

Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) 347

Religion and Environmental Values in America

The Ohio State University, School of Environment and Natural Resources
Course Proposal/Syllabus

Instructor:

Gregory E. Hitzhusen, MDiv, PhD
Office: 469e Kottman Hall
Phone: 292-7739
Email: hitzhusen.3@osu.edu

Autumn Quarter 2009 (5 credits)
T,R Lecture, 1:00pm-2:48pm
R or F Recitation, time tbd
Graduate Teaching Assistants: tbd

No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it. – Aldo Leopold (1949)

Course Description: Environmental stewardship is already on its way to becoming the next great American pastime. A new wave of “green” entrepreneurship, industry, policy, and spirituality is seeping throughout the American cultural landscape. Solutions to environmental problems are shaping to be a major focus for 21st century Americans. Our response to environmental problem-solving must be diverse and complex; the best science, policies, and individual commitments will all be required. As research reveals, in America the most significant source of environmental values is religion and spirituality. Most Americans see ethics within their religious framework, but also show a broad appreciation for a range of other religious and philosophical views. What does this mean for environmental citizenship in America? What does this mean to each of us as individuals?

This course will examine the development and influence of religious thinking about the environment in America, and explore the underpinnings of environmental values in American culture. Until recently, many environmental thinkers were convinced that religion was largely a barrier to environmental citizenship in Western culture, due to the influence of theories about the anthropocentric focus of Western religion. Today, the nearly universal attention given by religious communities to environmental concerns is overturning that perception – indeed, sociologists have concluded that if anything, religion is helping the environmental cause, and many environmental leaders now see religions as crucial to solving environmental problems. Whether in the Vatican’s bid to become the world’s first carbon-neutral state, the host of environmental policy statements generated by religious denominations, the embrace of “creation care” by evangelical Christians, or the rise of faith-based environmental organizations, religious teachings and worldviews are being applied as never before to help solve environmental problems and preserve ecological integrity.

In “Religion and Environmental Values in America” students will closely examine these developments through lecture, discussion, and written assignments. In the early weeks of the course, we will explore some of the fundamental questions underlying our intellectual emphases, loyalties, affections, and convictions regarding religion and environmental citizenship. What is religion? Nature? Ethics? Science? What are people for? What is scientific knowledge? Moral

knowledge? We will also examine the question of whether (or to what extent) Western Judeo-Christian traditions are responsible for modern ecological crises.

Next we will look at a range of religious environmental expressions in America, from environmentalism itself, to expressions in Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian (including mainline Protestant, Evangelical, and Catholic) traditions. In light of debates about the differences between liberal and conservative Christian views, we will examine social thought on character and virtue ethics, and ecologically relevant conceptions of sin, salvation, and cosmic reconciliation. We will also discuss *environmental (or eco-) justice* and *creation spirituality*, two other prominent approaches to religion and the environment in the United States. At the end of the course, we will reflect on the themes of Sabbath, thanksgiving, praise, and hope.

No matter what religious tradition we identify with, if any, how do we integrate our most deeply held values and beliefs with ecological facts, social realities, economic forces, and hopes for sustainability? In what ways do religion, spirituality, and faith provide cultural resources for environmental sustainability, and shape the landscape of environmental citizenship in America? These and other questions will guide our inquiry.

Prerequisites: No background in environmental ethics, religion, or philosophy is presupposed, although students with such background will be able to work on assigned papers at a more advanced level.

Course Format: There will be two types of meetings as noted on the course schedule below: classroom and lecture sessions (T, R) and recitations (R or F). Classroom sessions will combine lectures and instruction with discussions of assigned readings and other topical issues. Some topics will be engaged as a Socratic dialogue, others in traditional lecture presentation; occasional guest speakers will add variety to the schedule as well. Recitations will be led by graduate TAs, and will involve discussion of course readings, including weekly written synopses of assigned texts.

Course Objectives: The main objectives of the course are as follows:

- 1) To introduce the development and diversity of religious responses to environmental concerns in North America, including trends, debates, and ideas that have shaped the field.
- 2) To facilitate students' reflection on how their spirituality and values shape their own engagement in environmental citizenship.
- 3) To analyze the contribution of religion to environmental citizenship and in solving environmental problems.
- 4) To develop students' capacities for critical reading, thinking, writing, and discussion; and for aesthetic and historical response and judgment regarding ethical and moral dimensions of environmental issues within American culture.

This course addresses the 2008 GEC Expected Learning Outcomes for the Arts and Humanities "Cultures and Ideas" Category:

1. Students develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret major forms of human thought and expression.
2. Students develop abilities to understand how ideas influence character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

This course also addresses the 2008 GEC Expected Learning Outcomes for the “**Social Diversity in the United States**” Category:

1. Students describe the role of religion in the pluralistic institutions and cultures of the United States.
2. Students recognize the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values regarding appreciation, tolerance, and equality of others.

Requirements and Grading: Grades will be determined on the basis of the following assignments, in accordance with Faculty Rule 3335-7-21 (100% = 1000 points):

- 1) Environmental Autobiography and Peer Review: 10% (100 points)
- 2) Mid-term Exam: 15% (150 points)
- 3) Final Exam: 25% (250 points)
- 4) Term Paper: 25% (250 points)
- 5) Recitation discussion participation and weekly writing assignments: 25% (250 points)

1) Environmental Autobiography and Peer Review (10%)

In the second week of the course, you will write a 5-page, double-spaced environmental autobiography describing the formative experiences, values, and beliefs that make up your view of environmental citizenship (due Tuesday, Oct. 6). You will then peer-review two other students’ autobiographies (due in recitation, Oct. 8&9) before revising your own in response to your peer reviewers’ comments (due Tuesday, Oct. 13). Your grade for the assignment will be based on the final version of your essay (80%) and on the quality of your peer reviews (20%).

2) Mid-term exam (15%)

A one-hour in-class exam will be held on Tuesday, October 29, consisting of one short essay (30 minutes) and six mini-essays (5 minutes each). The exam will cover the material from the first half of the course. We will schedule optional review sessions before the exam.

3) Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will consist of two parts: two short essays (30 minutes each) and six mini-essays (5 minutes each). One of the short essays and all of the mini-essays will cover the material from the second half of the course. The second short essay will integrate material from the entire course.

4) Term Paper (25%)

You will be responsible for choosing a topic unique to your interests and preparing a 10-12 page paper due before finals week, on Friday, Dec. 4. Your paper must relate in some significant way to the subject matter of the course as reflected in the course title and syllabus, but this leaves you with a good deal of latitude. We hope that you will find a topic that will be enjoyable and that will permit you to grow in your understanding of your own beliefs, values and moral commitments—as you interact with the worldviews, ideas, and moral views of others. Your topic must be approved by the instructor or one of the TAs before you write the paper. You will also be required to hand in an outline of

your paper three weeks before the paper is due (Nov. 12&13), to permit the instructors to give you some feedback on your topic.

5) Recitation discussion participation and weekly writing assignments (25%)

Each week you will be responsible for a one-page, single-spaced written synopsis of an assigned reading. The readings will complement the lecture material for the week, and recitation sessions will consist of discussion and questions related to the reading and to the week's lectures. Your recitation grade will be determined by the quality of your weekly synopses and your participation in discussion, in equal parts. Attendance in weekly recitations is required: your recitation grade will be significantly affected by absences, and *you will receive no credit if you do not attend the majority of recitations.*

Carmen: This class will be administrated using Carmen; on the class website you will find the course syllabus, reading list, links to weekly homework assignments, announcements, and Points. To gain access to the Carmen website, go to <http://class.osu.edu>, sign in with your OSU ID (e.g., hitzhusen.3) and your password, and navigate to the ENR 347 website. You can also find a PDF copy of *the Student Guide to WebCT: The Basics* at <http://telr.osu.edu/webct/overview/basics.pdf>

Make-up Work: Make-ups for assignments will not be scheduled in the case of an unexcused absence (and in some cases, may not be rescheduled for logistical reasons). There are three situations that constitute an "excused absence" from class. They are: 1) students who participate in a *documented* University sanctioned event, 2) students who have a *documented* death in the family, and 3) students who have received *documented* medical attention for an illness. Students who will be participating in University sanctioned events must provide the instructor with a copy of the scheduled events and those classes that will be missed. This documentation must be on University letterhead, signed by the coach/supervisor, and given to the instructor within the first two weeks of the quarter.

Late Assignment Policy: To receive full credit for writing assignments, work must be turned-in on time and in condition to be evaluated. Papers with excessive errors (15 or more) will be returned for resubmission and will be treated as if they are late. Late assignments will incur a deduction of 50% of the total point value for each 24-hour period (or portion) that they are late (including weekends). In-class assignments missed because of an unexcused absence cannot be made-up or repeated.

Academic Integrity: It is our intent to treat each of you as if you are honest. We assume that whatever you say or do is done in good faith. If we suspect that you have breached that trust, our intention is to report any suspected academic misconduct through appropriate channels to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct. The Ohio State University Student Handbook covers the subject should you not understand what academic misconduct is. Of course, we will be happy to discuss the topic with you on a no fault basis if we are consulted before the fact. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp).

Disability Services: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Course Readings:

Required Texts:

Required readings for the course will be made available in a **course readings packet** (purchase information here), and you are expected to bring the readings packet to class and recitation for discussion purposes. **In addition, the following texts are required:**

Pollan, Michael. *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*. New York: Grove Press, 1991.
Dunlap, Thomas R. *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as a Religious Quest*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.
Wirzba, Norman. *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006.

Suggested Texts:

Copies of the following texts will be placed on closed-reserve; you are encouraged to purchase your own copy to supplement the course materials if your budget allows:

Kellert, Stephen R., and Timothy Farnham, eds. *The Good in Nature and Humanity: Connecting Science, Religion, and Spirituality with the Natural World*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002.
Kearns, Laurel, and Catherine Keller, eds. *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.
Bouma-Prediger, Steven. *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.

Bibliography of additional suggested readings will be provided on the Carmen course web site.

Course Schedule:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
			P = Pollan; D = Dunlap; W = Wirzba R = Readings Packet (+ = suggested but not required)
9/24	R	Course introduction	R: Tucker
9/24-5	R/F	Ecological autobiographies	
9/29	T	Religious environmentalism in America: Overview (Renewal)	R: +Gottlieb
10/1	R	What is Religion? Ethics? Nature? What are people for?	R: Berry
10/1+	R/F	The place of humans in nature	P: Chs 1-4,6,9,10,12
10/6	T	What is science? Eco-autobiographies due	R: +Barbour
10/8	R	Scientific knowledge; moral knowledge	R: Fleming; Baer
10/8+	R/F	Relativism; peer-reviews due	R: Wood
10/13	T	Lynn White Jr.: Is biblical religion to blame?; autobio's due	R: White; Hitzhusen
10/15	R	The Genesis of Ecotheology	R: +Kinsley Chs 8-9
10/15+	R/F	Ecotheology in biblical traditions	R: Green Bible essays
10/20	T	Religious <i>environmentalism</i>	R: Goodenough
10/22	R	Religious <i>environmentalism</i>	R: +Crosby
10/22+	R/F	Faith in nature	D: pps 3-67; 148-172
10/27	T	<i>Religious</i> environmentalism – Judaism	R: Tirosh-Samuelson
10/29	R	<i>Religious</i> environmentalism – Islam; midterm exam	R: Ozdemir
10/29+	R/F	Green Buddhism	R: Schumacher; Kinsley
11/3	T	<i>Religious</i> environmentalism – Christianity	R: Hauerwas; +Berry
11/5	R	Vision, character, and virtue	R: Bouma-Prediger
11/5+	R/F	Environmental virtue	R: Hauerwas
11/10	T	Sin and ecology	R: Niebuhr
11/12	R	Salvation, restoring relationship, and the cosmos	R: Santmire
11/12+	R/F	Sin, salvation, grace, cosmic reconciliation; paper outline due	R: Niebuhr
11/17	T	Environmental justice; creation spirituality	R: Upton
11/19	R	Wilderness spirituality	R: Hitzhusen
11/19+	R/F	Spirituality	R: Pura
11/24	T	Virtue and happiness: Groundhog Day (film screening)	R: Kupfer
Thanksgiving			
12/1	T	Sabbath	W: Chs 1-6,9,11
12/3	R	Thanksgiving, celebration, praise, hope	R: Baer
12/3+	R/F	Final reflections; term papers due	
Date	Day	Final Exam (Location)	

Packet Readings Bibliography:

- Baer, Richard A. Jr. "Our Need to Control: Implications for Environmental Education." *The American Biology Teacher* (November, 1976): 473-476, 490.
- Baer, Richard A. Jr. "Praise for All Things." *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 2.2 (1979): 124-133.
- Barbour, Ian. *Religion in an Age of Science*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990, 31-92.
- Berry, Wendell. *What are People For?* New York: North Point Press, 1990, 123-125.
- Berry, Wendell. "The Ecological Crisis as a Crisis of Character." In *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1986, 17-26.
- Bouma-Prediger, Steve. "What Kind of People Ought We Be?" In *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001, 137-160.
- Crosby, Donald A. "A Case for Religion of Nature." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 1.4 (2007): 489-582.
- Fleming, Patricia Ann. "Can Nature (Legitimately) Be Our Guide?" In *Religion and the New Ecology*, edited by David M. Lodge and Christopher Hamlin. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.
- Goodenough, Ursula. *The Sacred Depths of Nature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 152-174.
- Gottlieb, Roger S. "Religious Environmentalism: What it is, Where it's Heading and Why We Should be Going in the Same Direction." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 1.1 (2007): 81-91.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. "Character, Narrative, and Growth in the Christian Life." In *A Community of Character*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, 129-135, 145-152.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. "Toward an Ethics of Character." *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, 48-67.
- Hitzhusen, Gregory E. "Biblical Wilderness Theology: Spiritual Roots for Environmental Education." *Taproot* 17.1 (2007): 9-13.
- Hitzhusen, Gregory E. "Judeo-Christian Theology and the Environment: Moving Beyond Scepticism to New Sources for Environmental Education in the United States." *Environmental Education Research* 13.1 (2007): 55-74.
- Kinsley, David. "Buddhism: Ecological Themes." In *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995, 84-98.

- Kinsley, David. "Christianity as Ecologically Harmful," and "Christianity as Ecologically Responsible." In *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995, 103-124.
- Kupfer, Joseph H. "Virtue and Happiness in Groundhog Day." In *Visions of Virtue in Popular Film*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999, 35-60.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Man as Sinner." In *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation, Vol. I*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964, 178-207.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Wisdom, Grace, and Power." In *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation, Vol. II*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964, 98-126.
- Ozdemir, Ibrahim. "Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective." In *Islam and Ecology*, edited by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny and Azizan Baharuddin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, 3-37.
- Pura, Murray. "The Divine Game of Pinzatski" *Crux* 24. 4 (December 1988): 8-10, also In *With Heart, Mind & Strength: The Best of Crux, 1979-1989*, edited by Donald M. Lewis. Langley, B.C. : Credo, 1990, 261-266.
- Santmire, H. Paul. "Reenacting the Story Ritually: Beyond the Milieu of the Gothic Spirit." In *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, 74-92.
- Schumacher, E.F. "Preface[s] to the 1989 Edition," and "Buddhist Economics." In *Small is Beautiful*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989, ix-xxiii, 56-66.
- The Green Bible*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.
- Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava. "Introduction. Judaism and the Natural World." In *Judaism and Ecology*, edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, xxxiii-lxii.
- Tucker, Mary Evelyn. "Ecology, Religion & Policymaking: Survey of the Field." *Bulletin of the Boston Theological Institute* 6.2 (Spring 2007): 8-15.
- Upton, Charles. *Who is the Earth? How to See God in the Natural World*. San Rafael, CA: Sophia Perennis, 2008, 1-12, 42-47, 90-91.
- White, Lynn, Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-07.
- Wood, Alan. "Relativism" In *Unsettling Obligations: Essays on Reason, Reality, and the Ethics of Belief*. Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2002, 131-157.