WRE ch 9
	9	Thur	Christianity: moral imperatives Ecospiritual Activism Projects	Reader: McDaniel, Hessel WRE ch 14: Boff
	14	Tues	Islam/Sufism Saleem Ali, Environmental Studies	WRE ch 10; EP 4, 33, 50, 334 Reader: Ali
	16	Thur	Comparing Western Traditions (exam review)	<u>DUE</u> : R &E Practices Paper
	21	Tues	Eastern Views South Asian Traditions	WRE ch 4, ch 11: Sullivan
	23	Thur	Hinduism/Jainism	<u>DUE</u> : Mid-term Exam #1 EP 52, 59, 93, 114, 150, 153, 173, 175
	28	Tues	Buddhism	WRE ch 5; EP 44,145, 319, 390 Reader: de Silva
	30	Thur	Buddhism	Reader: Nhat Hanh, Sivaraksa EP 11 ,24, 120,242,266,348,381
NOV	4	Tues	Chinese Traditions	WRE ch 6
	6	Thur	Japanese Traditions	WRE ch 7
	11	Tues	Ecospiritual Activism: Project Presentations	<u>DUE</u> : Group Research Projects
	13	Thur	Presentations cont'd	
	18	Tues	Contemporary Perspectives Spiritual Deep Ecology	WRE ch 12; Reader: Snyder EP 43, 55, 612,80, 208, 283-329
	20	Thur	Ecofeminist spirituality	WRE ch 13 except Mellor; EP 14, 25, 46, 181, 380 Reader: Warren
	25	Tues	Reverence for Life Cami Davis, Art/Env Studies	WRE: Earth Charter Reader: Rockefeller, Carson
	27	Thur	Thanksgiving Break	EP 214-245

DEC	2	Tues	New Eco-Cosmologies Neopaganism, Goddess spirituality	WRE ch 15, ch 11:Harvey Reader: Spretnak
	4	Thur	Comparing Eastern and emerging views (exam review)	EP: 26, 94, 106, 122, 134, 156, 180, 192, 198
	9	Tues	Closing reflections: The place of spirit in life work for Earth	EP 331-375 <u>DUE</u> : Mid-term exam #2

Reading: We will be covering a lot of material in a short time, so it will be important for you to stay current on the reading. I will not be lecturing on the reading but expect to discuss your response to it as we clarify the main points. Please come to class prepared to speak to the substance of the assigned material. Each day you should bring three questions from the readings, one per article if there are several articles. I will collect these questions and draw on them to guide our discussion. We are using a brand new text which has many diverse and evocative readings. I hope you enjoy it and are inspired by the authors!

Group Work: You have two projects /presentations, one short, the other more in-depth. For both you will work with others in a small group. This requires outside meeting time in addition to time provided in class. Write-up of these projects will be minimal; oral presentations will be used to explain your process and results. Please plan and rehearse your presentations carefully to use the allocated time well and involve all group members. To whatever extent possible, include posters, overheads, slides, music, visuals to make your presentation creative and effective.

Written Assignments: You have two papers in the first half of the semester. Please take time to write these thoughtfully, with clear organization and structure. Be concise but offer specific examples to illustrate your points. Both papers are subjective in nature, but please draw on the readings where appropriate. You also have two take-home mid-term exams. Questions for the exams will be given out a week ahead of the due date. All written work should be completed on a word processing program and handed in as a printed paper. Do not hand in disks or handwritten papers. [I will not read these submissions]. Double-space your papers, allowing normal 1.25" margins for comments. Number your pages, and staple all pages together for safety. Check for computer errors, broken lines or unformatted paragraphs, and strange hyphenation. Spellcheck and proofread your work before handing it in. Use inclusive language; i.e. be conscious of your use of gender pronouns and referents. Use "people" or "humankind" instead of "man", and "he or she" or "they" instead of simply "he".

Course Policies

Absences

Attendance will be taken, and unexcused absences will factor into your final grade. Even if you are feeling a little under the weather, make an effort to come to class and keep up with the course rhythm, even if you don't feel like talking. Absences are not "excused" unless they are personally cleared with me by phone or email. I expect you to make it a commitment to attend every class, both for your own personal learning, and to contribute to the community of learners in the group.

Late work

Turn work in on time, i.e. at the beginning of class on the day the assignment is due. Late work is subject to penalties, the most important one being my lack of attention. Don't let your paper be the one buried in the pile! Your grade will drop a half grade each day the paper is late unless you have a medical excuse. If you need an extension due to illness or family emergency, please speak with me personally. I

will do my best to read all the papers at once after they are turned in and try to return them to you within two weeks.

Plagiarism

I support UVM's commitment to academic honesty. This means your written words should be your own. If you draw on other sources, they should be cited properly to give adequate credit. If you work with other students to prepare for an exam, your written answers should be individually constructed, not copied from each other or shared notes. Work that appears to be plagiarized will be given no credit and students will be asked to meet with the instructor to explain the situation. Plagiarism at UVM is grounds for academic suspension; don't do it.

Grading:

There are two papers, two projects/oral presentations and two exams for a total of 400 points. In order of due dates, these are:

	<u>points</u>	
Self-Assessment Paper	75	due September 18th
R & E Practices Paper	75	due October 16th
Mid-Term Take-home Exam	100	due October 23rd
Research Projects (includes oral presentation)	75	due November 11th
Class Participation (includes discussion, attendance, class opening contribution)	75	due throughout
Final Take-home Exam	<u>100</u>	due December 9th
TOTAL	500	

*Extra credit may be earned at 10-20 points per write-up of relevant video reports, guest speakers, or field trips. Please clear with professor first.

Grading Philosophy:

I do not believe that grades are central to the learning experience though they can be quite distracting. This course is about more than grades; it is about your personal understanding of the role of spirituality and religion in approaching human-environmental relations. Given the limits of grades, I will do my best to be fair, open, and communicative about the grading process. I will try to be clear about the assignments and my criteria for high quality work and give you good feedback on your papers. If you are in trouble and falling behind for any reason, please come in and talk to me. Also, if you would like to rewrite any of your work (including exam questions), you may do so for regrading and additional credit.

Teaching Approach:

You will be working closely with others in the class on your assignments, sharing resources and ideas and helping each other with direction, focus, and clarity. Please make an effort to work effectively in a group.. The more you learn with each other, the less you will be solely engaged with me in a learning relationship and the more capable you will be of undertaking group environmental work in the future.

I am very interested in seeing you develop your capacity for creative response to the environmental situation, drawing on personal and cultural strengths not necessarily typical in academic settings. I encourage you to offer yourself to the course and speak with spirit and presence as you participate. We can push each other to a very high caliber of discourse if we give our attention to synergy, openness, and integrity. Please be prepared to co-create this discourse by reflecting on the subject matter outside of class and doing as much of the reading you can before you come to class!

