

Religion and Ecology

ENVS 182, Fall 2013



Course director: Prof. Adrian Ivakhiv

Office: Bittersweet Bldg., 153 So. Prospect

Consultation hours: Tue 11:00-12:00 am, Wed 2:00-4:00 pm

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Overview

What is the relevance of religion to the perception and resolution of environmental problems? Answering this question requires some understanding of what religion is and how it is changing in today's world. This course will explore various understandings of religion in its relationship to environment/ecology/nature. It will examine the development of the field of "religion and ecology" and the so-called religious-environmental movement, assess various religious communities' responses to today's environmental issues, and consider historical, cultural, ecological, and scriptural/theological bases for beliefs and practices related to the environment across various traditions. Guest speakers from different faith traditions and student research presentations will form a significant part of the class.

Course objectives

The course is designed to help you answer the following questions:

- What *is* religion and how is it changing in today's globalized world?
- How have religious beliefs and practices contributed to human societies' relations with their ecological surrounds (positively, negatively, or neutrally)? To what extent might they be "complicit" in or "responsible" for the environmental crisis?
- How are different religious communities engaging with environmental concerns today?
- How could religious beliefs and practices help resolve today's environmental problems?
- How might the environmental movement itself be seen as a religious movement, and are there advantages and disadvantages to this (for environmentalists)?
- What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are needed to be able to work with people of faith on environmental issues? How can you practice these?

Reading Texts

Required Texts

GR *Grounding Religion: A Field Guide to the Study of Religion and Ecology*, ed. by Whitney A. Bauman, Richard R. Bohannon II, and Kevin J. O'Brien (Routledge, 2011).

TSE *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. by Roger Gottlieb, 2d ed. (Routledge, 2004).

Recommended & Supplementary Texts

WRE Foltz, R., ed., *Worldviews, Religion, & the Environment* (Wadsworth, 2003)

Oxford Gottlieb, Roger, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (Oxford UP, 2006).

AGF Gottlieb, R., *A Greener Faith: Religious Envir'ism & Our Planet's Future* (Oxford UP, 2006).

DGR Taylor, B., *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality & the Planetary Future* (U. Calif. Press, 2009).

ERN Taylor, B., et al., *Encyclopedia of Religion & Nature*, 2 vols. (Thoemmes Continuum, 2005).

Useful Websites:

Forum on Religion and Ecology

<http://fore.research.yale.edu/>

National Religious Partnership for the Envir't

www.nrpe.org/

Alliance of Religions and Conservation

www.arcworld.org

Web of Creation

www.webofcreation.org

GreenFaith

www.greenfaith.org

Emerging Earth Community

<http://emergingearthcommunity.org/>

Journal for Study of Relig'n, Nature, & Culture

<http://www.equinoxpub.com/journals/index.php/JSRNC>

Worldviews: Global Religion, Culture, & Ecology

<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15685357>

Religion Dispatches Magazine

<http://www.religiondispatches.org/>

The Immanent Frame (blog)

<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/>

Course Expectations

1. Reading & Class Participation (20% of grade)

The course will cover a great deal of material in a short time period, so it will be important for you to stay current on the reading. I will not be lecturing on the reading, but we will discuss your responses 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 two questions from the readings, or one question per article if there are several articles. We will collect these and draw on them to guide our discussion.

Your participation grade will incorporate your attendance and performance in class discussions. You are expected to attend all sessions. If you will be absent for any reason, please let me (or Sasha) know ahead of time and indicate how you plan to make up missed work. Participation is a significant part of your grade and difficult to do if you are not there.

Respect and consideration for fellow students, instructors, guests, and the ideas they express is essential at all times. This is a D2 course that deals with questions of value and identity, so this is especially important to keep in mind.

Additionally, you will be expected, on at least one occasion through the term, to do some additional reading and investigating into a topic of your choice (you will have to sign up for one of these earlier in the semester), and to prepare and carry out a 5-10 minute class exercise based on it. This should normally be carried out in pairs, but can be done individually if you prefer.

2. Written Reflections Papers (4 x 5% = 20%)

You will be required to submit four reflection papers over the course of the term. These will be based on your reflections on the readings and class topics. Questions will be provided in class. See Assignments Policy below.

3. Group Project: Case Study Analysis, Presentation, and Report (30%)

You will be required to work in small groups to investigate and analyze a case study of the interaction between religion and environmental action or practice. (A list of potential case studies will be provided, but it is suggested that you search out examples familiar to you. These can be in the Burlington area or anywhere else.)

This will involve carrying out interviews (face-to-face or electronic) with one or more activists or religious community members, and analyzing the interaction between religion and environmental practice in terms discussed in the course. For instance, questions you might wish to answer include: What are the religious/cultural sources for the activists' environmental commitments? How are they engaging with their religious/cultural traditions, e.g., through "recovery/reinterpretation," "criticism," or "reconstruction"? (We will discuss the differences between these three approaches in class.) To what extent do they act as bridge-builders between environmental movements and religious communities, and how do they do this? What challenges do they face? etc. The goal will be to illuminate these groups' practices in light of the readings and topics of the course, so as to understand the role religion plays in these forms of environmental activism.

Each group will present the results of its case study analysis in class during the week before Thanksgiving break (Nov. 19 and 21). Presenters should use the allocated time well, involving all group members and including audio-visual media (posters, overheads, slides, music, etc.) as appropriate.

Each group will be required to write a report based on their case study analysis. This report should contextualize your analysis within relevant course readings and/or other literature. Additional sources

should be consulted and appropriately cited and documented, with footnotes/endnotes and/or a bibliography of works cited. The report should also state your relationship, if any, to the group(s) analyzed, so that your position as researchers and/or practitioners is clearly defined.

This report will be due on the final day of classes (December 3). Format and requirements for the report will be provided in class.

Grading will be broken down as follows:

Group proposal	5%
Presentation	10%
Report	10%
Self-reflection (individual)	5%

4. Quiz & Exam (10% + 20% = 30%)

You will have one in-class quiz on October 10, and a final take-home exam for which questions will be given out a week ahead of the due date.

Writing policies:

Assignments: For full credit, all written assignments (including reflection papers, reports, and take-home exams) must be handed in on time. After that, points will be taken off at a rate of a half grade each day, unless you have a justifiable medical excuse. If you need more time for anything, ask about that well before the due date. All written work should be handed in as a printed paper; email copies or handwritten papers are not acceptable. Please double-space (or 1 1/2 space) your papers, allowing at least 1" margins for comments; number your pages, and staple all pages together for safety; and spellcheck and proofread your work before handing it in. Font-size should be at least 11-point (Times New Roman, Arial, or another common style) and easily readable.

Academic integrity: Please read UVM's statement on Academic Integrity at <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf> 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. It may result in failure in the course. Plagiarism at UVM is grounds for academic suspension; don't do it. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please ask.

Course Outline

*This schedule is **tentative** and subject to change. Not all listed readings will be required; details will be announced in class and on Blackboard.*

GR = Grounding Religion; TSE = This Sacred Earth

** indicates readings to be shared on Blackboard*

August

27 **Introduction and Course Overview**

29 **What is religion?**

Read: 1. GR, Introduction (p. 1-8) and Part I "Religion," Chapters 1-3 (pp. 13-45). Focus especially on chapter 1.

September

- 3 **What is ecology? What is religious about ecology?**
Read: 1. *GR*, Part II "Ecology," Chapters 4-6 (pp. 49-76).
- 5 **What is ecological about religion? And what *isn't* religion?**
Read: 1. Anderson, "Religion in conservation & management: a Durkheimian view," *JSRNC* 6.4 (2012): 398-417*
2. Loy, "The religion of the market," *WRE*, pp. 66-74*
3. Sponsel & Natadecha-Sponsel, "Illuminating darkness: the monk-cave-bat-ecosystem complex in Thailand," *TSE*, pp. 134-142
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10 **The Lynn White debate; Growth of the field of Religion and Ecology**

- Read:** 1. White, "The historical roots of our ecological crisis," *TSE*, pp. 192-201
2. Grim & Tucker, "Intellectual & organizational foundations," *GR*, ch. 7 (pp. 81-92)

12 **The 'greening' of religions; Debates within the field**

- Read:** 1. Taylor, "Introduction," *ERN*, pp. vii-xxi.*
2. Veldman, Szasz, Haluza-DeLay, "Climate change & religion: rv'w of existing research," *JSRNC* 6.3 (2012):255-66*
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17 **Judaism**

- Read:** 1. Tirosh-Samuelson, "Judaism," in *Oxford*, pp. 25-56*
2. Selections from The Hebrew Bible, *TSE*, pp. 77-89
3. Waskow, "What is eco-kosher?" *TSE*, pp. 273-276.
Video: *Renewal*: "Ancient Roots"

19 **Christianity**

- Read:** 1. Hart, "Catholicism," in *Oxford*, pp. 65-87*
2. Peterson, "In and Of the World: Christian theological anthropology & env. ethics," *TSE*, pp. 113-123
Video: *Renewal*: "A Crime Against Creation," "Eco-Justice," and "Going Green" sections
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24 **Christianity (continued)**

- Read:** 1. Pope John Paul II, "The ecological crisis," *TSE*, pp. 202-209
2. Other Christian environmental documents, *TSE*, pp. 202-231. (Read at least one of the statements carefully; browse the others.)

Guest speaker: Nancy Wright, Pastor, Ascension Lutheran Church, South Burlington

- 26 **Read:** 1. T. Berry, "The New Story," *WRE*, pp. 525-31*
2. S. M. Taylor, "Reinhabiting religion: Green sisters, ecological renewal & the biogeography of religious landscape," *TSE*, pp. 613-27

3. Sallie McFague, "The scope of the body: the cosmic Christ," *TSE*, pp. 262-71

Guest speaker: Sister Gale Worcelo, Green Mountain Monastery, Greensboro, Vermont

Video: *Spirit & Nature*: Sally McFague

October

1 **Islam**

- Read:** 1. "From The *Qur'an*," pp. 90-91, *TSE*
2. Izzī-Deen, "Islamic environmental ethics, law, and society," *TSE*, pp. 158-166
Viewing: *Spirit & Nature*: Seyyed Hossein Nasr

- 3 **Read:** 1. Ammar, "An Islamic response to the manifest ecological crisis," *TSE*, pp. 285-297
Viewing: *Renewal*: Food for Faith: Muslim tradition and charity forge bonds between urban communities and sustainable farms in Illinois (14:50 min)
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8 South Asian traditions

- Read:** 1. Chapple, "Defining Hindu religion," *TSE*, p. 301
2. Narayanan, "Water, wood and wisdom: ecological perspectives from Hindu traditions," *WRE*, 130-41*
3. Dwivedi, "Satyagraha for conservation: awakening the spirit of Hinduism," *TSE*, pp. 145-56
Video:

- 10 **No readings assigned**
In-Class Quiz
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15 Buddhism

- Read:** 1. Harris, "Ecological Buddhism," *WRE*, 171-181*
2. Harris, "A vast unsupervised recycling plant," pp. 207-13*
Video: *Spirit & Nature*: Dalai Lama excerpts; *Renewal*: "Compassion in Action: Green Sangha"

- 17 **Read:** 1. Kaza, "To save all beings: Buddhist environmental activism," *TSE*, pp. 330-347
Guest speaker: Dr. Stephanie Kaza, Director, Environmental Program
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22 Chinese & East Asian traditions

- Read:** 1. Miller, "Daoism and Nature," in *Oxford*, pp. 220-35*
2. "from The Tao Te Ching," *TSE*, pp. 73-76
3. Weiming, "The continuity of being," *WRE*, pp. 209-216*
4. Paracka, "China's three teachings & the relationship of heaven, earth & humanity," *Worldviews* 16 (2012): 73-98*

- 24 **Read:** 1. Bocking, "Japanese religion," *WRE*, pp. 247-251*
2. Hendry, "Nature tamed," *WRE*, 268-276*
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29 Indigenous traditions

- Read:** 1. Deloria, "Sacred Places and Moral Responsibility," *WRE*, pp. 81-8*
2. Nabhan, "Cultural Parallax in Viewing North American Habitats," *WRE*, pp. 104-10.*
3. McKay, "An Aboriginal perspective on the integrity of creation," *TSE*, pp. 175-179
Viewing: *Renewal*: "Sacred Celebration"

- 31 **Read:** 1. Snodgrass & Tiedje, "Indigenous nature reverence and conservation—seven ways of transcending an unnecessary dichotomy," *JSRNC* 2.1 (2008): 6-24.*
2. Segundad, "Biodiversity and tradition in Malaysia," *TSE*, pp. 180-185
3. Spoon & Arnold, "Collaborative research and co-learning: integrating Nuwuvi (Southern Paiute) ecological knowledge & spirituality to revitalize a fragmented land," *JSRNC* 6.4 (2012): 477-498*
Guest speaker: TBA
Viewing: *Spirit & Nature*: Audrey Shenandoah
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November

5 **Spiritual ecology: Environmentalism as religion**

- Read:** 1. Gottlieb, "Environmentalism as Spirituality," in *A Greener Faith*, pp. 147-71*
2. Taylor, "Religion and Environmentalism in America and Beyond," in *Oxford*, pp. 588-606*
3. Muir, "from Thousand-mile walk to the Gulf," *TSE*, pp. 34-35
4. Shibley, "Sacred nature: Earth-based spirituality as popular religion," *JSRNC* 5.2 (2011): 164-82*
5. Lovelock, "God and Gaia," *WRE*, pp. 531-40*

7 **Spiritual ecology: Deep ecology & ecofeminism**

- Read:** 1. Baugh, "Gender," *GR*, pp. 130-43
2. Reuther, "Ecofeminism: the challenge to theology," *WRE*, pp. 464-71*
3. Seed, "Gaia meditations," *TSE*, pp. 552-3
4. Baker-Fletcher, "Something or nothing: an eco-womanist essay on God, creation, indispensability," *TSE*, 428-36
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12 **New & emerging spiritualities: Neo-Pagan, Goddess, & New Age spiritualities**

- Read:** 1. Harvey, "Paganism and the environment," *WRE*, pp. 420-6*
2. Eisler, "Messages from the past: the world of the Goddess," *TSE*, pp. 449-59
Listening: Tippett & Ivakhiv, "Pagans Ancient & Modern" podcast, <http://www.onbeing.org/program/pagans-ancient-and-modern>

14 **Globalization, interfaith activism, & green pilgrimage**

- Read:** Ivakhiv, "Green Pilgrimage: Problems & prospects for ecology & peace-building"*
2. "The Earth Charter"
3. "The Cochabamba Declaration on Water," *TSE*, pp. 721-2
4. Lorentzen, "Globalization," *GR*, pp. 181-99
Video: *Renewal*: "Interfaith Power and Light"
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19 **Religious environmentalism in action**

- Read:** 1. Gottlieb, "Religious Environmentalism in Action," in *A Greener Future*, pp. 111-46*
Group presentations

21 **Group presentations**

26-8 Thanksgiving Week Break (no classes)

December

3 Final class
Due: Group Project Reports

TBA Final exam