

Religion 395 Spring 2009
RELIGIONS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
TTh 11:00 am - 12:20 pm Lyman Hall 126

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This course explores the ways participants in different religious traditions understand and interact with the natural environment. We ask how (and if) the ways individuals and communities think about and value "nature" (which may be variously defined) affect their actual uses and treatments of their surroundings. We also examine some of the ways religious traditions are responding to current perceived local and global ecological crises and controversies -- whether through rethinking mythology and theology, refashioning rituals, or organizing community action and political movements. Throughout the semester we consider whether and how studies in comparative religion might contribute to solving current global environmental problems shared by human and all other living beings.

Requirements

Read, reflect, attend, pay attention, stay awake, talk, listen, think, learn, understand, question, express your own ideas and positions, be alert and considerate of other persons' views.

This is a "*critical reflections*" course. It demands of each student a careful attempt to comprehend perspectives that may be very different from his or her own, and to bring new ideas to bear on earlier assumptions. There are substantial materials to learn and perplexing issues to examine; ideally your course work will integrate those two goals. Success will depend most of all on coming to class, doing the readings carefully, and demonstrating attentiveness in your class contributions and written work. I have not designated discussion days on the syllabus because discussion should be our regular practice.

Required work breaks down into the following categories:

participation	25%
6 2-page response papers @ 5 points each	30%
take-home 2/3-term essay (5-6 pages)	20%
independent project	25%

note: the independent project has a Service Learning option

**Extra credit potential 5 points max*

Required Readings: Books

The following 4 books contain required readings and should be available for purchase at the University and Orange Bookstores. They have also been placed on **one-day** reserve in Bird library.

Boyle, T.C. 2001 *A Friend of the Earth* New York: Penguin USA

Gottlieb, Roger S. 2004 *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment* SECOND EDITION.
Routledge

Haberman, David L. 2006 *River of Love in an Age of Pollution: The Yamuna River of Northern India*
University of California Press

LaDuke, Winona. 2005 *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming*. South End Press

Occasionally other brief required readings will be available to download as PDFs via "Course Documents" on our Blackboard course web site.

Week/Date**Topic/Readings***initial perspectives on religions and environments*

1 Tu 1/13 Introductory session
Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology) Popular culture's lyrical response to environmental crisis

Th 1/15 The terms of the questions, questioning the terms: environment, nature, ecology, religion, spirituality
Read: Gottlieb, both intros, 3-20 in *Sacred Earth*
• hand-out for RP 1 •

2 Tu 1/20 Crisis, actions, reactions . . . and what's religion got to do with it?
Read: Gottlieb, "No Place to Hide," 361-382 in *Sacred Earth*
Discussion of Gottlieb *plus* selections from DVD: "Renewal: stories from America's religious-environmental movement"

Th 1/22 *Service learning information (11-11:30 am) Liz Occhino will join us at the beginning of class to discuss the Service Learning option for REL 395*
City and country, garden and forest, mountain and shore: Where we come from, where we stand, what's it to us? Self-introductions
Read: Your choice of any three selections from "The Moment of Seeing" in *Sacred Earth*
•• RP 1 due ••
• sign-up for discussion leader: weeks 3-7 •

ethics, theologies, fictions and futures

3 Tu 1/27 "*to be a friend of the earth you have to be an enemy of the people*"
Read: Boyle, pp. 1-61 **plus** Segundad, 180-185; Wallace, 596-612 in *Sacred Earth*,
• hand-out for RP 2 •
• hand-out #1 on Independent Project •

Th 1/29 radical action
Read: keep reading Boyle **plus** the following entries available at <http://www.religionandnature.com/ern/sample.htm>
"earth first! and the earth liberation front!"; "radical environmentalism"; "deep ecology"
Video: "Butterfly" (80 minutes)

4 Tu 2/3 Debating the ecological consequences of monotheism and its origin myths
Read: Boyle (*you should be around p. 201 by now*) **plus** White in *Sacred Earth*, 192-201
•• Service Learning option commitment **deadline** ••

Th 2/5 Deep ecology and its (logical?) consequences
Read: finish Boyle **plus** Cobb, 248-261; Kowalski, 351-354; Berry, 492-496; Macy 497-504; Shepard, 505-508 all in *Sacred Earth*
•• RP 2 due ••

deep monotheism: some Jewish, Christian and Islamic perspectives on earth

- 5 Tu 2/10 Judaism
Read: Hebrew Bible, 77-89; Swartz, 92-109; Ginzberg, 110-112; Waskow, 273-276; Diamond & Seidenberg, 438-448; Bernstein and Fink, 517-535; Zuckerman, 644-646 in *Sacred Earth*
 • hand-out on RP 3 •
 • hand-out #2 on Independent Project •
- Th 2/12 Christianity
Read: Pope John Paul, 202-209; Haught, 232-247; McFague, 262-272; Baker-Fletcher, 428-437; Lachecki, 558-562, Taylor, 613-633 in *Sacred Earth*
- 6 Tu 2/17 Islam
Read: Qur'an, 90-91; Deen, 158-167; Ammar, 285-299 in *Sacred Earth*
- Th 2/19 monotheisms, concluding discussion
Read: catch up
 •• RP 3 due ••
 • sign-up for discussion leaders: weeks 8-15 •
- vision and practice in Asian religions*
- 7 Tu 2/24 Hinduism: divine and earthly realities
Read: Hindu myths, 61-64; Dwivedi, 145-147; Chapple, 300-315; Shiva, 466-469 in *Sacred Earth plus* Haberman, Intro & Ch 1, 1-42
 •• Independent Project statement due ••
 • hand-out on RP 4•
- Th 2/26 Hinduism: pilgrimage and pollution
Read: Haberman, Chs 2-3, 43-94
- 8 Tu 3/3 Hinduism: devotion and activism
Read: Haberman, Chs 4-5, 95-175
 • handout on 2/3-term take-home essays •
- Th 3/5 Hinduism: balance
Read: Haberman, Ch 6, 175-195 **plus** Fisher, 695-711 in *Sacred Earth*
 •• RP 4 due ••
- 9 SPRING BREAK!
- 10 Tu 3/17 Buddhism's compassion and insight
Read: Kabilsingh, 130-133, Sponsels, 134-144, Kaza, 330-350, Hanh, 515-516 in *Sacred Earth*
- Th 3/19 glimpses of East Asian thought
Read: Basho, 24-25; Lao Tzu, 73-76; Weiming, 316-329 in *Sacred Earth*
- 11 Tu 3/24 Asian religions, concluding discussion
Read: catch up
 •• 2/3-term take-home essays due in class ••
video: TBA

indigenous world views: livelihood, spirit, voice, politics

- Th 3/26 enduring traditions
guest in the classroom: Eglute Trinkauske (Visiting Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Hamilton College) will discuss her work on indigenous religion in Lithuania
Read: Fanetorens, 56-60; Dudley, 124-129; Peterson, 168-174; McKay, 175-179; Water Woman, 186-188; Byers, 651-660 in *Sacred Earth* **plus** LaDuke, 11-15
- 12 Tu 3/31 native cosmologies and conflicting world views
Read: Martin in *Sacred Earth*, 647-650 **plus** LaDuke, Part I, 19-63
• hand-out on RP 5 •
- Th 4/2 knowledges
Read: LaDuke, Part 3, 153-210 (Part 2 is recommended but not required)
- 13 Tu 4/7 kinship
Read: LaDuke, Part 4, 213-253
- Th 4/9 recovery and restoration, concluding discussion
Read: LaDuke, catch up
•• RP 5 due in class ••

urban environments, ecojustice, and learning from one another

- 14 Tu 4/14 ecojustice
Read: Riley, 412-427; Ingram, 634-643; Conradie et al, 661-680 in *Sacred Earth*
independent project presentations
• hand-out on RP 6 •
- Th 4/16 urban landscapes, green politics
Read: Gottlieb, 568-595; Chavis, 723-726 in *Sacred Earth*
independent project presentations
•• written reports on independent projects due in class ••
- 15 Tu 4/21 **MAYFEST NO CLASSES**
Students are encouraged to attend the *Teach-in on Global Warming Solutions* to be held this day in conjunction with Earth Week at ESF (extra credit opportunity and details TBA)
- Th 4/23 *independent project presentations*
- 16 Tu 4/28 Concluding discussion, evaluations, whole food
& any remaining *independent project presentations*
•• RP 6 due in class ••

There is no final exam in REL 395

more about requirements

Participation means:

1) **All students** are expected to come to **every** class prepared to talk about the day's reading assignment.

2) Beginning the third week of class, 3-4 students will take **pre-arranged**, rotating turns at discussion leadership. A discussion leader gives a **brief** (under 5 minutes) opening presentation of the assigned readings. This is **not** a summary, but more of an oral response. Its main purpose is to **get a general discussion going among all class members**. Ideally, you would conclude with questions, addressed to fellow students (not your professor). An advance sign-up sheet will circulate. You must take at least two turns in the course of the semester!

Your participation is assessed largely on presence and preparation; discussion leadership is a major component. Everyone starts with a B (18). You will maintain it through fulfilling the conditions detailed above. Consistently well-prepared discussion and near-perfect attendance can of course raise this grade; evident negligence and no-shows on your discussion leader turn day can lower it.

• **attendance counts**, but I don't want unwilling prisoners. Therefore, missing three or fewer classes will not damage your participation points, but for each cut over three you lose 2 points. Your TA will do his best to keep an accurate written record of student attendance, beginning the second week of the semester, but please help him!

Note 1: Only documented medical and family *emergencies*, religious holidays (or, for participants in athletic programs, documented, prearranged events) will not count against your attendance record.

Note 2: Students missing class for any reason are themselves responsible for finding out what they missed, turning in their work, and obtaining assignments. Contact instructor or TA by email, or check with the Department of Religion secretary in 501 HL.

Response papers are just that: a chance for you to respond to the readings; they may be written informally, and should prepare you especially well for discussion on the day they are due. A reading journal option is usually available.

The 2/3-term take-home essay will require that you demonstrate knowledge and understanding of syllabus materials across units, cultures, themes. It will demand a more formal writing style.

Independent projects are opportunities for students to explore topics not covered on the syllabus. The "Service Learning" option is an exciting opportunity for your independent project. All projects will involve both a written component (about 8 pages) and an oral presentation (about 10 minutes).

extra credit Two sources for extra credit points are:

- 1) event reports – mini-response papers based on your attending events on campus related to our syllabus materials; I will post opportunities on blackboard as they come to my attention; 2 points each max
- 2) organizational responsibilities for class discussions; 1 extra credit point is offered

finally: Late work is bad for you and bad for us. On the other hand, we acknowledge the complexities and balancing acts of college life. Any written work that is one class late will lose a full letter grade (one point off on the 5-point response papers; 3 points off on the essay). **Absolutely no** response papers will be accepted beyond one class late.

Learning Outcomes

In keeping with University-wide concerns to assess learning outcomes in undergraduate courses, the religion department advises all students of the following goals. You will learn:

- to understand better what we mean by "religion" and to think more critically about the subject;
- to become more aware of a diversity of perspectives within the study of religion;
- to know and understand better diverse manifestations of religion within human cultures and societies, and be able to describe and interpret them.

Your grades in this course, based on written and classroom performance, will reflect your achievement of these goals, at the broadest level.

IMPORTANT NOTICES REGARDING DISABILITY, INTEGRITY AND COURTESY: PLEASE READ THESE CAREFULLY

disability Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor.

Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the Office of Disability Services website, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>

academic integrity The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort.

For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>

Students in REL 395 found violating academic integrity in any aspect of their class work will receive the grade F for that assignment. Students have a right to appeal.

academic courtesy All students are expected to follow simple rules of academic courtesy to fellow students and instructors. Please come to class on time to avoid disrupting the class. Once class begins, you must refrain from personal conversations. You must put away all non-course reading materials (e.g. newspapers). Turn off and put away all cell phones and MP3 players. Refrain from using computers for any non-course related activities. Please avoid premature preparations to leave class; your instructor will let you know when class is over. Eating is not allowed during class. You may be asked to leave the class for the day if you do not follow these rules.