

Religion, Nature and Globalization
REL 5183
MA/MS
Tuesdays 2:00-3:15, 3:30-4:30
Thursday 2:00-3:15¹**
Fall 2011²

Room: GC 283A, and TBD

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Course Description

This course draws from religious, philosophical, and scientific sources in order to examine planetary environmental problems. Environmental Philosophy and Ethics, as well as the emerging field of Religion and Ecology have developed over the past 50-60 years in an attempt to address problematic human-earth relations. However, underlying many of these approaches is a very western understanding of “nature” as pristine, pure and without human presence. The Modern, Western Scientific Worldview, for instance, has attempted to define globally what “nature” is. Historically, some religious worldviews have understood nature as either a pristine creation for which humans ought to be good stewards, or as evil material that must be controlled and eventually escaped. Finally, many Romantic thinkers have argued that culture and technology are the culprits of ecological and social ills, and human beings ought to return to a paradisiacal relationship with nature.

Might these very static notions of nature, as either pristine source of salvation or chaotic source of evil, exacerbate planetary ills? This is precisely what some political, post-modern, and post-colonial scholars have suggested. Nature, from this perspective should be thought of in the plural and not as something separate from “culture.” The very attempt to define nature and globalize that understanding of nature leads to social oppressions (think about what is coded as “natural” or “unnatural”) and ecological ills (through removing humans from their ecological and often urban contexts). This course will explore the effects of globalizing understandings of “nature” and “religion.” The hypothesis of the course is that both religion (culture) and science (nature) have served as apolitical foundations for forcing truth claims upon “others.” In response to this, this course will explore what a “planetary” understanding and ethic (Spivak) of the world as opposed to

¹ **Note: Students will have “in-class” meetings on Tuesdays; Thursdays are time to be spent researching, out of class, on the student’s own time: see requirements below.

² Syllabus is subject to change. Required purchased text, course requirements, and course time will not change, but some of the reading materials may depending on the context of the Fall 2010 semester.

that of the global might look like. In other words, what might planetary environmental ethics look like?

AIM OF THE COURSE

To explore the philosophical and religious sources and forms for the processes known as “globalization” as they pertain to the human and non-human community, and to discern an appropriate, non-colonizing environmental ethic in a world that has multiple meanings of “nature” and what is “natural.”

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will: a) familiarize students with “environmental ethics”, b) familiarize students with the literature in “religion and ecology,” and thus c) provide students with the resources to address and examine global, environmental problems and how those problems affect different peoples around the world.

REQUIREMENTS

Recognizing that there are many different learning styles, these requirements are designed to provide you with a variety of ways in which you can demonstrate your engagement with the materials in the course.

1. Class Participation—30%

A note on the timing of the course: You will be expected to show up for lectures with the BA/BS students from 2:00-3:15, then, from 3:30-4:30pm, we will discuss our focus reading for the day. The schedule below will reflect “lecture readings” and “focus readings.” During our time together you can ask questions about both, but we will focus on the “focus readings.” Further: Thursdays will be your official research hour. This does not mean that you only need to research from 2-3:15 on Thursdays, but that you should consider this time as research. You will need to turn a research log in (see below) with this portion of the course.

The first step to doing well in this class is to show up! You can’t be a part of the learning community if you are not present. If you have to be absent from the course, please notify me ahead of time. Any more than two absences (unless there are extenuating circumstances) will result in a lowering of your participation grade. One absence is a free-bee. The second, just let me know. **(Just attending all sessions gets you 10 points.)**

The second step to doing well in this course is to read the materials. I trust that you will read the materials for each week’s class. You will note that the readings are divided up into lecture reading and focus reading. The lecture reading is basic background for lectures that you should know. The focus reading is what we will discuss in our seminar-style discussion. Though, you should bring questions from the lecture readings to our discussion as they arise, the majority of our discussion will be focused on the Focus Readings. **Each student must come prepared with a concept chart for each day’s focus readings. We will discuss this in class. (These will count for 10 points)** Note: these charts are important and necessary to bring to class. You may be called upon during the course discussion to comment on your chart in class. You must also turn these in to me each week.

The third step to doing well in the class is to speak up during course discussions. I realize that we all exist on a spectrum between introversion and extroversion, but remember that the classroom is as good as all of the voices therein. We all lose if we don't hear your voice at some point(s) throughout the semester. **(This will count for 10 points)**

The classroom is a community of learners. That is, we are all in the process of critically engaging the lectures and course materials together. Learning should be a collaborative process and it will take all of us to learn this semester. Having said that there are some ground rules that should be followed in course discussions and assignments.

1. Confidentiality: Sometimes we are exploring serious issues in the course that may be hard to speak about or give voice too. I expect that students will respect one another's privacy in this course and allow room for this type of exploration.
2. Trust and Respect: The classroom is a learning community and it is only as good as the relationships of the people that make up the classroom. Give your classmates the benefit of the doubt before jumping to conclusions about what is said. Also, be sure to state your opinions, questions, ideas and beliefs in a way that is not intentionally disrespectful to others in the class.
3. Academic Honesty. In all written materials, students will be expected to cite sources. Plagiarizing and "Copying" from other students may result in a failing grade. Grading for written assignments will follow the Rubric that is handed out on the first day.
4. Students should be aware of everyone in the classroom and enable each person to contribute to the conversation. Likewise, each participant should refrain from dominating class discussion.
5. In order to facilitate dialogue, on discussion days we may break out into small groups.

3. Investigation of an Academic Journal: Research Methods (plus research log)—30%

Each student is expected to research a peer-reviewed, academic journal in Environmental Philosophy, Environmental Ethics, or Religion and Nature/Ecology. There are plenty online and in the FIU library. Please ok your journal with me during class on **September 13**. The point of the project is to look over the publication history of the journal and answer the following three (interrelated) questions in 5-7 pages. 1) Give a history of the journal: where is it published, what methods does it use/what academic fields are represented in the journal, who are the primary (if any) theoretical figures that publish in it, and what questions does it explore. 2) Given the Editorial Mission of the journal, what are two major issues or debates that the journal has focused on in the last 10 years? And 3) How does the journal problematize the issue of "the environment": is it theoretical / religious, practical, economic, sociological, etc.? Included here may be the description(s) of the way the journal examines the human-nature relationship. Using the Three subheadings, your analysis should be 5-7 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 inch font. These will be turned in to the class through moodle on **October 11**. We will discuss them during our reading-discussion time on **October 18**. The point of this project is to analyze various ways of looking at the issue of "environmental ethics" and philosophy from academic perspectives. It should be seen as a way, also, to help you focus in on a method for your final paper.

NB: Each time there is an assignment due, you should turn in the research log for this project. In other words, **On September 13, and October 11**, you should turn in a research log for every Thursday hour of what you have done. Please make this hour research time (not writing time). If you spend this hour well, each Thursday, your research will be much more productive.

You will want to fill out a weekly entry with AT LEAST the following categories; No more than a couple of sentences is needed for each category: Projected Research Goal; Work Done Toward this Goal; Reflection Upon the Goal; and Goal for Next Week.

4. Final Paper—40%

Each student is expected to write a final research paper, which will be done on the date of the final in the course. Please turn in an abstract on Moodle, with a few resources for your proposed project by class time on **October 25**. We will go over these in class together on **November 1**. The topic of the paper must be something we have addressed in the course, and must include a topic at the intersection of “religion, nature, and globalization.” We will discuss possible paper topics throughout the course. As a MA/MS student, it might be helpful for you to think about how this paper project could help you develop your thesis. I will pass out a rubric to let you know how I grade the papers. The papers will be due on **December 6 by 5:00pm**.

NB: Each time there is an assignment due, you should turn in the research log for this project. In other words, **On October 25, and December 6** you should turn in a research log for every Thursday hour of what you have done. Please make this hour research time (not writing time). If you spend this hour well, each Thursday, your research will be much more productive.

You will want to fill out a weekly entry with AT LEAST the following categories; No more than a couple of sentences is needed for each category: Projected Research Goal; Work Done Toward this Goal; Reflection Upon the Goal; and Goal for Next Week.

They must follow a format (preferably Chicago or MLA) and must include research outside of the course reading materials. Note, please do not cite Wikipedia. It is a good starting point, but not an authoritative source as it tends to gloss over the controversies on a given topic/field. The paper must include (but in no way should be limited to): Two academic journal sources, two academic books, and two academic web sources. It should be no longer than 20 pages, double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12pt font.

I will not give any extensions on final papers, nor incompletes without **SERIOUS EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES**. This is not because I am a big meanie, but because in my experience students tend not to complete incompletes.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

This course adheres strictly to FIU’s plagiarism policy:

This Policy views plagiarism as one form of academic misconduct, and adopts the definition of the university’s Code of Academic Integrity, according to which plagiarism is:

the deliberate use and appropriation of another’s works without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for the ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Term papers acquired online or from other sources;
2. Copying of original material without attribution;
3. Use of other students’ work;

4. Copying and pasting, verbatim, information from Internet sources, without quotation marks and correct citation.

Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and a referral to the College of Arts and Sciences Dean of Students for academic misconduct.

Grading Scale

A	96-100	C	72-77
A-	91-95	C-	71, 70
B+	89, 88	D+	69, 68
B	82-87	D	62-67
B-	80, 81	D-	60, 61
C+	79, 78	F	59 and below

Required TEXTS

Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religions: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (University of California Press, 2009).

Whitney Bauman, Rick Bohannon, and Kevin O'Brien, eds., *Grounding Religion: A Fieldguide to the Study of Religion and Ecology* (Routledge 2010).

Teresa Brennan, *Globalization and its Terrors* (Routledge 2003)

David R. Keller, *Environmental Ethics: The Big Questions* (Blackwell 2010).

Other selected PDF Readings on Moodle.

Important Web Resources

Forum on Religion and Ecology: www.environment.harvard.edu/religion/religion.

Environmental Ethics: <http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Environ/Enviroethics.htm>.

Center for Environmental Philosophy: <http://www.cep.unt.edu/>.

Ecofeminism: <http://eve.enviroweb.org/>.

Environmental Justice: <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/>.

Evangelical Environmental Network: <http://prayerforcreationcare.creationcare.org/index.php>

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life: <http://www.coejl.org/index.php>

Indigenous Environmental Network: <http://www.ienearth.org/>

Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences: <http://www.ifees.org.uk/>

United Nations Environmental Program: www.unep.org

***NB: Please help me add to this list. I hope and actually expect to learn a lot from you this semester!**

Important Dates

September (1962):	Publication of Rachel Carson's <i>Silent Spring</i>
September 13:	Choose Journal!
September 26:	St. Francis Birthday
October 11:	Turn Journal Project in!
October 25:	Abstract for Final Papers due!
October 31:	Last day to drop with a DR grade
December 6:	Final Paper Due by 5:00pm!!!
December 19:	Anniversary of the Brundtland Report
December 24:	Anniversary of Apollo Earth Rise Image
February 16 (2005):	Kyoto Protocol Comes into Effect
March 24, (1989):	Exxon Valdez Oil Spill
March 26 (1974):	First Large Action of the Chipko Movement
April 1 (1940):	Birthday of Wangari Maathai
April 20-24, 2009:	Indigenous People's Global Summit on Climate Change
April 22 (1970):	First Earth Day
April 26 (1986):	Chernobyl Disaster
June 4 (1892):	Sierra Club formed with John Muir as President
July 4 (1845):	Thoreau moves to Walden Pond
August 2 (1978):	Lois Gibbs begins movement at Love Canal

Schedule

Conceptual Introductions

Week 1, August 23: Introduction to Course: Sources for Environmental Ethics. Overview of Syllabus and Requirements

READING:

Blackboard: Lynn White, The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis (PDF online)

Week 2, August 30: What is Religion? What is Nature?

READINGS: Keller, "Introduction" pp 1-24.
Grounding Religion, 1-46.

Focus: Taylor, 1-41.

Week 3, September 6: What is Nature? What is Religion?

READINGS: Keller, 193-220; 230-251.
Grounding Religion, 47-78.

Moodle: Val Plumwood, "Decolonizing Nature," 51-75

Focus: Taylor, 42-102.

Historical Overviews: Religion, Nature, and Cosmologies

Week 4, September 13: "Religion and Nature: The Ancient Near East, Greece and Proto-Forms of Modern Science"

READINGS: Keller, 57-88; 252-256.

Moodle: Selections from the *Enuma Elish*; Genesis 1 Creation Story; Ferngren, Chapter 5, "Aristotle", 33-46.

Focus: Moodle, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, Part 1, ch 1 and ch 4.

Week 5, September 20: Religion and Nature: Islamic Thought and the Scientific "Revolution": Shifting Paradigms.

READINGS: Keller, 352-367

Moodle: Ferngren, "Islam" pp 73-92. Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, chapters 5 and 7.

Focus: Moodle, *Inherited Land*, 64-79; *Dark Side of the Renaissance*, XXX-XXX.

Week 6, September 27: Colonization of land, animals and "others"

READINGS: Keller, 257-280.

Grounding Religion, 147-162.

Moodle: Bauman, Chapter 3, "Ex Nihilo, Erasure and Discovery," 57-78.

Focus: Taylor, 103-179.

Week 7 October 4: The Romantic "Return"

READINGS: Keller, 89-146. 311-327.

Moodle: Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 42-70.

Focus: Taylor, 180-222.

Topics in Religion and Ecology / Nature

Week 8, October 11: Globalization and its Discontents

READINGS: Keller, 409-413; 551-558.

Grounding Religion, 181-202

Moodle: Ruether, 1-44.

Focus: Journal Projects Due! No extra reading

Week 9, October 18: Religion, Gender and Nature

READINGS: Keller, 281-310.

Grounding Religion, 130-146.

Moodle: Merchant, *Reinventing Eden*, XXX-XXX.

Focus: Journal Projects on Moodle

Week 10, October 25: Technology, Religion and Nature

READINGS: Keller, 368-376

Moodle: Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto."

Abstracts due on Moodle

Focus: Brennan, 1-31.

Week 11, November 1: Agriculture and Food

READINGS: Keller, 161-174; 443-468, 476-490.

Grounding Religion, 113-129, 203-221.

Focus: Read Abstracts on Moodle

Week 12, November 8: Environmental Justice

READINGS: Keller, 509-550.

Grounding Religion, 163-180

Moodle: *Inherited Land*, 148-170.

Focus: Brennan, 33-77.

Week 13, November 15: Global Climate Change.

READINGS: Keller, 561-574.

Moodle: IPCC Report.

Focus: Brennan, 78-132.

November 22, No Class! Happy Thanksgiving! Work on Final Papers

Week 14, November 29: The Planetary Future

READINGS: *Grounding*, 81-95, 222-227.

Moodle: Bauman, "From Global to Planetary Identities."

Focus: Brennan, 133-172.

December 6, Final Paper Due!