

Religion and Ecology

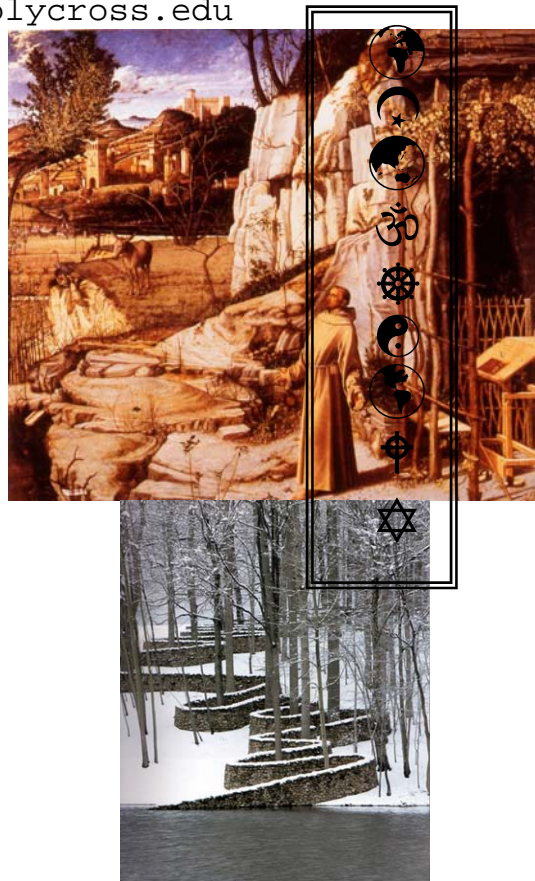
RELIGIOUS STUDIES 225, SPRING 2009

Professor Todd T. Lewis

Religious Studies Department, Smith 425 Office Phone: 793-3436

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:30; Wed 1-2 and by appointment

E-mail: tlewis@holycross.edu



Course Description:

The human destruction of wilderness and natural resources at an unprecedented rate has raised the question of its causes and the potential role of religion in halting this process. This course will begin by exploring various perspectives on nature arising from the world's religions. It will take as its premise that human-earth relations are based on particular cultural constructions—cosmologies and ethical orientations— that shape communities to understand the origin and development of the universe and humanity's place in it. In the second half of the term, we will survey how modern philosophers, religious writers, theologians, and ecologists have sought to solve the current global environmental problems. The term will end with an examination of how religious figures and institutions are taking environmental action today.

Course Requirements:

Read, reflect, attend. Be mindful, talk, listen, think, learn, understand. Question, express your own ideas, be considerate of others' views. This a "critical reflections" course. It entails reading a substantial body of material, with a dual challenge with new things to learn and topics to ponder carefully. Attendance at class, special lectures, and outings.

Design and Guidelines:

This course is planned as an introductory exploration, subject to changes according to student/instructor interests. It will integrate lectures with regular discussions, and involve an observational component for journaling.

Lectures supplement required readings, not replace them. Attendance will be kept randomly. The map of the world as well as all exams and papers must be handed in on time to receive full credit. The latter should follow instructions exactly, be concise, and edited for clarity. Separate guidelines for each will be distributed. Bring texts to class, if indicated on the syllabus.

Grading:

Map.....	5
Attendance and Participation.....	10
Paper #1.....	10
Paper #2.....	15
Observational Journal.....	25
Final Exam.....	<u>.35</u>
	100 pts

Assessment of Writing Assignments

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 you discussion. Be as clear and as thorough as you can possibly be. Be sure to PROOFREAD your paper before you turn it in.

My evaluation of your written work will concentrate on 1) what you say and 2) how you say it. 1. As to 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. As to how you say it. Is it well organized? Is the discussion sharply focused? Is it clearly and convincingly written? Is it attentive to detail - free of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, word usage, phrasing, etc.?

Required Textbooks:

David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1995.
Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim eds. *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994.

Mary Evelyn Tucker ed. *Confucianism and Ecology*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998.

Vernon Reynolds and Deborah Tanner, *The Social Ecology of Religion*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1997.

D. Howard Smith, *The Wisdom of the Taoists*. New York: New Directions, 1980.

John Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*. Kearney: University of Nebraska, 1967.

Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006.

Robert Bly, ed. *News of the Universe*. SF: Sierra Club Books, 1995

E.O. Wilson, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*. NY: Norton, 2007.

Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild: Essays*. SF: Shoemaker & Hoard Publishers, 2003

ERE-s Readings [password: rels225]

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecology: A Pocket Guide*. Berkeley: University of California, 2008

All the books above have been ordered from the Holy Cross bookstore.

Class Topics and Reading Assignments

I. Introductory Considerations

1. 1/14: First Class: Syllabi Distributed and Course Overview

What is "Religious Tradition"? Studying Other World Religions

Required Reading:

Reynolds and Tanner, *The Social Ecology of Religion*, 3-18; 19-28

This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment, 1-20

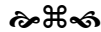
2. 1/16: What is Ecology? Where are we Today? What can/should a Course Do?

The Geography of World Religions.

Required Reading:

Worldviews and Ecology, 19-29

United Nations, "Living Beyond Our Means" [ERE-s]
Lester Kurtz, "Religious Life in the Global Village" [ERE-s]
E. O. Wilson, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*,
Chapter 1
Black Elk Speaks, Part 1
Recommended Reading: Ernest Callenbach, *Ecology: A Pocket
Guide*.



II. Religion & Ecology in Simple Subsistence Societies

3. 1/21: Religion and Ecology in Human Origins

Required Reading:

Marvin Harris, "Culture Overshadowing" and "A Different Kind
of Selection" [ERE-s]

4. 1/23: The Sacred Dimension of Hunting in Tribal Societies

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 3-21; 42-50

Worldviews and Ecology, 41-54

Black Elk Speaks, Part II

Stan McKay, "An Aboriginal Perspective on the Integrity of
Creation" [ERE-s]

L. Woman, "Learning to Connect Spirit, Mind, Body, and Heart to
the Environment" [ERE-s]

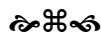
5. 1/28: The Land as Sacred Sphere in Subsistence Societies

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 22-41

Black Elk Speaks, Part III

Michael Dudley, "Traditional Native Hawaiian Environmental
Philosophy" [ERE-s]



III. The Ecology of Religions in Practice

6. 1/30: The Ecology of Religious Rituals [1]

Required Reading:

Marvin Harris, "Mother Cow," and "Pig Lovers and Pig Haters"
[ERE-s]

7. 2/4: The Ecology of Religious Rituals [2]

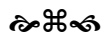
Required Reading:

Tanner, *The Social Ecology of Religion*, 53-148

8. 2/6: The Ecology of Religious Rituals [3]

Required Reading:

Tanner, *The Social Ecology of Religion*, 149-304



IV. The Major World Religions: Classical Views in Contemporary Interpretation

9. 2/11: Judaism and the Ecology of Hebrew Biblical Traditions

Required Reading:

Texts from the Hebrew Bible [ERE-s]

Daniel Swartz. "Jews, Jewish Texts, and Nature" [ERE-s]

10. 2/13: Environment and Human Dominion in Islam and Hinduism

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 53-67

Worldviews and Ecology, 83-95; 113-123; 138-149

Qur'an verses and M. Deen, "Islamic Environmental Ethics, Law, and Society" [ERE-s]

Hindu texts [ERE-s] and O.P. Dwivedi, "Satyagraha for Conservation..." [ERE-s]

11. 2/18: Early and Mahāyāna Buddhism and Ecology

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 84-98

Worldviews and Ecology, 124-137

"*Buddhist Texts in Translation*" and Chatsumarn Kabilsingh,

"*Early Buddhist Views of Nature*" [ERE-s]

"*Selections from the Mahayana Texts*" [ERE-s]

12. 2/20: Religions of China: Overview; Daoism [1]

Required Reading:

Kinsley-Ecology and Religion, 68-83

Worldviews and Ecology, 150-162

Selections from the *Tao Te Ching* [ERE-s]

D. Howard Smith. *The Wisdom of the Taoists*

13. 2/25: Daoism [2]

Required Reading:

Roger T. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back in Daoism" [ERE-s]

14. 3/27: Confucianism

Required Reading:

Confucianism and Ecology, 237-263

Worldviews and Ecology, 150-162r

Confucianism and Ecology, Assigned chapter

March 1-8th: SPRING BREAK R R →

15. 3/11: Christian Theology and the Lynn White Hypothesis

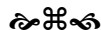
Required Reading:

Kinsley-Ecology and Religion, 101-114; 115-124

Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" [ERE-s]

16. 3/13: Religious Gardens: Sacred Utopian Expressions

Examples from Islamic, Confucian, and Zen Buddhist Traditions



V. Formative Early Modern Traditions

17. 3/18: The Enlightenment on Nature; The Romantic Tradition

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 125-140
The Social Ecology of Religion, 29-52
Robert Bly, ed. *News of the Universe*. SF: Sierra Club Books,
1995

**18. 3/20: North American Eco-Spiritualities [1] – The
Transcendentalists** **Ralph Waldo**

Emerson and Henry David Thoreau

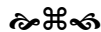
Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 141-146
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature" [ERE-s]
Henry David Thoreau, excerpt from *Excursions and Walking*
[ERE-s]

**19. 3/25: North American Eco-Spiritualities [2] – Muir,
Leopold and Abbey**

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 147-160
Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic" [ERE-s]
Edward Abbey, "Episodes and Visions" [ERE-s]
John Muir, "The American Forests" and "A Thousand Mile Walk"
[ERE-s]



VI. Modern Religious Teachings and Case Studies

20. 3/27: Christian Eco-Theology Today

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 161-177
Pope John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis: A Common
Responsibility" [ERE-s]
"Evangelical Declaration on the Environment" [ERE-s]
"Address of His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew"
[ERE-s]
Sallie McFague, "The Scope of the Body: The Cosmic Christ"
[ERE-s]

**21. 4/1: Christian Eco-Feminism Film: "Adam's World";
Animal Rights**

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 203-209

Rosemary Ruether, "Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social
Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination
of Nature" [ERE-s]

The Island of the Animals [ERE-s]

**22. 4/3: The Tradition of Modern Land Art Film: "Rivers
and Tides"**

Required Reading:

23. 4/8: Deep Ecology and "Ecovisionaries" I: Thomas Berry

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 178-192; 210-226

"Introduction" to *Deep Ecology and World Religions* [ERE-s]

Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 1-162

4/10: NO CLASS: EASTER BREAK

**24. 4/15: E.O. Wilson: An Atheist Biologist Reaches out
to the Religious**

Required Reading:

E.O. Wilson, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*

**25. 4/17: Deep Ecology and "Ecovisionaries" II: Gary
Snyder**

Required Reading:

Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild: Essays*.

26. 4/22: Future Visions and Prophecies

Required Reading:

Kinsley-*Ecology and Religion*, 227-232;

The Social Ecology of Religion, 305-312

Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 163-170

27. 4/24: [or evening TBA] LAST CLASS, Presentations of Term Papers

**EXAM PERIOD: COMPREHENSIVE, in-class
FINAL**



