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 347 fulfills GE Cultures and Ideas requirements)

Instructor: Sarah Walton
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Office Hours: Th 1-4pm and by appointment
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Fall Semester 2019 (3 units)
MW Lecture: 11:30am-12:25pm
MW: University Hall 047; F: Kottman Hall 116
F Section: 11:30-12:25/12:40-1:35

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 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, Native American, 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 Cultures and Ideas 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.

**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.

**Requirements and Grading:** Grades will be determined on the basis of the following assignments:
1) Lecture and Section participation and attendance (10%)
Friday discussion sections are limited to 15 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 attendance/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 8 (Monday, October 7th), including five mini-essays (~10 minutes each), complemented by a two-page take-home essay due on Wednesday, October 9th. The exam will cover the material from the first half of the course.

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. I will schedule an optional review/study session before the exam.

4) Term Paper (20%); Bibliography & Outline (5%)
You will be responsible for choosing a topic unique to your interests and preparing a 10-12-page paper due on November 25th. 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. I 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. Your topic must be approved by me before you write the paper, via an abstract submission. 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 me to give you additional feedback on your topic. Additional details of the term paper assignment will be posted in Carmen.

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 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. A rubric outlining the criteria according to which written work in this class will be evaluated is posted on Carmen.

**Extra Credit:** In this course, there are two options for extra credit, of which each student may only choose and complete one. Extra credit assignments must be completed and turned in by midnight on the last day of class (December 4th). More details regarding extra credit are available on Carmen.

**Carmen:** This class will be administrated using Carmen. Under “Modules,” you will find the course syllabus, reading list, links to weekly homework assignments, announcements, and grades. You can find help for navigating Carmen at https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/canvas.

**Absences:** 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. The instructor shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct.

It is my intent to treat each of you as if you are honest. I assume that whatever you say or do is done in good faith. If I suspect that you have breached that trust, my intention is to report any suspected academic misconduct through appropriate channels to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct. The Ohio State University Student Handbook and the Code of Student Conduct cover the subject should you not understand what academic misconduct is.

**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 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614-292-3307, https://slds.osu.edu/.
**Required Texts:** Required readings 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:**

Hitzhusen Textbook (links available on Carmen)


Francis, Pope. *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*, 2015. (multiple publishers exist)

**Schedule of Lectures and Reading Assignments:** (Subject to Change)

**Note:** Please see Carmen for most up-to-date reading assignment for class sessions

Due dates of major assignments highlighted in yellow

**Week 1 (August 21-23): Introduction**

W: Introduction  
F Rec: Intro discussion section; No synopsis due

**Required Reading:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 1

**Week 2 (August 26-30): Introduction to Religion and Environmental Values**

M: Defining Religion, Ethics; Methods of religion; Relativism vs. Fallibilism  
W: Environmental Attitudes, Values, Behaviors, and Citizenship: Assessing the Role of Religious Variables; Guest Speaker – Dr. Greg Hitzhusen, SENR Faculty  
F Rec: Lynn White discussion; **Environmental Autobiography due**

**Required reading:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 2  
White: “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”

**Supplemental reading:**
Hitzhusen: “Judeo-Christian Theology and the Environment…”

**Week 3 (September 2-6): Epistemology – Religion and Science**

M: Labor Day—NO CLASS  
W: Defining Science, Nature; Methods of science; Knowledge Across the Spectrum; Ratio and Intellectus; science as “power”  
F Rec: Baer discussion; Synopsis due

**Required Reading:**
Baer: “Our Need to Control: Implications for Environmental Education”  
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 3.3 & Chapter 4

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

**Week 4 (September 9-13): The Role of Religion in Environmental Movement(s)**

M: Eco-theology in the U.S.: Stewardship, Resonance of religion in American conservation themes; Religious Environmentalism
**W:** Creation Spirituality, Wilderness Spirituality; The Book of Nature, Sabbath and Edenic Paradise; Guest Speaker – Dr. Greg Hitzhusen, SENR Faculty
**F Rec:** Solo Reflection #1

**Required reading:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 7
Hitzhusen: “Biblical Wilderness Theology: Spiritual Roots for Environmental Education”

**Supplemental reading:**
Pura: “The Divine Game of Pinzatski”

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

**Week 5 (September 16-20): The Human Component—Gardener Ethic**

**M:** The “Wilderness Ethic” and critique
**W:** What are people for? The Garden: What does it tell us about the meaning of nature?
**F Rec:** Pollan/gardener’s ethic discussion; synopsis due

**Required reading:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 3.1, 3.2
Pollan: Chs: 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12

**Week 6 (September 23-27): Spiritual Anthropologies**

**M:** Spiritual Anthropologies: What’s going on?; biophilia; aesthetics; human role in environmental issues
**W:** Niebuhr and Loy anthropologies
**F Rec:** Niebuhr-Loy discussion; synopsis due

**Required reading:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 5
Niebuhr: “Man as Sinner”
Loy: “Healing Ecology”

**Week 7 (September 30-October 4): Laudato Si’**

**M:** *Laudato Si’* – themes from the Pope’s environmental encyclical and dialogue with other religions
**W:** Catholic tradition and social teaching related to environment; Midterm review
**F Rec:** Laudato Si’ discussion; synopsis due

**Required reading:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 8
Pope Francis: *Laudato Si’*

**Week 8 (October 7-11): Eco-Feminist Approaches**

**M:** Midterm Exam in Class
**W:** Feminist Perspectives and Critiques
**Take-home Midterm due on Carmen** Wednesday at 11:59pm
**F Rec:** Fall Break—NO CLASS

This week’s material will NOT be included in midterm exam

**Required reading:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 6
Week 9 (October 14-18): Indigenous Perspectives

**M:** Native American religious perspectives; “ratio” vs. indigenous knowledge systems

**W:** Religious/environment perspectives; approaches to healing/stewardship in a post-colonial world

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

Please refer to Carmen for this week’s readings:
Selections from *Neither Wolf Nor Dog*
“Introduction” in *Sharing the Skies: Navajo Astronomy*

**Other readings TBD**

**Supplemental Readings:**
Selections from *Decolonizing Wealth* by Edgar Villanueva

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Week 10 (October 21-25): Islam, Judaism, Food Ethics & Animal Welfare

**M:** Islam and the Environment; Halal; guest speaker

**W:** Food and Faith; Judaism and the Environment: Eco-Kashrut; Guest Speaker Rabbi Jessica Shimberg: Term paper abstracts due

**F Rec:** Singer/Food & Faith/Animal Welfare discussion; synopsis due

**Required reading/viewing:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 10
Singer: “All Animals Are Equal”
NYT Article on Vegan/Vegetarian Butchers
A series of brief articles on food ethics are posted on Carmen
Film: Renewal: Faith in Place (Muslim Halal in Chicago segment)

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Week 11 (October 28-November 1): Eco-Justice & Food Justice

**M:** Contextualizing Eco-Justice; Eco-Womanism

**W:** Eco-Justice; Guest Speaker Kelsey Ryan-Simkins, SENR

**F Rec:** Eco-Justice/Eco-Womanism discussion; synopsis due

**Required reading:**
Harris (2016): “Ecowomanism”
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 13
White (2017): “A Pig and a Garden”

**Supplemental reading:**
W.E.B. DuBois “Behold the Land”

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Week 12 (November 4-8): Climate Change, A Case Study

**M:** Religious Perspectives on Climate Change

**W:** Climate Justice; Guest Speaker Michael Charles, Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, citizen of the Navajo Nation, and COP23 Delegate: Term Paper Annotated Bibliographies & Outlines Due

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

**Required reading:**
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 9
Additional required readings for this week will be posted on Carmen

**Week 13 (November 11-15): Virtue**

**M:** Veteran’s Day—NO CLASS  
**W:** Environmental Virtue: How then shall we live?  
**F:** Kupfer/virtue and happiness discussion; synopsis due

**Required reading:**  
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 11  
Kupfer: “Virtue and Happiness in Groundhog Day”

**Week 14 (November 18-22): Creation Spirituality & Consumerism Spirituality**  
**M:** The Story of Stuff; Affluenza; Culture, Media, and Consumerism  
**W:** Monastic alternatives to consumer culture; voluntary simplicity  
**F Rec:** Creation v consumer spirituality; solo reflections #2 due

**Required reading:**  
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 12  
Chapter 6 – *Neither Wolf Nor Dog*

**Week 15 (November 25-29): Integration**  
**M:** Integration; **Term Papers Due**  
**W:** Thanksgiving—NO CLASS  
**F Rec:** Thanksgiving—NO CLASS

**Week 16 (December 2-4): Hope for Environmental Citizenship and Concluding Thoughts**  
**M:** Conclusions and wrap up  
**W:** Last Day of Class; **Extra Credit Due**

**Required reading:**  
Hitzhusen Textbook – Chapter 14

**Reading Day: Thursday, December 5**  
**Final Exam: Thursday, December 12th, 10:00am-11:45am**

Embedded here are links to both the University’s Academic Calendar, as well as the Autumn 2019 Finals Schedule.

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


