

**Earth Ethics: Religion, Nature and Globalization**  
**REL 3492**  
**Meets Global Learning Requirement**  
**Writing Across the Curriculum Course**  
**Fall 2017**  
**T/Th 2:00-3:15pm<sup>1</sup>**

“The whole marvelous panorama of life that spreads over the surface of our globe is, in the last analysis, transformed sunlight.” Ernst Haeckel, *Welträtsel*

**Room: SIPA 100**  
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### **Course Description**

This course draws from religious, philosophical, and scientific sources in order to examine planetary environmental problems. Environmental Philosophy and Ethics, as well as the emerging field of Religion and Ecology have developed over the past 50-60 years in an attempt to address problematic human-earth relations. However, underlying many of these approaches is a very western understanding of “nature” as pristine, pure and without human presence. The reductive and productive model of science, for instance, has attempted to define all non-human nature as “dead” stuff and thereby as resource for human use. Historically, some religious worldviews have understood nature as either a pristine creation for which humans ought to be good stewards, or as evil material that must be controlled and eventually escaped. Finally, some thinkers have argued that culture and technology are the culprits of ecological and social ills, and human beings ought to return to a paradisiacal relationship with nature.

Might these very static notions of nature, as pristine source of salvation, as mere resource for human beings, or as chaotic source of evil, exacerbate planetary ills? This is precisely what some political, post-modern, and post-colonial scholars have suggested. Nature, from this perspective should be thought of in the plural and not as something separate from “culture.” The very attempt to define nature and globalize that understanding of nature leads to social oppressions (think about what is coded as “natural” or “unnatural”) and ecological ills (through removing humans from their ecological and often urban contexts). This course will explore the effects of globalizing understandings of “nature” and “religion.” The hypothesis of the course is that both religion (culture) and science (nature) have served as apolitical foundations for forcing truth claims upon “others” both humans and “more than humans.” In response to this, this course will explore what a

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<sup>1</sup>Syllabus is subject to change. Required purchased texts, course requirements, and course time will not change, but some of the reading materials may, depending on events that happen throughout the semester.

“planetary” understanding and ethic (Spivak) of the world as opposed to that of the global might look like. In other words, how might we begin to think and act as if we are part of a planetary community rather than separate from or an exception to the rest of the natural world?

## **Aim Of The Course**

To explore the philosophical and religious sources and forms for the processes known as “globalization” as they pertain to the human and non-human community, and to discern an appropriate, non-colonizing environmental ethic in a world that has multiple meanings of “nature” and what is “natural.”

## **Global Learning Outcomes**

In this course: a) Students will be able to identify interrelationships between religious ideas and the ways we interact with other animals and the rest of the natural world; b) Students will be able to identify specific, global environmental challenges and analyze them from multiple perspectives; c) Based on their awareness of how their own life-choices affect global environmental issues, students will be able to describe possible solutions that work toward global health.

## **Writing Across The Curriculum Outcomes**

This course is intended to help students become better writers. In particular, this course is aimed at helping students “write to learn.” Writing to learn involves developing one’s critical thinking, reasoning, and argument skills through writing. As such, students will write three short, interconnected essays and work in peer-review groups to evaluate the essays. After the peer-review of each essay, students will have the opportunity to revise each essay according to the peer evaluations. All writing requirements will be assessed by rubrics handed out on the first day of class.

## **Requirements**

Recognizing that there are many different learning styles, these requirements are designed to provide you with a variety of ways in which you can demonstrate your engagement with the materials in the course.

### **1. Class Participation/Quizzes—30%**

The first step to doing well in this class is to show up! You can’t be a part of the learning community if you are not present. If you have to be absent from the course, please notify me ahead of time. Any more than two absences (unless there are extenuating circumstances) will result in a lowering of your participation grade. One absence is a free-bee. The second you must give me an excuse for.

The second step to doing well in the class is to speak up during course discussions. This means you must read materials and attend lectures! I realize that we all exist on a spectrum between introversion and extroversion, but remember that the classroom is as good as all of the voices therein. We all lose if we don’t hear your voice at some point(s) throughout the semester. **(Just attending all sessions and participating gets you 10%.)**

The classroom is a community of learners. That is, we are all in the process of critically engaging the lectures and course materials together. Learning should be a collaborative process and it will take all of us to learn this semester. Having said that, there are some ground rules that should be followed in course discussions and assignments.

1. Confidentiality: Sometimes we are exploring serious issues in the course that may be hard to speak about or give voice too. I expect that students will respect one another's privacy in this course and allow room for this type of exploration.
2. Trust and Respect: The classroom is a learning community and it is only as good as the relationships of the people that make up the classroom. Give your classmates the benefit of the doubt before jumping to conclusions about what is said. Also, be sure to state your opinions, questions, ideas and beliefs in a way that is not intentionally disrespectful to others in the class. While freedom of expression, and challenging assumptions is encouraged in this classroom, hate speech will not be tolerated.
3. Academic Honesty. In all written materials, students will be expected to cite sources. Plagiarizing and "Copying" from other students may result in a failing grade. Grading for written assignments will follow the Rubric that is handed out on the first day.
4. Students should be aware of everyone in the classroom and enable each person to contribute to the conversation. Likewise, each participant should refrain from dominating class discussion.
5. In order to facilitate dialogue, on discussion days we may break out into small groups.

Interactive Blackboard tools: In order to facilitate interaction with course materials (lectures and readings), I will provide you with reading questions, which we will discuss in class. Reviewing these questions will help you study for the quizzes.

Quizzes: The third component of class participation is course readings! It is important that you engage with the texts of the course! A quiz will be given every three-ish weeks on the readings and lectures for the given weeks; these will be delivered on the blackboard site and will be open on a Friday and stay open until Monday. They will make up **20% of the grade**.

## **2. Ecological Footprint Essays (WAC Assignment): 57% of the grade**

Each student is expected to write three "ecological footprint" essays. These essays will be distinct, but will build upon one another. A completed draft will be peer-reviewed in groups, in class. After each peer review, students will resubmit the final essay. The peer-review process is part of this requirement! You must turn in your peer-review rubrics (at least 1 for each essay) along with the final essay (by the time of the next class session following the submission of a final essay). **These will count for 10% of the grade for each essay.** Do not, I repeat, do not pretend to do a peer-review of your own essay, I will be able to tell and you will get a lower grade. The person who does your peer review should put his/her name on the rubric. I strongly suggest that you pair up with someone in the beginning of the semester to be peer-review partners. If you cannot find someone to peer review for you, please let me know by the time the first essay is due. The peer-review rubrics will be available on the course blackboard site. Each essay should be 1000-1200 words, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font. For each section, you should cite information using parenthetical citations; include a "works cited" page at the end of each essay. Any type of plagiarism will not be tolerated. Each essay should contain AT LEAST (though you may have more) once citation from a book, one citation from an article (academic, newspaper, or magazine), and one citation from a reputable online source. Remember not all sources are equally reputable and there is a lot of false information out there. Part of this assignment is to help you sift through information and discern what sources are reputable. A good way to do this is to check claims with multiple, scholarly sources. In terms of online sources, remember there is a difference between .edu, .org, .net, and .com addresses. When you are citing a source online, be sure to figure out what type of organization is making a claim and why.

Students must make an appointment with a Writing Center tutor for the first essay. **You will have to turn in some sort of proof that you went to the writing center for this first essay, which they can provide you with.** It is strongly recommended that you make an appointment early, and take your first essay along to that appointment; some students may also choose to go to the Writing Center between the due date of the first draft of the first essay and the due date of the revised, final first essay. **Attending a writing center session will account for 20% of grade of the first essay.**

A. Go online and complete the Ecological Footprint. ([http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/personal\\_footprint](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/personal_footprint)). Write a reflection about your results in your journal including addressing the complex question, “what is sustainability?” **Be sure to read *Grounding Religion*, ch 14 for your reflections on this journal!** Offer your own reflections about whether or not humans are responsible for living within the ecosystems of planet earth. Finally, offer your reflections on what you might be able to “do” given the results of your ecological footprint. This is a “writing to learn” assignment meant to help you understand the complex issues surrounding the concept of sustainability and how your own habits relate to sustainability. **First draft due September 19th (in class). We will work in peer-review teams to critique and analyze the writing style of this assignment on September 21st. Revised Drafts will be due September 26th (Turn it In). 19%**

B. Monitor your food consumption for a day. Write down everything you eat, including the ingredients, and try to find out: a) where the food came from and how much it had to travel to get to you, b) how the people in farms/factories were treated in the making of the food product (this one may not be possible in all cases, but do your best), c) how the crops and animals that make up your food were grown /raised (organically? With pesticides? In factory farms? Small farms? Etc.) After completing these three steps, reflect on ways that these issues tie into your own ecological footprint from the first assignment. This is a “writing to learn” exercise that is meant to help you explore how your daily food habits have global implications; it is meant to introduce you into the issues of food, globalization, and the environment. **First draft due October 10th. We will work in peer-review teams to critique and analyze the writing style of this assignment on October 12. Revised Drafts will be due October 17th(Turn it In). 19%**

C. Council of All Beings Journal. First, Read *The Council of All Beings* (which will be given to you). The Council of All Beings, developed by thinker Joanna Macy, is an exercise in which you take on the avatar of another organism or system in nature, and then through that organism or system, you tell the human community how it experiences the actions of human beings. This is meant to help us understand that the earth is a planetary community and that there are many perspectives outside of the human. For this journal, choose an animal, plant, or system (dolphins, the ocean, the everglades, alligators, polar bears, the climate, etc.) Based upon your ecological footprint and food journals, describe how current human technologies and lifestyles are affecting that animal, plant, organism or system (you might need to do a little outside research to determine this). Based upon your findings throughout the course, what are some technologies, attitudes, and or life-changes that could be made to help foster the flourishing of your animal, plant, organism, or system? This is a “writing to explain” task and is meant to help you use conceptual tools to analyze and think about solutions to some of the problems that emerge in around the issues of religion, nature, and globalization. **First draft due November 14. We will work in peer-review teams to critique and analyze the writing style of this assignment on November 16. Revised Drafts will be due November 21st (Turn it In). 19%**

**3. Final Video: 13% of the Grade.** Students will work in groups of no more than 5 to create a 1.5-minute (no longer) final video on the theme of “envisioning the planetary future in South Florida.” Given what we have discussed throughout the course, and what you know about the problems of climate change facing south Florida, what ought we to do? Given that a sea wall will not work because the bedrock under us is porous limestone, will we be able to save the Everglades, Miami Beach or Key West? What happens when the sea level rises and the fresh water Aquifers are inundated with salt water? Should we start planning to relocate humans? What should we do about all the other species that will be lost and/or affected by climate change in South Florida? Can technology save us? These should be imaginative and creative! (NB: Don’t just narrate a power point, and don’t just splice together clips from someone else’s talking head on the Internet). These will be posted on our course Blackboard site, and we will watch them during our finals time. If you need it, you can check out Video Recording Equipment from FIU in GL 177. They will also instruct you on how to use the equipment if you are not familiar. If you need help with the editing process you can make an appointment with Academic Video Services in GL 150. You can also find out information about these resources online: <http://libguides.fiu.edu/filmandtv/videoproduction>.

### **Plagiarism Policy**

This course adheres strictly to FIU’s plagiarism policy:

This Policy views plagiarism as one form of academic misconduct, and adopts the definition of the university’s Code of Academic Integrity, according to which plagiarism is:

the deliberate use and appropriation of another’s works without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for the ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Term papers acquired online or from other sources;
2. Copying of original material without attribution;
3. Use of other students’ work;
4. Copying and pasting, verbatim, information from Internet sources, without quotation marks and correct citation.

**Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and a referral to the College of Arts and Sciences Dean of Students for academic misconduct.**

### **Grading Scale**

A	96-100	C	72-77
A-	91-95	C-	71, 70
B+	89, 88	D+	69, 68
B	82-87	D	62-67
B-	80, 81	D-	60, 61
C+	79, 78	F	59 and below

## Required Texts

Whitney Bauman, Rick Bohannon, and Kevin O'Brien, eds., *Grounding Religion: A Fieldguide to the Study of Religion and Ecology, Second, Revised Edition* (Routledge 2017).

Lori Gruen, Dale Jamieson, and Christopher Schlotzmann, *Reflecting on Nature: Readings in Environmental Ethics* (second edition) (Oxford, 2013).

Other Readings Provided Online.

## Important Web Resources

Forum on Religion and Ecology: <http://fore.yale.edu/>

Environmental Ethics: <http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Environ/Enviroethics.htm>.

Center for Environmental Philosophy: <http://www.cep.unt.edu/>.

Ecofeminism: <http://eve.enviroweb.org/>.

Environmental Justice: <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/>.

Evangelical Environmental Network: <http://www.creationcare.org/>

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life: <http://www.coejl.org/>

Indigenous Environmental Network: <http://www.ienearth.org/>

Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences: <http://www.ifees.org.uk/>

United Nations Environmental Program: [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

Nature Critical, "Queer Ecology": <https://naturecritical.wordpress.com/queer-ecology-queer-ecocriticism-reading-list/>.

GreenFaith: <http://www.greenfaith.org/>.

## Important Dates

- September (1962):** Publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*
- September 26:** St. Francis Birthday
- December 19:** Anniversary of the Brundtland Report
- December 24:** Anniversary of Apollo Earth Rise Image
- February 16 (2005):** Kyoto Protocol Comes into Effect
- March 10 (1967)** Lynn White Essay "Historical Roots" published
- March 15 (2017)** New Zealand names Whanganui River as a legal Person with Rights
- March 20 (2017)** The Ganga and Yamuna Rivers named as Persons with Rights
- March 24, (1989):** Exxon Valdez Oil Spill
- March 26 (1974):** First Large Action of the Chipko Movement
- May 24 (2015)** Laudato Si Publication
- April 1 (1940):** Birthday of Wangari Maathai
- April 20-24, 2009:** Indigenous People's Global Summit on Climate Change
- April 22 (1970):** First Earth Day
- April 26 (1986):** Chernobyl Disaster
- June 4 (1892):** Sierra Club formed with John Muir as President
- July 4 (1845):** Thoreau moves to Walden Pond
- August 2 (1978):** Lois Gibbs begins movement at Love Canal

## Course Schedule

### Conceptual Introductions

Week 1: August 22/24: Introduction to Course: Sources for Environmental Ethics. Overview of Syllabus and Requirements

T: Discussion of Syllabus  
Th: Lecture

READINGS: *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 1, Lynn White; *Grounding Religion*, “Introduction”.

Week 2: August 29/31 What is Religion? What is Nature?

T: Lecture  
Th: Reading Discussion

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Chs. 1-2.

Week 3: September 5/7 What is Nature? What is Religion?

T: Lecture  
Th: Reading Discussion

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Chs. 3-4. *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 1, Darwin.

### Historical Overviews: Religion, Nature, and Cosmologies

Week 4: September 12/14 Religion and Nature: The Ancient Near East, Greece and Proto-Forms of Modern Science

T: Lecture  
Th: online Quiz; no class; work on your first essay which is due next week!

READINGS: *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 1, “Genesis”, “Aristotle”; Selections from the *Enuma Elish* (online).

#### **Online Quiz 1: Weeks 1-4**

Week 5: September 19/21 Religion and Nature: Islamic Thought and the Scientific “Revolution”: Shifting Paradigms

T: Lecture (turn in Journal 1)  
Th: Peer Review of Journals

READINGS: Selection from Ahmad Dallal, *Islam, Science and the Challenge of History* (online); Merchant, *Death of Nature* chapters 5 and 7 (online).

#### **Journal 1 Due, September 19 (In Class):**

**Be sure to read *Grounding Religion*, ch 14 for your reflections on this journal!**

Week 6: September 26/28 Colonization of land, animals and “others”

T: Lecture

Th: Reading Discussion

READINGS: *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 4: “Peter Singer,” Lori Gruen,” and Section 5, “Ramachandra Guha”. Plumwood, “Decolonizing Nature” (online). Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, Chs. 1 and 2 (online).

**Revised Drafts of Journal 1 Due (Turn it In):  
September 26<sup>th</sup>; don’t forget to bring peer evaluations to the next class.**

Week 7: October 3/5 The Romantic “Return”

T: Lecture

Th: Reading Discussion

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch. 7. *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 1, “Naess” and “Muir”, Section 5, Cronon.

**Online Quiz 2: Weeks 5-7**

### Topics in Religion and Ecology / Nature

Week 8: October 10/12 Globalization and its Discontents

T: Lecture

Th: Peer Review of Journals In Class.

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch. 8, 15; *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 3. Ruether, 1-44 (online).

**Journal 2 Due, October 10 (In Class)**

Week 9: October 17/19 Religion, Gender, Sexuality and Nature

T: Lecture

Th: Reading Discussion

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch. 5; Selections from Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden* (online).

**Revised Journal 2 Due (Turn it In); October 17th;  
don’t forget to bring peer evaluations to the next class.**

Week 10: October 24/26 Technology, Religion and Nature

T: Lecture

Th: Reading Discussion/ Film: “The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts”

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch. 12. Selections from David Noble, *The Religion of Technology*, Chs. 1 and 2 (online).

Week 11: October 31/ November 2 Food and Agriculture

T: Lecture

Th: Reading Discussion

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Chs. 10-11. *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 5, “Food”.

### **Online Reading Quiz 3: Week 8-11**

Week 12: November 7/9 Environmental Justice

T: Lecture

Th: Reading Discussion

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Chs. 6 & 13. *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 3, “Foster and Cole”; Section 5, “Agarwal and Narain”.

Week 13: November 14/16 Global Climate Change

T: Lecture

Th: Peer Review of Journal 3 in class.

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch 9. *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 5, “Gardiner” and “Postner and Sunstein”; Climate Literacy (online).

### **Journal 3 Due, November 14 (In Class)**

November 21/23: No classes; American Academy of Religion Meeting and Thanksgiving week. Work on Catching up / Final projects.

### **Revised Journal 3 due (Turn it In);**

**Tuesday November 21; don't forget to bring peer evaluations to the next class.**

Week 14: November 28/30 The Planetary Future

T: Lecture

Th: Course Wrap up and final reading discussion

### **Final Online Quiz 4: Weeks 12-14**

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch. 16; *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 2, Routley; Bauman, *Religion and Ecology: Developing a Planetary Ethic* (selections) (online).

Week 15 December 4-9: Finals Week

**Final Video Projects Due at the time of our exam period. We will watch these during our exam period.**