

Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) 3470

Religion and Environmental Values in America

The Ohio State University, School of Environment and Natural Resources
Course Syllabus (ENR 3470 fulfills GE Historical and Cultural Studies requirements)

Instructors:

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Autumn Semester 2024 (3 units)
M,W Lecture: 11:30am-12:25pm
Kottman Hall 116
F Sections: 11:30-12:25
(**Kottman Hall 116**) or 12:40-
1:35 (**Kottman Hall 116**)

No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it. – Aldo Leopold (1949)

Course Format:

There will be two types of meetings as noted on the course schedule below: classroom and lecture sessions (M, W) and discussion sections (F). Classroom sessions will combine lectures and instruction with discussions of assigned readings and other topical issues. Some topics will be engaged as a Socratic dialogue, others in traditional lecture presentation; occasional guest speakers will add variety to the schedule as well. Friday sections will involve discussion of course readings, including weekly written synopses of assigned texts.

Course Description: Environmental citizenship is influenced by a diverse mix of factors, and while sustainability and other “green” interests remain important in America, religion and spirituality have become a surprising source of environmental values. Surprising, because since the late 1960s, discussions in environmental ethics have often highlighted the negative influence of Western cultures and religions on environmental values, and many environmental thinkers have reinforced the popular academic argument that the anthropocentrism of Western, biblical traditions has been a key obstacle to environmental progress, if not the historic root of our ecological crises. More recently, however, social scientists have demonstrated that Western, biblical traditions are equally germane to positive environmental attitudes and behaviors as Eastern and other religious traditions, and point out that in America, the most significant source of environmental values is religion and spirituality.

Other developments have also increased the interest in this trend. Art historians have begun to investigate positive environmental themes in religious art. The scholarly field of Religion and Ecology has highlighted the wealth of sources for environmental values found across religious traditions, and particularly in the past decade, American environmental organizations have taken unprecedented steps to partner with faith communities as allies in environmental work. With increasing particularity, Americans are developing and deepening environmental values within religious frameworks, while retaining a broad appreciation for religious and philosophical views beyond their own. Aldo Leopold’s lament about environmental ethics (quoted above) no longer

applies. What does this mean for environmental citizenship in America? What does this mean to each of us as individuals?

In “Religion and Environmental Values in America,” students will closely examine the development and influence of religious thinking about the environment in America, and explore religious and spiritual contributions to environmental values in American culture through lecture, films, special forums, discussion, and written assignments. In the early weeks of the course, we will explore some of the fundamental questions underlying our intellectual emphases, loyalties, affections, and convictions regarding religion and environmental citizenship. What is Nature? Science? Religion? Ethics? We will also examine the debate about the extent to which Western Judeo-Christian traditions are responsible for modern ecological crises and for generating negative environmental attitudes, and examine social science evidence and other scholarly arguments that address these questions.

The middle part of the course will highlight a range of religious environmental expressions in America, from secular environmentalism itself, to expressions in Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian traditions. Because Christianity is the predominant religion in the U.S., a larger share of course material will focus on mainline Protestant, Evangelical, Catholic, and other Christian traditions. We will give careful thought to the three main traditions that sociologists have identified as the primary modes of religious engagement with environmental concerns in America: stewardship, eco-justice, and creation spirituality. Students will examine many case studies: environmental policy statements generated by religious denominations; the embrace of “creation care” by conservative Christians; Pope Francis’ recent environmental encyclical letter, *Laudato Si’*; environmental themes in religious art; the rise of faith-based environmental organizations; pronouncements of environmental pollution as sin; climate change as a topic of widespread faith-community engagement; spiritual dimensions of consumerism; and faith-based environmental advocacy. We will also examine social thought on character and virtue ethics, and ecologically relevant conceptions of Sabbath, cosmic reconciliation, sin, salvation, thanksgiving, and hope.

At the end of the course, we will reflect on how these diverse religious influences contribute to the variables affecting environmental citizenship behavior. No matter what spiritual tradition we identify with, if any, how do we reconcile our most deeply held values and beliefs with ecological facts, social realities, economic forces, and hopes for sustainability? In what ways do religion, spirituality, and faith provide cultural resources for environmental sustainability, and shape the landscape of environmental citizenship in America? These and other questions will guide our inquiry.

Note: Through its various assignments and readings, ENR 3470 fulfills the requirements of a GE Historical and Cultural Studies course, including the following goals and objectives:

Goals: Students evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.
2. Students evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms that guide human behavior.

Prerequisites: No background in environmental ethics, religion, or philosophy is presupposed, although students with such background will be able to work on assigned papers at a more advanced level.

Requirements and Grading: Grades will be determined on the basis of the following assignments, in accordance with Faculty Rule 3335-7-21 (100% = 400 points):

- 1) Class and Section discussion participation: 10% (40 points)
- 2) Mid-term Exam: 15% (60 points)
- 3) Final Exam: 25% (100 points)
- 4) Term Paper: 25% (80 points paper; 20 points bibliography and outline)
- 5) Weekly writing assignments: 25% (100 points)

1) Class and Friday Section discussion and participation (10%)

Friday discussion sections are limited to 15-17 participants to allow for in-depth discussion of course readings, graded on the basis of thoughtful participation in discussion. Making specific references to portions of course readings will be important. Some Monday and Wednesday classes will also involve significant group discussion, and participation there will be factored into your grade as well.

NOTE: Attendance in Friday discussion sections is required because of their importance to the course: participation grades will be significantly affected by any absences, and you will not be given a passing grade for the course if you do not attend the majority of the Friday discussion sections.

2) Mid-term exam (15%)

A 50-minute in-class exam will be held in week eight (Wed. Oct 11th), including five mini-essays (~10 minutes each), complemented by a two-page take-home essay due on Monday, October 16th. The exam will cover the material from the first half of the course. An extra credit optional assignment will be described in class to augment mid-term exam grades.

3) Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will consist of two parts: two short essays (~30 minutes each) and five mini-essays (~10 minutes each). One of the short essays and all of the mini-essays will cover the material from the second half of the course. The second short essay will integrate material from the entire course. We will schedule an optional review/study session before the exam.

4) Term Paper (20%); Bibliography & Outline (5%) [sub-chapter option!]

You will be responsible for choosing a topic unique to your interests and preparing a 10-12-page paper due during week 15. Your paper must relate in some significant way to the subject matter of the course as reflected in the course title and syllabus, but this leaves you with a good deal of latitude. We hope that you will find a topic that will be enjoyable and that will permit you to grow in your understanding of your own beliefs, values and moral commitments—as you interact with the worldviews, ideas, and moral views of others. ***You also have the option to complete religion-sustainability database entries in lieu of writing a term paper. More details about this term paper option will be forthcoming in class/on Carmen.*** Your topic must be approved by an instructor before you write the paper. You will also be required to hand in an annotated bibliography and outline of your paper 2-3

weeks before the paper is due, to permit the instructor to give you additional feedback on your topic. Additional details of the term paper assignment will be posted in Carmen News. Note that term papers will be submitted through a “Turn-It-In” check for plagiarism. Additional details of the term paper assignment will be posted in Carmen, and many of the additional readings posted or listed in Carmen Modules are intended to serve as potential term paper resources for you, depending on which topics interest you.

5) Weekly writing assignments (25%)

Each week you will be responsible for a one-page, single-spaced written synopsis of an assigned reading, due in Friday section; in week two, you will write a two-page, single-spaced environmental autobiography in place of a synopsis (see Carmen News for further assignment details). The readings will complement the lecture material each week, and Friday sections will consist of discussion and questions related to the reading and sometimes also to the week’s lectures. *As part of your weekly writing assignment grade, you will also complete an entry in the religion-sustainability database. More details on this database entry will be forthcoming in class/on Carmen.*

Canvas: This class will be administrated using Canvas; on the class website, especially under “Modules,” you will find the course syllabus, reading list, links to weekly homework assignments, announcements, and grades. To gain access to the Canvas website, go to carmen.osu.edu, sign in with your OSU ID (e.g., hitzhusen.3) and your password, and navigate to the ENR 3470 website. You can find help for navigating Canvas at <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/canvas>.

Make-up Work: Make-ups for assignments will not be scheduled in the case of an unexcused absence (and in some cases, may not be rescheduled for logistical reasons). There are three situations that constitute an "excused absence" from class. They are: 1) students who participate in a *documented* University sanctioned event, 2) students who have a *documented* death in the family, and 3) students who have received *documented* medical attention for an illness. Students who will be participating in University sanctioned events must provide the instructor with a copy of the scheduled events and those classes that will be missed. This documentation must be on University letterhead, signed by the coach/supervisor, and given to the instructor within the first two weeks of the quarter.

Late Assignment Policy: To receive full credit for writing assignments, work must be turned-in on time and in condition to be evaluated. Papers with excessive errors (15 or more) will be returned for resubmission and will be treated as if they are late. Late assignments will incur a deduction of one full letter grade for each 24-hour period (or portion) that they are late (including weekends). In-class assignments missed because of an unexcused absence cannot be made-up or repeated.

Academic Integrity: The university states that: “It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487).

For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://oaa.osu.edu/assets/files/documents/csc_12-31-07.pdf).”

It is our intent to treat each of you as if you are honest. We assume that whatever you say or do is done in good faith. If we suspect that you have breached that trust, our intention is to report any suspected academic misconduct through appropriate channels to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct. The Ohio State University Student Handbook covers the subject should you not understand what academic misconduct is. Of course, we will be happy to discuss the topic with you on a no fault basis if we are consulted before the fact. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (link above).

Office of Academic Affairs Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity: There has been a significant increase in the popularity and availability of a variety of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, Sudowrite and others. These tools will help shape the future of work, research and technology — but when used in the wrong way, they can stand in conflict with academic integrity at Ohio State.

All students have important obligations under the Code of Student Conduct to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. Our professional students also have the responsibility to uphold the professional and ethical standards found in their respective academic honor codes. Specifically, students are not to use “unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, on field work, in scholarship or on a course assignment” unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing” of writing, ideas or other work that is not your own. These requirements apply to all students — undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless an instructor for a given course specifically authorizes their use. Some instructors may approve of using generative AI tools in the academic setting for specific goals. However, these tools should be used only with the explicit and clear permission of each individual instructor, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Course Readings: Most weeks will include an online textbook chapter as required/primary reading; REVA (Religion and Environmental Values in America) is the abbreviation for the online textbook, as well as:

Required Texts: Required readings (packet) for the course will be available on Carmen, and you are expected to bring the required readings to class and recitation (either electronically or in hard copy) for discussion purposes. **In addition, the following texts are required:**

1. Pollan, Michael. *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*. New York: Grove Press, 1991.
2. Francis, Pope. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, 2015. (multiple publishers exist)

Suggested Text:

Moore, Kathleen D., and Michael Nelson. *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*. San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2010. (Designated as "MG" below)

A bibliography and links to additional suggested and supporting readings will be provided on the Carmen/Canvas course web site, and suggestions for further reading and study are included in the course schedule outline below. You can also find numerous religion-environment resources in the RESTORExchange religion and sustainability database: <https://restorexchange.wixsite.com/home>

Schedule of Lectures and Reading Assignments: (Subject to Change, check Carmen for most up-to-date reading assignments)

Required Readings are marked below with double asterisks ().** See Carmen "supplemental material" at the bottom of the Modules page for supplemental readings on the below topics.
Due dates of major assignments highlighted in yellow below.

Week One (Aug 21, 23): Introduction

W: Introduction; Environmental Attitudes, Values, Behaviors, and Citizenship: Assessing the Role of Religious Variables

F Rec: Intro recitation/discussion section

**Online Textbook (REVA): Note to Reader and Chapter 1
 Start reading Pollan: Chs: 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12; browse database

Week Two (Aug 26, 28, 30): Lynn White and the Genesis of Ecotheology

M: Lynn White Jr.: Is biblical religion to blame?

W: Genesis and environmental stewardship

F Rec: Lynn White discussion; **Environmental Autobiography due**

** REVA: Chapter 2

**White: "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis"

Continue reading Pollan: Chs: 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12; browse database

Week Three (Sept 2, 4, 6): Stewardship – Gardener Ethic

M: Labor Day – no class

W: Traditions of Religious Environmental Response in the U.S.; Religion-Sustainability Database Orientation; Contextualizing Pollan: Religious roots of the Wilderness Ethic and Environmental Art

F Rec: Pollan/gardener’s ethic discussion; **synopsis due**

** REVA: Chapter 3.1 and 3.2

**Pollan: Chs: 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12

Week Four (Sept 9, 11, 13): Climate Change and Climate Justice

M: Climate Change as a Moral Issue; **Dr. Bryan Mark**, State Climatologist of Ohio, OSU Dept of Geography and Byrd Polar Climate and Research Center, guest speaker

W: Climate and Environmental Justice; The Ethics of Climate Denial and Controversy; Climate Change Statements of Different Faiths, Indigenous perspectives on climate justice/activism

F Rec: Religious responses to climate change; **synopsis due**

** REVA: Chapter 9

**Additional required readings for this week (religious climate statements) will be posted on Carmen

Week Five (Sept 16, 18, 20): Epistemology – Knowledge and Science

M: Defining Science, Nature; Methods of science **Database Entry due by 11:30**

W: Knowledge Across the Spectrum; Ratio and Intellectus; integrative knowing

F Rec: Baer: ratio-intellectus/control discussion; **synopsis due**

** REVA: Chapter 3.3 & 4.1-4.3

** Baer: “Our Need to Control: Implications for Environmental Education”

Week Six (Sept 23, 25, 27): Epistemology – Knowledge and Values

M: Defining Religion, Ethics; Methods of religion

W: Meta-ethics, Normative Ethics, Applied Ethics; integrating ethical approaches

F Rec: Wood: relativism/epistemology discussion; **synopsis due**

** REVA: Chapter 4.4-4.6

**Wood: “Relativism”

Week Seven (Sept 30, Oct 2, 4): Spiritual Anthropologies I

M: Spiritual Anthropologies: What’s going on?; Niebuhr and Loy anthropologies

W: Loy Buddhist spiritual anthropology

F Rec: Niebuhr-Loy discussion; **synopsis due**

** REVA: Chapter 5

** Niebuhr: “Man as Sinner” (an additional short article may also be assigned)

**Loy: “Healing Ecology”

Week Eight (Oct 7, 9): Spiritual Anthropologies II

M: Ecofeminist perspectives; Salvation, Grace, Unselfing; Iris Murdoch; Greek Orthodox perspectives; spiritual anthropologies in music

W: **Midterm Exam in section;** Murdoch/anthropologies material will be included in midterm exam

F Rec: Fall Break, No class

** REVA: Chapter 6

Week Nine (Oct. 14, 16, 18): Creation Spirituality

M: **Take-home Midterm due in class;** Sabbath and Edenic Paradise: resonance of religion in American conservation themes; Religious Environmentalism; Religious Naturalism; Creation Spirituality; Wilderness Spirituality; The Book of Nature

W: Wilderness Spirituality, continued

F Rec: solo reflection **synopsis due**

** REVA: Chapter 7

**Hitzhusen: “Biblical Wilderness Theology: Spiritual Roots for Environmental Education”

Week Ten (Oct 21, 23, 25): Creation Spirituality v Consumerism Spirituality

M: The Story of Stuff; Affluenza; Culture, Media, and Consumerism; Monastic alternatives to consumer culture; voluntary simplicity

W: Buddhism and consumerism: **Dr. Seth Josephson**, guest speaker

F Rec: creation v consumer spirituality; **solo reflections #2 synopsis due**

** REVA Chapter 13 is only required reading this week

Week Eleven (Oct 28, 30, Nov 1): Pope Francis’ Environmental Encyclical: *Laudato Si’*

M: *Laudato Si’* – themes from the Pope’s environmental encyclical and dialogue with other religions

W: *Laudato Si’*, continued; guest speaker TBD, **Term paper topic paragraphs due**

F Rec: *Laudato Si’* discussion; **synopsis due**

** REVA: Chapter 8

**Pope Francis: *Laudato Si’*

Week Twelve (Nov 4, 6, 8): Judaism; Islam; Food and Faith: Animal Welfare

M: Food and Faith; Judaism and the Environment: Eco-Kashrut; **Memona Hossain**, guest speaker

W: Islam and the Environment; Halal; **Becky O’Brien**, guest speaker; **Term paper annotated bibliographies and outlines due;**

F Rec: Judaism; Islam; Food and Faith discussion; **synopsis due**

** REVA: Chapter 10

**Singer: “All Animals Are Equal”

**A series of brief articles on food ethics are in the packet and posted on Carmen

Week Thirteen (Nov 11, 13, 15): Virtue

M: Veteran’s day; no class

W: Virtue and the Environment: Film Screening: Groundhog Day director commentary (view film beforehand outside of class) OR Aesthetics and Virtue; Character and Narrative; Environmental Virtue: How then shall we live?; Kupfer/virtue and happiness discussion

F Rec: Virtue discussion; **synopsis due**

- ** REVA: Chapter 11
- **Kupfer: “Virtue and Happiness in Groundhog Day”
- **Johnson: “The Virtues of Fishing”

Week Fourteen (Nov 18, 20, 22): Eco-Justice and Integrative themes

M: Eco-Justice; Faith in Action and Advocacy; **Guest speaker:** Marcia Dinkins, Ohio IPL Executive Director;

W: Environmental Justice across environmental issues

F: Final perspectives; Hope for all things; integrating the pieces; **Integrative synopsis due**

** REVA Chapter 13 is only required reading this week, in lieu of finalizing your term paper and studying for final exam

Week Fifteen (Nov 25): Thanksgiving and Hope for Environmental Citizenship

M: Cosmic reconciliation, peace, grace, tikkun olam, thanksgiving, hope

W: no class – Thanksgiving break

F: Indigenous People’s Day/Columbus Day – no class

** REVA Chapter 13 is only required reading this week, in lieu of working on your term paper

Week Sixteen (Dec 2, 4): Wrap up and Poetry

M: Poetry reading/sharing today or Wednesday; **Term papers due**

W: Last day of class

Exams: Friday, Dec 6 – Thursday, Dec 12

Final Exam: Thursday, December 12 10:00 am - 11:45 am

Required Readings Bibliography -- additional bibliography and links are available on the ENR 3470 Carmen site.

Baer, Richard A. Jr. “Our Need to Control: Implications for Environmental Education.” *The American Biology Teacher* (November, 1976): 473-476, 490.

*Bleich, J.D., “Vegetarianism and Judaism”; Lerner, B.D. “Vegetarianism and Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935)”; Schwartz, R. “Vegetarianism, Judaism, and God’s Intention,” pp. 1693-1699 in Taylor, B., ed, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature: Volume II: K-Z*, New York: Continuum, 2005.

*Foltz, R.C. “Introduction: Islam, Muslims, and non-human animals,” and “Towards an Islamic vegetarianism,” pp. 1-9; 105-127, plus “Notes” pp. 153-155; 164-169 in *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006.

Hauerwas, Stanley. “The Significance of Vision: Toward an Aesthetic Ethic.” *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, 30-47.

Hitzhusen, Gregory E. “Biblical Wilderness Theology: Spiritual Roots for Environmental Education.” *Taproot* 17.1 (2007): 9-13.

Hitzhusen, Gregory E. “Judeo-Christian Theology and the Environment: Moving Beyond

- Scepticism to New Sources for Environmental Education in the United States.” *Environmental Education Research* 13.1 (2007): 55-74.
- Hitzhusen, GE, & Tucker, ME (2013). The potential of religion for Earth Stewardship. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 11(7); 368-376, doi: 10.1890/120322.
- Kupfer, Joseph H. “Virtue and Happiness in Groundhog Day.” In *Visions of Virtue in Popular Film*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999, 35-60.
- *Linzey, A. “The Theological Basis of Animal Rights,” pp. 355-360 in Gottlieb, R.S., ed, *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment* (second edition), New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Loy, David. “Nondualist Ecology: Perspectives on the Buddhist Environmentalism of David Loy.” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 17 (2010): 253-267.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. “Man as Sinner.” In *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation, Vol. I*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964, 178-207.
- Pollan, Michael. “Unhappy Meals” *The New York Times Magazine*, January 28, 2007.
- Pura, Murray. “The Divine Game of Pinzatski” *Crux* 24. 4 (December 1988): 8-10, also In *With Heart, Mind & Strength: The Best of Crux, 1979-1989*, edited by Donald M. Lewis. Langley, B.C. : Credo, 1990, 261-266.
- Singer, P. “All animals are equal,” pp. 1-23, plus “Notes” pp. 269-271 in *Animal Liberation* (second edition), New York: New York Review, 1990.
- Ware, Kallistos. “Safeguarding the Creation for Future Generations.” Paper presented at the Symposium on the Adriatic Sea, “A Sea at Risk, A Unity of Purpose,” sponsored by HAH Patriarch Bartholomew, June 6-10, 2002.
- *Waskow, A. “What is Eco-Kosher?” pp. 273-276 in Gottlieb, R.S., ed, *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment* (second edition), New York: Routledge, 2004.
- White, Lynn, Jr. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-07.
- Wood, Alan. “Relativism” In *Unsettling Obligations: Essays on Reason, Reality, and the Ethics of Belief*. Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2002, 131-157.
- *You will be required to read *one* of these choices related to food/animal ethics.