

CS 277  
RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

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Purpose and Outline of the Course

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This course will examine the complex intersections between religion and environmentalist movements in North America over the last 400 years. Religion in this class will be analyzed both respectfully and critically from an academic perspective, as we discuss both the positive and the negative impacts of religious ideologies on attitudes toward nature and environmentalist social movements. We will begin with a discussion of the first contact between Europeans and Native American cultures, the sharp differences between European Christian and indigenous views of nature, and the (mis)representations of native cultures in European religious and scientific discourse. We will then examine the continuities and shifts in these early representations of the environment in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in U.S. policy and in new religious and philosophical movements such as Transcendentalism. The second half of the class will then focus on contemporary movements since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Earth-based religions such as Neo-Paganism, Wicca, Gaia spirituality, and Eco-feminism. Special attention will also be given to Harvard's landmark conference on World Religions and Ecology in 1998, which examined attitudes toward the environment in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religions, and indigenous traditions in a comparative framework. Finally, we will conclude by looking at shifts in attitudes toward the environment contemporary mainstream Christianity, such as the Evangelical community, which now has a large faction committed to addressing climate change.

Throughout our discussion of these various religious movements, we will also pay special attention to their social, historical and political contexts. Rather than examining religious worldviews in isolation, we will also discuss how they intersected in complex ways with very real environmental policies: how, for example, did attitudes toward Native American religions inform environmental policies and legal debates surrounding the use of protected lands and endangered species in religious rituals? How have conservative Christian leaders used their religious beliefs to block policies concerning environmental regulations; and, conversely, how have progressive activists such as Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., appealed to religion to push his environmental initiatives? How did President Bush's religious faith inform his environmental agenda, which many critics see as quite indifferent or even hostile to environmentalists' concerns?

In addition to attendance and vigorous participation in class discussions, students will be expected to write three short papers and give one in-class group presentation based on a topic of their own choosing.

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## REQUIRMENTS AND EVALUATIONS

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Evaluations will be based on three things:

1. Attendance and Participation (25% of final grade). This means attendance to all classes and active participation in class discussions. Each unexcused absence will deduct 2 points from your final grade.
2. One in-class group presentations (15% of final grade): Students will work together for the first half of the quarter to develop a group presentation that will be delivered during the second half of the quarter. The topic is open but must deal with some aspect of the intersection between religion and environmentalism.
3. Three Written Papers (5-7 pages) on assigned topics (60% of final grade). One of these must be based on a visit to a religious community in the Columbus area and an analysis of that community using at least two theories discussed in class

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## READINGS

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Required Texts,  
available at SBX Bookstore and on reserve at Sullivant library

Albanese, Catherine. *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Eaton, Heather and Lois Ann Lorentzen. *Ecofeminism and Globalization: Exploring Culture, Context and Religion*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

Schiebinger, Londa. *Nature's Body*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.

Readings on our Carmen web-site:

There are also a number of short articles and chapters on the contents section of our Carmen site.  
Log-in at: [www.carmen.osu.edu](http://www.carmen.osu.edu)

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## STUDENT RIGHTS AND CONDUCT

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Any student with a documented disability who may require special accommodations should identify him or herself to the instructor as early in the quarter as possible to receive effective and timely accommodations. You may also wish to contact the Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall, 292-3307).

Students are expected to know and understand the rules regarding academic misconduct, particularly the rules regarding plagiarism, as stated in the University's Code of Student Conduct. All cases of plagiarism will be treated very seriously according to the University's guidelines.

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## SYLLABUS

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### INTRODUCTION: Religion and the Roots of our Environmental Crises

Read: Jonathan Z. Smith, "Imagining Religion" (on Carmen)  
Lynn White, Jr. "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" (on Carmen)  
Lewis Moncrief, "The Cultural Roots of our Ecological Crisis" (on Carmen)  
Bill Moyers, "'Battlefield Earth,'" <http://www.alternet.org/envirohealth/20666/>

### WEEK I. NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS AND EUROPEAN CONTACT

Monday: Native American and European Christian views of the Environment

Read: Genesis, Chapters 1-11 (from any Bible)  
Gutierrez, "The Pueblo Indian World in the Sixteenth Century" (on Carmen)  
Allen, "The Sacred Hoop" (on Carmen)

Wednesday: Native Explications and Defenses of their Worldview

Read: Churchill, "A Little Matter of Genocide" (on Carmen)  
Tapahonso, Breeze Swept Through (on Carmen)

### WEEK II. NATURE, GENDER, RACE AND SCIENCE IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Monday: Nature's Body

Read: Schiebinger, Nature's Body, Introduction through Chapter 3

Wednesday: Nature's Body, II

Read: Schiebinger, Nature's Body, Chapters 4-6

### WEEK III. RELIGION, NATURE AND EARLY AMERICAN POLITICS

Monday: "From the Revolution that was Lawful to the Destiny that was Manifest"

Read: Albanese, Nature Religion in America, chapters 1-2

Wednesday: "Wildness and the Passing Show: The Transcendentalist Religion and its Legacies"

Read: Albanese, Nature Religion, chapters 3-4.

WEEK IV. THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWAKENING OF THE 1960s AND 70s

Monday: Silent Spring

Read: Carson, "Silent Spring" (on Carmen)  
McKibben, "The End of Nature" (on Carmen)

Wednesday: Earth-Based Spirituality and the Gaia Movement

Read: Lovelock, "Gaia" (on Carmen)  
Ruether, "Gaia and God" (on Carmen)

WEEK V. ENVIRONMENTALISM ENTERS THE STUDY OF WORLD RELIGIONS, I

Monday: The Harvard Conference on World Religions and Ecology, 1998,

Read: Tucker and Grim, "Ecology and Religion" (on Carmen)

Wednesday: Rethinking Abrahamic Religions

Read: Tirosch Samuelson, "Judaism and the Natural World" (on Carmen)  
Ozdemir, "Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a  
Qur'anic Perspective" (on Carmen)

WEEK VI. ENVIRONMENTALISM ENTERS THE STUDY OF WORLD RELIGIONS, II

Monday: Engaging Hinduism, Buddhism, and South Asian Religions

Read: Chapple and Tucker, "Hinduism and Ecology" (on Carmen)  
Tucker, "Buddhism and Ecology" (on Carmen)

Wednesday: Engaging Taoism, Confucianism and East Asian Religions

Read: Miller, "Ecology and Daoism" (on Carmen)  
Tucker, "Ecology and Confucianism"

WEEK VII. NEO-PAGANISM, WICCA AND THE SEARCH FOR A NEW ECOLOGICAL  
RELIGION

Monday: The Rebirth of the Goddess

Read: Adler, "Drawing Down the Moon" (on Carmen)

Wednesday: Neo-paganism, Environmentalism and Politics

Read: Starhawk, "Dreaming the Dark" (on Carmen)

Films: "Witchcraft in America;" Interviews with Starhawk and Z. Budapest

## WEEK VII. ECOFEMINISM, GLOBALIZATION AND RELIGION

Monday: Ecofeminism and Globalization

Read: Eaton, Ecofeminism and Globalization, chapters 1-2

Wednesday: Ecofeminism and Religion

Read: Eaton, Ecofeminism, chapters 3, 6-8

Films: Interview with Vandana Shiva

## WEEK VIII. RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS IN THE LATE 20<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES

Monday: Carter, Gore and the Politics of Conservation and Climate Change

Read: Carter, "Our Endangered Values" (on Carmen)  
Gore, "Inconvenient Truth" (on Carmen)

Film Clip: "Inconvenient Truth"

Wednesday: George W. Bush's Religious Views and Environmental Policies

Read: Kennedy, Crimes Against Nature (on Carmen)  
Pope and Rauber, Strategic Ignorance (on Carmen)

## WEEK IX. RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTALISM TODAY, I

Monday: Environmental Debates within Contemporary Christianity

Read: "Pope Benedict XVI Urges Action on Climate Change" (on Carmen)  
Kennedy, "For the Sake of Our Children" (on Carmen)  
Hendricks, "Divine Destruction: Dominion Theology and American Environmental Policy" (on Carmen)

Film: Bill Moyers, "Is God Green?"

Wednesday: Ongoing debates in non-Christian traditions

Read: The Dalai Lama, "The Universe in a Single Atom" (on Carmen)  
Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Man and Nature" (on Carmen)

Film: Further interviews with Vandana Shiva

## WEEK X. RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTALISM TODAY, II

Monday: Contemporary Native American Issues and U.S. Environmental Policy

**Read:** Tirso A. Gonzales and Melissa K. Nelson, "Contemporary Native American

Responses to Environmental Threats in Indian Country” (on Carmen)  
“Indigenous Environmental Network” (on Carmen)

Wednesday: Summary and Conclusions

Additional Recommended Readings  
on Religion and Religious Studies Theory

- Adler, Margot. *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess Worshippers and Other Pagans in America Today*. New York: Penguin, 1986.
- Allen, Paula Gunn. *The Sacred Hoop*. Boston: Beacon Press,
- Callicot, J. Baird and Roger Ames. *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*. Albany: SUN Y Pres, 1989.
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.
- Carter, Jimmy. *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2007.
- Chapple, Christopher and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds. *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection fo Earth, Sky and Water*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Chapple, Christopher. *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Churchill, Ward. *Fantasies of the Master Race*. Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1992.
- Dalai Lama. *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*. Broadway, 2007.
- Fox, Matthew. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance*. San Francisco, 1998
- Gore, Al. *Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What we Can do About it*. Rodale Press, 2006.
- Gottlieb, Roger. *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature and Environment*. Routledge, 1995.
- Gutierrez, Ramon. *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Hendricks, Stephanie. *Divine Destruction: Dominion Theology and American Environmental Policy*. Melville House, 2005.
- Hutkrantz, Ake. "Ecology." In *The Encyclopeda of Religion*. Mircea Eliade, ed. New York: MacMillan, 1987.
- Izzi Dien, Mawil. *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*. Cambridge, U.K., 2000.
- Kennedy, Jr., Robert F. *Crimes Against Nature*. Harper Perennial, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "For the Sake of Our Children." *EarthLight Magazine* 52 (Winter 2005).
- Kinsley, David. *Religion and Ecology: Ecological Spirituality in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Prrentice Hall, 1995.
- Lovelock, James. *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

- McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature*. New York: Random House, 1989.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*. San Francisco, 1980.
- Miller, James. "Daoism and Ecology." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Lindsay Jones, ed. New York: Thomson Gale, 2005, v. 4.
- Moncrief, Lewis. "The Cultural Basis of our Environmental Crisis." *Science* 30 (1970).
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*. Dunstable, 1997.
- Pojman, Louis. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Applications*. Wadsworth, 2007.
- Pope, Carl and Paul Rauber. *Strategic Ignorance: Why the Bush Administration is recklessly Destroying a Century of Environmental Progress*. San Francisco, 2004.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. San Francisco, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Integrating Ecofeminism, Environmentalism and World Religion*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.
- Shiva, Vandana and Maria Mies. *Ecofeminism*. Zed Books, 1993.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Starhawk. *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.
- Tapahonso, Luci. *Breeze Swept Through*. Albuquerque: West End Press, 1987.
- Tirosh-Smauelson, Hava, ed. *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Tucker, Mary Evelyn and John A. Grim, "Ecology and Religion: An Overview." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Lindsay Jones, ed. Thomson Gale, 2005, v. 4.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy and the Environment*. Orbis Books, 1991.
- Tucker, Mary Evelyn et al, eds. *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Tucker, Mary Evelyn. *Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter their Ecological Phase*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- White, Jr., Lynn. "The Historical Causes of Our Ecological Crisis." *Science* 155 (March, 1967).