Earth Ethics: Religion, Nature and Globalization
REL 3492
Meets Global Learning Requirement
Writing Across the Curriculum Course
Fall 2020
T/Th 12:30-1:45pm¹ (EST)
Remote Zoom Lectures

“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: Zoom
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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

¹Syllabus 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.
(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 “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?

**Modality:** This will be a remotely taught course. This means that lectures will be in real time, during the time the course is scheduled. They will be held on Zoom and they will be recorded. NB: It is important to “show up” for the lectures and participate in course discussions as this is a major part of the grade. Links to all the Zoom lectures and discussion will be available on the Course Canvas Page. The “reading discussions” will take place in small groups (on-line) and not in real time. I will correct the online discussions so that everyone has access to the reading questions and answers, which will help you for the course quizzes.

**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** (See Due Dates in the Course Schedule Below)
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—10%**
The first step to doing well in this class is to show up and participate, even in zoom lectures and online discussions! You can’t be a part of the learning community if you are not present. If you have to be absent for an extended period due to illness or family issues, etc., please let me know.

The second step to doing well in the class is to “speak up” during reading discussions. This means you must read materials and contribute to course reading questions in your group! There will also be time for Q&A on course lectures day. It is important to hear your voice!

The classroom is a community of learners. That is, we are all in the process of critically engaging the lectures and course materials together, even remotely. 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 will 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 Canvas tools: In order to facilitate interaction with course materials (lectures and readings), I will provide you with reading questions, that will be answered in groups, and then posted for the whole class on Canvas. Reviewing these questions will help you study for the quizzes. We will also use Zoom for all Tuesday lectures and any other synchronous (in real time) business (such as meeting with me during “office hours”). I will also record lectures and make the recordings available on the course canvas site.

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 3-4 weeks on the readings and lectures for the given weeks; these will be delivered on the blackboard site and will be open on a Thursday and stay open until Tuesday.

2. Planetary Thinking Essays (WAC Assignment): 50% of the grade

Each student is expected to write three “planetary thinking” essays. These essays will be distinct but will build upon one another.

Each essay should be 1000-1200 words, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font. You must cite your sources (even if they are just course materials). 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. Use your course materials for these citations as well! 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.

For all essays, follow the citation and formatting guidelines of the Chicago, Turabian Style: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/citation-guide.html.

Students must make an appointment (in person or virtual) with a Writing Center tutor for the first essay (v https://case.fiu.edu/writingcenter/make-an-appointment/). 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 (usually an official email approval or stamp). 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. First Essay: Ecological Footprint Journal. (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. Due September 7th, Turn it In.

B. Second Essay: Food Consumption Journal. 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. Due October 8, Turn it in.

C. Third Essay: 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. Due, November 5th, Turn It In.

3. Final: Eco-Autobiography: 30% of the Grade. Every Wednesday of October, there will be a zoom session on “planetary storytelling” from 11am to 1pm EST. These will be recorded. I will provide you with a link to the live versions and recorded versions. You are to watch (live or recorded) these 4 sessions and then think about your own relationship to other people and the rest of the natural world. Answer the 4 questions in relationship to your own “eco-autobiography.” First, what stories shaped the way you understand your own relationship to the rest of the natural world? Second, how do race, sex, and class shape your own understanding of other animals and the rest of the natural world? Third, how has this course uncovered injustices that might be part of the way in which you understand nature? And Fourth, given those injustices and what you have learned in the course, how has your “story” about human-earth relations shifted?

This should be from 1500 (min) to 2000 words (max). Again, use citations from course materials and follow the Turabian, Chicago style for formatting the essay: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/citation-guide.html. These will be due on the date of the final exam, on Turn it In.

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
A- 90-95
B+ 87-89
B  83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 76-79
C  70-75
D  60-69
F  59 and below

Required Texts


Other Readings Provided Online. *(marked in Yellow)*

Important Web Resources
Forum on Religion and Ecology: http://fore.yale.edu/
Center for Environmental Philosophy: http://www.cep.unt.edu/.
Ecofeminism: http://eve.enviroweb.org/.
Environmental Justice: http://www.ejnet.org/.
Evangelical Environmental Network: http://www.creationcare.org/
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life: http://www.coej.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

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 25: Introduction to Course: Sources for Environmental Ethics. Overview of Syllabus and Requirements

T: Discussion of Syllabus
Th: Group Discussions online.

READINGS: Lynn White reading (online); Grounding Religion, “Introduction”; Sandler, chapter 1.

Week 2, September 1: What is Religion? What is Nature?
T: Lecture.
Th: Group Discussions Online.

READINGS: Grounding Religion, Chs. 1-2; Sandler, chapter 2.

Week 3, September 8: What is Nature? What is Religion?
T: Lecture
Th: Group Discussions Online

READINGS: Grounding Religion, Chs. 3-4; Sandler, chapters 3-4.

Historical Overviews: Religion, Nature, and Cosmologies

Week 4, September 15: Human-Animal Relations
T: Lecture
Th: Group Discussions Online


Online Quiz 1: Weeks 1-4
(Open from Thursday after class until the following Tuesday at class time)
Week 5, September 22: Religion and Nature: The Ancient Near East, Greece and Proto-Forms of Modern Western Science
  T: Lecture
  Th: Group Discussions Online.

  READINGS: Online: Selections from: “Genesis”, “Aristotle”; Selections from the Enuma Elish (online); Merchant, Reinventing Eden (online)

  First Essay Due: Ecological Footprint Journal (online)

Week 6, September 22: Religion and Nature: Islamic Thought and the Scientific “Revolution”:
  Shifting Paradigms
  T: Lecture
  Th: Group Discussions Online

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

Week 7, September 29: Colonization of land, animals and “others”
  T: Lecture
  Th: Group Discussion Online.

  READINGS: Sandler, chapters 5-6; Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States, Chs. 1 and 2 (online).

  Online Quiz 2: Weeks 5-7
  (Opens from Thursday after class until the following Tuesday at class time)

  Topics in Religion and Ecology / Nature

Week 8, October 6: The Romantic “Return”
  T: Lecture
  Th: Group Discussion Online

  READINGS: Grounding Religion, Ch. 7. Sandler, chs. 11-12.

  Second Essay Due: Food Consumption Journal

Week 9, October 13: Globalization and its Discontents
  T: Lecture
  Th: Group Discussion Online
READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch. 8, 15; Ruether, 1-44 (online).

**Week 10, October 20:** Religion, Gender, Sexuality and Nature  
T: Lecture  
Th: Group Discussion Online

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch. 5; Sandler chapter 14.

**Week 11, October 27:** Technology  
T: Lecture  
Th: Group Discussion Online

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

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

**Week 12, November 3:** Environmental Justice  
T: Lecture  
Th: Group Discussions Online

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Chs. 6 & 13; Sandler, chapter 15.

**Essay 3 Due: Council of All Beings**

**Week 13, November 10:** Global Climate Change  
T: Lecture  
Th: Group Discussions Online

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Ch 9; *Climate Literacy* (online); Sandler, chapter 16.

**Week 14, November 17:** Food and Agriculture  
T: Lecture  
Th: Group Discussions Online

**READINGS: ONLINE, TBA**

**Week 15, November 24:** The Planetary Future  
Tuesday: Lecture, “The Planetary Future”  
Thursday: Thanksgiving; no class.

READINGS: *Grounding*, chapter 16; Sandler, chapter 17; Bauman and O’Brien (online)
Week 16, December 1:
Tuesday: Class wrap up and evaluations
Thursday: Reading discussion week 15.

Final Online Quiz 4: Weeks 12-15

Turn in Eco-Autobiography, Date of the Final