

Religion, Nature, and Environmentalism in America

RS 280B

Butte 219

Wednesdays 7:00—9:50 PM

Instructor:

Sarah Pike

Trinity 240

x-6341

Office hours: **Tues. and Thurs. 10-11, Wed. 1-3** and by appointment

• Course Description •

This seminar will explore the relationship between religion, nature and environmentalism. Course topics will include American Indians and the environment, sacred sites, representations of nature, utopias and dystopias, green ritualizing and environmental activism, and gender, sex and nature. We will focus mainly on California, often extending our discussions to broader national and global issues. For class presentations and final papers, students may choose to cover any geographical or cultural area related to the course topic.

• Course Texts •

Malcolm Margolin, *The Ohlone Way*

John Muir, *Mountains of California*

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*

Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island*

Freeman House, *Totem Salmon*

Julia Butterfly Hill, *The Legacy of Luna*

RS 280B course packet at Mr. Copy next week, readings for next week on reserve.

• Course Requirements and Grading •

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:

This class will be taught as a seminar, so your participation and attendance are essential. You should read assignments carefully and come to each class with written comments and questions about the readings. Absences will only be excused in the case of medical or other emergencies (30%).

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

1) Every week you will turn in a two-page response to the readings or take a short quiz on the readings at the beginning of class, as noted in the syllabus.

Your responses should be typed double-spaced and should not exceed two pages. This should not be a summary, rather you should react to the readings by developing one or two ideas. What issue(s) does the reading raise for you? Do you agree or disagree with the author's perspective? Why or why not? Your response should focus on one or two central issues, but you should try to make

specific references to the texts and incorporate brief quotes into your response (20%).

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

One student will facilitate each class discussion. Please arrange to meet with me ahead of time to discuss your plans for your class session. You will start the class off by introducing what you see as the significant issues for the week. You must also bring in information on the topic of the week to supplement assigned readings. This supplementary information could consist of your comments on an article or book about the topic, a guest speaker, a video, or a survey of World Wide Web sites about your topic. You will also be responsible for getting the discussion going with provocative questions about the readings. Feel free to bring in audio-visual aids and customize your class session in any way you like (20%).

RESEARCH PAPER:

Each student will pursue a research topic throughout the course, resulting in a 12-15 page paper. You must use at least **four books and articles**, at least **one type of "field work,"** such as a visit to a church or temple, a telephone interview, participation in an event, etc. and at least **one electronic source** (Sierra Club web site, for example).

--Two page description of your topic with bibliography of primary and secondary sources. For ethnographic research projects your primary sources can be individuals, groups or communities. Due on **February 20**

--Annotated bibliography due **April 3** (5%)

--First draft of research paper due in class on **April 24**. Drafts will be exchanged with another member of the seminar and you each will read and write up comments and suggestions on each other's papers which you will also share with me. Comments will be due on **May 1** (5%).

--Final paper due on **May 24** (20%).

Note to students with certified disabilities: Please notify me of any special needs relating to your disability within the first two weeks of the semester. I will make every effort to facilitate your success in this course. Please note that you may be required to show documentation of your disability.

Course Calendar

Topics, Readings and Films

January 30, Introduction to the course and discussion of terms

February 6, Ecological Indians

Readings: Shepard Krech, selections from *The Ecological Indian*, Joel Martin, selection from *The Land Looks After Us*, Winona LaDuke, "The Wild Rice Moon"

In-class quiz

February 13, Native Californians at colonial contact

Readings: Gretel Ehrlich, "Home is How Many Places," and Malcolm Margolin, *The Ohlone Way*

Response paper due

February 20, Imagining sacred California

Readings: selection from Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way* and John Muir, *The Mountains of California*, Chs. I-VI

In-class quiz

PAPER TOPIC DUE

February 27, National parks as pilgrimage sites

Readings: Muir, Chs. VII-end

Response paper due

March 6, Utopias, communes and the back-to-the-land movement

Readings: Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*

Response paper due

March 13, Watersheds in life and politics

Readings: Freeman House, *Totem Salmon*

FILM: "Thinking Like a Watershed"

Response paper due

Guest Speaker: TBA

March 20, Bioregionalism and the power of place

Readings: Bron Taylor, "Bioregionalism," Gary Snyder, "The Rediscovery of Turtle Island," "Ancient Forests of the Far West" and *Turtle Island*

Response paper due

Guest Speaker: Bron Taylor

April 3, Deep ecology

Readings: Carolyn Merchant, "Deep Ecology"

In-class quiz

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

April 10, The proper relationship between humans and animals

Readings: Gary Snyder, "Nets of Beads, Webs of Cells," Wallace Stegner, "Remnants," Barry Lopez, "A Presentation of Whales," and selection from *Earth First! Journal*

Response paper due

April 17, Gender, nature and ecofeminism

Readings: Karen Warren, selections from *Ecofeminism*, Petra Kelly, "Women and Power"

In-class quiz

April 24, Green religious radicalism

Readings: Bron Taylor, "Earth First!'s Religious Radicalism," selections from Chris Manes, *Green Rage* and selections from *Earth First! Journal*

In-class quiz

ROUGH DRAFT DUE

May 1, Redwood spirituality and redwood wars

Readings: Julia Butterfly Hill, *Legacy of Luna*

Response paper due

FILM: TBA

COMMENTS DUE ON PARTNER'S PAPER

May 8, New Agers, Neopagans and earth religion

Readings: Ivakhiv, "Vortexes and Crossed Currents," Graham Harvey, selections from *Contemporary Paganism*, and selections from *Green Egg*

Response paper due

FILM: "In the Light of Reverence"

May 15, Green Christians

Readings: Bruce Barcott, "For God So Loved the World"

In-class quiz

FINAL PAPER DUE by midnight May 24