

Religious Studies 347 Sections 01 & 03 / Fall 2008
CROSS-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

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How do our conceptions of humanity, society, history, God, and nature shape our individual and societal lifestyles? What intellectual and moral resources for personal and social transformation can we draw upon as we seek to address the environmental issues that are facing our planet?

This course takes a cross-cultural and historical look at how religious and secular worldviews influence attitudes, behaviors, and policies toward the environment. More specifically, we will learn to appreciate the ambiguous moral and environmental implications of deep-seated religious and philosophical assumptions. We will learn to draw upon diverse religious and secular worldviews as resources for our own ecological and moral imaginations, and we will develop some skills for analyzing the ideological and ethical conflicts surrounding selected environmental issues.

RELS 347 is part of General Education Upper Division Theme D: "Environmental Issues." Courses in this theme aim to achieve the following goals and objectives:

- to impart an understanding of and an appreciation for the place of the human species in the global ecosystem,
- to examine the ways that the environment has influenced human behavior,
- to provide skills and information necessary to assess human environmental impacts
- to pursue ways to maintain Earth's life-support systems.

Please note that upper division theme courses may not be taken earlier than your last semester as a sophomore.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to complete the assigned readings; to attend class meetings; to be prepared to participate in class discussions; and to regularly log-in to the Chico State Portal to access course information and materials through Vista. Please turn off and stow cell phones and all other electronic devices before you come to class. Grades will be based on the following:

Three objective exams. The first exam will be worth 10% of the final grade. The second exam will be worth 15% of the final grade. The final comprehensive exam will be worth 20% of the final grade. Study guides will be distributed via the portal.

Two papers of approximately three-four typewritten pages (each worth 20% of the final grade). Topics and due dates will be announced via the portal and discussed in class.

Class attendance, participation, and occasional pop quizzes (worth 10% of the final grade).

A series of three one page typewritten reflections (worth a total of 5% of the final grade) on activities, events, and programs on campus and in the community that are relevant to understanding environmental issues and the role of religion and ethics in the contemporary world. These include but are not limited to the Sustainability Conference on campus (Nov. 6-9), the Religious Studies Lecture Series, Anthropology Forums, CAPE (Center for Applied and Professional Ethics) Forums, meetings of the Associated Students Environmental Affairs Council, presentations sponsored by University Public Events, visiting designated websites, etc. I will be announcing these and other relevant activities in class and via the portal.

Required Texts

David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective (available in the A.S. Bookstore and on library reserve).

Roderick Frazier Nash, (editor), American Environmentalism: Readings in Conservation History (available in the A.S. Bookstore and on library reserve).

Steven C. Rockefeller and John C. Elder, (editors), Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment is a Religious Issue (available in the A.S. Bookstore and on library reserve).

A packet of photocopied materials (available at Mr. Kopy, 119 Main Street and on library reserve).

Recommended Texts

Mary Evelyn Tucker & John A. Grim, editors, Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment, (available in the A.S. Bookstore and on library reserve).

Guidelines for Written Assignments

All papers should be typed and double-spaced. All papers must include references and a bibliography. You may choose to use either the MLA or the Chicago/Turabian style and citation format (for MLA see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/02/>; for Chicago/Turabian see http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c10_s1.html)

As a general rule, you should imagine that you are writing for an audience that is not familiar with your subject matter. Do not assume that your audience knows what you are talking about. Try to anticipate the questions that might arise in the minds of your readers as they read your work, and build the answers to those questions into your discussion. Be as clear and as thorough as you can possibly be.

Be sure to PROOFREAD your paper before you turn it in.

Evaluation of Written Assignments

My evaluation of your written work will concentrate on 1) what you say and 2) how you say it.

1. What you say. (Is it accurate? Is it complete and comprehensive? Does it provide sufficient depth and detail in its exposition and assessment of the material? Does it provide examples from the readings and class discussions in order to illustrate and support statements and claims?)
2. How you say it. (Is the discussion sharply focused? Is it well organized? Is it clearly and convincingly written? Is it polished and attentive to detail – free of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, word usage, phrasing, etc.?).

Academic Integrity Policy

All quotations and paraphrases in your written work must be properly referenced. Evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and disciplinary action that could result in expulsion from the university. The Department of Religious Studies has established a policy on academic integrity, honesty, and plagiarism. For an explanation of the policy and a tutorial visit:

<http://www.csuchico.edu/rs/resources.html#plagiarism>

By submitting written assignments, you are indicating that you understand and agree to abide by this policy.

Students with Certified Disabilities

If you have a documented disability that may require reasonable accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) within the first two weeks of the semester for coordination of your academic accommodations. DSS is located in the Student Services Building; the phone number is 898-5959 V/TTY or FAX 898-4411. Visit the DSS website at <http://www.csuchico.edu/dss/>

CLASS SCHEDULE: TOPICS, READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS
(subject to revision)

1st & 2nd weeks

I. INTRODUCTION

Worldviews, Ethics, and the Environment

Reading: David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion, pp. xv-xxi; Lester R. Brown, "Entering a New World," chapter 1 from Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble (photocopy); "Do Environmentalists Overstate Their Case?" (photocopy).

2nd - 4th weeks

II. THE MODERN WORLDVIEW AND THE ETHOS OF CONSUMERISM

The Structure and Limitations of the Modern Worldview; The Ecological Crisis as a Crisis of Character

Readings: David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion, chp. 10; Alan Durning, "Asking How Much Is Enough," (photocopy).

Recommended: Tucker and Grim, Worldviews and Ecology, pp. 19-29

Video: "Affluenza"

5th week

EXAM T 9/23 (date subject to revision)

**III. SPIRITUALITY AND ECOLOGY:
ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON BEING IN THE WORLD**

Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment is a Religious-Ethical Issue

Reading: Rockefeller and Elder, Spirit and Nature, pp. 1-14 and additional chapters to be announced in class

Video: Bill Moyers, "Spirit and Nature"

6th & 7th weeks

Native American Perspectives

Readings: David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion, pp.42-50; Black Elk, "Native Americans Define the Natural Community," (in Nash #1); Rockefeller and Elder, Spirit and Nature, pp. 15-23.

Recommended: David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion, pp. 3-21; Tucker and Grim, Worldviews and Ecology, pp.41-54

Video: "Hopi: Songs of the Fourth World"

8th & 9th weeks

Christian Perspectives

Reading: David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion, pp. 101-124; 214-217; Wendell Berry, "Religion and the Environment," (in Nash #42)

Recommended: Kinsley, 164-177; Tucker and Grim, Worldviews and Ecology, pp. 71-82

10th & 11th weeks

EXAM T 10/28 (date subject to revision)

Ecological Themes in Chinese Religions

Readings: David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion, pp. 68-83

Recommended: Tucker and Grim, Worldviews and Ecology, pp. 150-160; Huston Smith, The World's Religions, chps. 4 & 5 (on reserve)

11th & 12th weeks

IV. CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND DEBATES

The Value of Wilderness: Conservationism vs. Preservationism

Readings: David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion, chp. 11; the following selections are in Nash, American Environmentalism: Henry David Thoreau, "The Value of Wilderness" #5; Gifford Pinchot, "The Birth of Conservation" #11; Theodore Roosevelt, "Publicizing Conservation at the White House" #13; John Muir, "A Voice for Wilderness" #15; Aldo Leopold, "A Land Ethic" #27
Video: "Champions of the Land"

13th & 14th weeks

Mainstream and Radical Environmentalism: Philosophical and Tactical Debates; Social Ecology; Ecofeminism; Bioregionalism; Deep Ecology; Ecoactivism

Readings: David Kinsley, Ecology and Religion, chps. 14, 15, 16, 17, and Conclusion; the following selections are in Nash, American Environmentalism: Gary Snyder, "Respect for Nature" #36; Kirkpatrick Sale, "Schism in Environmentalism" #44; Edward Abbey and Dave Foreman, "Monkeywrenching" #46; George Sessions and Bill Devall, "Deep Ecology" #47
Recommended: Ynestra King, "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology," (photocopy); Tucker and Grim, Worldviews and Ecology, pp. 181-189; 207-227

THANKSGIVING BREAK BETWEEN 13th & 14th WEEKS

15th week

Environmental Policy Issues: Global Warming and Climate Change

Readings: "Do Human Activities Threaten to Change the Global Climate?" (photocopy); Lester R. Brown, "Building a New Economy" and "Plan B: Building a New Future," chapters 12 & 13 from Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble (photocopy)

FINAL EXAM: Th 12/18

RELS 347 Section 1 10:00-11:50

RELS 347 Section 2 2:00-3:50

PLEASE NOTE DATE AND TIME (AS LISTED UNDER "CLASS SCHEDULE" ON THE UNIVERSITY HOMEPAGE)

PLEASE DO NOT ASK TO RESCHEDULE THE FINAL EXAM

Notes on Theme D: Environmental Issues

In order to provide unity and coherence, each course in the Environmental Issues Upper Division Theme has been designed by theme instructors in consultation with one another to employ a core set of concepts, theories, issues, pedagogical approaches and activities.

Concepts/Theories common to all theme courses:

- Interconnectivity – the ecological principle: highlighting the interrelationships that characterize the natural order and the place of humans in that order
- Unintended Consequences – the precautionary principle: caution is the best policy when altering the environment, due to the difficulty of foreseeing all the consequences of human activity
- Plurality of Worldviews – value pluralism: diverse interpretations of the relationships between humans and nature
- Disciplinary Perspectives – problems of evidence: what counts as knowledge and what counts as evidence depend on criteria that are often discipline specific

Issues common to all theme courses:

- Resource Use (Food, Water, Energy, Shelter)
- Human Population / Consumption
- Biodiversity Loss
- Global Warming / Climate Change

Approaches common to all theme courses:

- Common vocabulary – employing and explaining key terms across theme courses, for example, “ecological consciousness, biocentrism and anthropocentrism.”
- Spirit of Hope – A solution orientation so students emerge from theme courses with ideas and direction to address humanity’s current environmental crises
- California – Reference to the special environmental problems and opportunities presented by California’s unique social, political, economic and ecological identity
- Sustainability – Attention to the broader environmental questions raised by human development as concerns the economy, social equity, and the environmental consequences of human development

Activities common to all theme courses:

- Ecological Footprint – activities dealing with the impacts of various human production and consumption patterns
- Civic Engagement – projects designed to take students outside the classroom to make an impact on the community with what they have discovered in class