

**Religion, Nature and Globalization**  
**RLG 5183**  
**MA/MS**  
**T /Th 2:00-3:15pm, SIPA 100**  
**T: 3:30-4:45, GC 271A**  
**Fall 2017<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 and GC 271A.**

**Instructor: Whitney Bauman**

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**Office Hours: By appointment.**

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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

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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.

“others” both humans and “more than humans.” In response to this, this course will explore what a “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.”

## **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.

## **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—30%**

A note on the timing of the course: **You will be expected to show up for lectures with the BA/BS students on Lecture Days. We will also have a weekly “focus reading” discussion which will be on Tuesday afternoons from 3:30-4:40 in GC 271A.** This time will be just for graduate students. You do not need to show up on days when the undergraduate students are having reading discussions or when they are doing peer-reviews of papers.

The schedule below will reflect “lecture readings” and “focus readings.” The focus readings will be the readings we discuss during the special graduate discussion hour. The lecture readings will be discussed with other BA students, mostly on Fridays. You can attend these discussions and you are expected to read the BA readings as well as the special MA readings.

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, just let me know. **(15%)**

The second step to doing well in the class is to speak up during course discussions. 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. **(15%)**

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.

## **2. Ecological Footprint Essays (WAC Assignment): 30% of the grade**

Each student is expected to write three "ecological footprint" essays. These essays will be distinct, but will build upon one another. I strongly suggest that you pair up with someone in the beginning of the semester to be peer-review partners on drafts of your essays. More eyes always help! 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.

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. **These will be due September 26th (online).10%**

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. **These will be due October 17th (online). 10%**

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. **These will be due November 21st (online). 10%**

#### **4. Final Paper—40%**

Each student is expected to write a final research paper, which will be due on the date of the final in the course. Please turn in an abstract, with a few resources for your proposed project by class time on **October 3<sup>rd</sup> (online)**. We will go over these in class together the next class during our “focus” hour. In addition, a 5-10 page version of this paper should be submitted by **November 7 (online)**. We will workshop these 5-10 page papers in our hour long, focus hour the next week. The topic of the paper must be something we have addressed in the course, and must include a topic at the intersection of “religion, nature, and globalization.” We will discuss possible paper topics throughout the course. As a MA/MS student, it might be helpful for you to think about how this paper project could help you develop your thesis. I will pass out a rubric to let you know how I grade the papers. The papers will be due by the end of the scheduled finals time for the course (online).

They must follow a format (preferably Chicago or MLA) and must include research outside of the course reading materials. Note, please do not cite Wikipedia. It is a good starting point, but not an authoritative source, as it tends to gloss over the controversies on a given topic/field. The paper must include (but in no way should be limited to): Two academic journal sources, two academic books, and two academic web sources. It should be no longer than 7000 words, double spaced, 1-inch margins, 12pt font.

I will not give any extensions on final papers, nor incompletes without SERIOUS EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES. This is not because I am a big meanie, but because in my experience students tend not to complete incompletes. **Final papers are due online at the time listed for our Final Exam.**

## 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 Schlotmann, *Reflecting on Nature: Readings in Environmental Ethics* (second edition) (Oxford, 2013).

James Miller, *China's Green Religion: Daoism and the Quest for a Sustainable Future* (Columbia University Press, 2017) (kindle or hardback edition is fine).

Nicole Seymour, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (University of IL Press, 2018). (kindle or paperback edition is fine).

Other selected PDF Readings on Blackboard.

## 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/>.

**\*NB: Please help me add to this list. I hope and actually expect to learn a lot from you this semester!**

## 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  
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  
May 24 (2015) Laudato Si Publication  
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 BA/MA: Discussion of Syllabus

T MA: We will have our scheduled special meeting for MA students at this time as well.

Th BA/MA: Lecture (must attend)

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

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

T BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Miller, Intro and Chapter 1.

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

T BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Miller, Chapters 2-3.

### 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 BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Miller, Chapters 4-5.

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

T BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Miller, 6-7.

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

T BA/MA: Lecture (Journal 1 due)

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Miller, 8-9.

**Journal 1 Due (online): Be sure to read  
*Grounding Religion*, ch 14 for your reflections on this journal!**

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

T BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Abstract Workshop

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

FOCUS READINGS: READ ABSTRACTS

**Abstracts Due, October 3<sup>rd</sup> (online)**

Topics in Religion and Ecology / Nature

Week 8: October 10/12 Globalization and its Discontents

T BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Seymour, Introduction.

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

T BA / MA: Lecture (turn in Journal 2)

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Seymour, Chapter 1.

**Journal 2 due online; October 17.**

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

T BA/ MA: Lecture

T MA: Reading Discussion



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

FOCUS READINGS: Seymour, Chapter 2.

Week 11: October 31/ November 2 Food and Agriculture

T BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Seymour, Chapter 3.

Week 12: November 7/9 Environmental Justice

T BA/MA: Lecture (5-10 page paper due)

T MA: Short Paper workshop

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

FOCUS READINGS: Read Short Papers

**5-10 page paper due on November 7<sup>th</sup>**

Week 13: November 14/16 Global Climate Change

T BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Reading Discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Seymour, Chapter 4.

November 21/23: No classes; American Academy of Religion Meeting and Thanksgiving week.

Work on Catching up / Final projects.

**Journal 3 due (online); Tuesday November 21**

Week 14: November 28/30 The Planetary Future

T BA/MA: Lecture

T MA: Course Wrap up and final reading discussion

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

FOCUS READINGS: Seymour, Chapter 5 and Conclusion.

Week 15 December 4-9: Finals Week

**We will not have a final exam, but you must turn your final paper in by the final exam time listed for our course (online).**