

**Earth Ethics: Religion, Nature and Globalization**  
**REL 3492**  
**Meets Global Learning Requirement**  
**Writing Across the Curriculum Course**  
**Fall 2014**  
**MWF 2:00-2:50**

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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 Modern, Western Scientific Worldview, for instance, has attempted to define globally what “nature” is. 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, many Romantic 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 either pristine source of salvation or 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.” 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, what might planetary environmental ethics look like?

**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 ones 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.

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), there will be a space on the course blackboard for weekly takeaway points from the lectures, and a glossary from the readings. I will also provide you with reading questions, which we will discuss in class. The glossary, questions, and weekly take-aways are dynamic and interactive, and I expect that each of you will contribute to these sections of the blackboard. This is a good way for introverts especially to get your voices heard, but also a good way to help each other study for quizzes, etc.

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 or so weeks on the readings and lectures for the given week; these will be delivered on the blackboard site and will be open on a Friday and stay open until Monday. There will be 4 quiz sessions. They will make up **20% of the grade.**

### **3. Ecological Footprint Essays (WAC Assignment): 56% 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 complete draft of each essay will be submitted on Turn it in. This complete 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 2 for each essay) along with the final essay. These peer-review rubrics will be available on the course blackboard site. Each journal entry 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.

NB: We will also have a workshop from someone in the Writing Center during the first week of class (this will not count as your private writing center session).

A. 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.** 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 14% of this portion of the grade.**

B. 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?” 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 Wednesday Sept. 24 (Turn it in). We will work in peer-review teams to critique and analyze the writing style of this assignment on Friday Sept 26th. Revised Drafts will be due Friday, October 3rd. 14%**

C. 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 made 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 Wednesday October 15<sup>th</sup> on Turn it in. We will work in peer-review teams to critique and analyze the writing style of this assignment on Friday, October 17th. Revised Drafts will be due Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup>. 14%**

D. Council of All Beings Journal. First, Read *The Council of All Beings in Religions and Environments*, Part I, chapter 6. 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 will need to do a little outside research to determine this). Based upon course readings, 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 Wednesday, November 19th on Turn it in. We will work in peer-review teams to critique and analyze the writing style of this assignment on Friday, November 21st. Revised Drafts will be due Monday, December 1<sup>st</sup>. 14%**

**4. Final Video: 14% of the Grade.** Students will work in groups of two to create a 1.5-minute (no longer) final video on the theme of “envisioning the planetary future.” Given what we have discussed throughout the course, what types of worlds do you want to live in? What types of worlds do you want to leave behind for future generations of humans and other animals? These videos should persuade us to want to live in your future planetary community. 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 a course you-tube site and we will watch these together during finals time. You can check Video Recording Equipment here: <http://it.fiu.edu/instructional/equipment.shtml>. We will have a workshop on this process during the first few weeks of class.

## **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* (Routledge 2010).

Richard Bohannon, *Religions and Environments: A Reader in Religion, Nature and Ecology* (Bloomsbury 2013).

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

Other selected PDF Readings on Moodle.

### **Important Web Resources**

Forum on Religion and Ecology: [www.environment.harvard.edu/religion/religion](http://www.environment.harvard.edu/religion/religion).  
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://prayerforcreationcare.creationcare.org/index.php>  
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life: <http://www.coejl.org/index.php>  
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)

## 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 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  
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

## SCHEDULE

### Conceptual Introductions

Week 1: August, 25, 27, 29 Introduction to Course: Sources for Environmental Ethics. Overview of Syllabus and Requirements

M: Discussion of Syllabus  
W: Lecture  
F: Writing Workshop

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

Week 2: September 1, 3, 5 What is Religion? What is Nature?

M: 9/1: Labor Day No class!  
W: Lecture  
F: Reading Discussions

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Part I

Week 3: September 8, 10, 12 What is Nature? What is Religion?

M: Lecture

W: Lecture

F: Reading Discussions

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Part II; *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 1, Darwin.

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

Week 4: September 15, 17, 19 “Religion and Nature: The Ancient Near East, Greece and Proto-Forms of Modern Science”

M: Lecture

W: Reading Discussions

F: Friday, Sept 19: Quiz; no class.

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

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

Week 5: September 22, 24, 26 Religion and Nature: Islamic Thought and the Scientific “Revolution”: Shifting Paradigms.

M: Lecture

W: Turn in Journal; Reading Discussions

F: September 26: Peer Review of Journals (in class)

READINGS: *Religions and Environments*, Part II, chapters 4-5; Merchant, *Death of Nature* chapters 5 and 7 (online).

#### **Journal 1 Due, Wednesday September 24th (Turn it In)**

Week 6: Sept 29, Oct 1, Oct 3 Colonization of land, animals and “others”

M: Lecture

W: Reading Discussions

F: October 3<sup>rd</sup>: Gary Yourofsky; Revised Journal Due!

**Revised Drafts of Journal 1 Due (In class); Friday October 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Chapter 9; *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 4. Plumwood, “Decolonizing Nature” (online).

Week 7: October 6, 8, 10 The Romantic “Return”

M: Lecture

W: Reading Discussions

F: Film: “The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts”; **Online Quiz 2: Weeks 5-7**

READINGS: *Religions and Environments*, Part I, chapters 1-4, 7-12. *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 1, Naess, Section 5, Cronon, Guha.

### Topics in Religion and Ecology / Nature

Week 8: October 13, 15, 17 Globalization and its Discontents

M: Lecture

W: Reading Discussions; **Journal 2 Due, Wednesday October 15th (Turn it in)**

F: Peer Review of Journals In Class.

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, Chapter 13; *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 3. Ruether, 1-44 (online).

Week 9: October 20, 22, 24 Religion, Gender and Nature

M: Lecture

W: Lecture

F: Reading Discussions **Revised Journal 2 Due (in class); Friday October 24**

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, chapter 10; *Religions and Environments*, Part II, chapters 9-10; Merchant, *Reinventing Eden* (online).

Week 10: October 27, 29, 31 Technology, Religion and Nature

M: Lecture

W: Lecture

F: Reading Discussions

READINGS: *Religions and Environments*, Part III, chapters 5-8; Haraway, “Cyborg Manifesto” (online).

Week 11: November 3, 5, 7: Food and Agriculture

M: Lecture

W: Reading Discussions

F: **Online Reading Quiz 3: Week 8-11; no class.**

READINGS: *Religions and Environments*, Part II, chapters 1-3, 6-8; *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 5, “Food”.

Week 12: November 10, 12, 14: Environmental Justice

M: Lecture

W: Lecture

F: Reading Discussions

READINGS: *Grounding Religion*, chapter 12; *Religions and Environments*, Part III, chapters 9-12; *Inherited Land* (online).

Week 13: November 17, 19, 21 Global Climate Change.

M: Lecture

W: Reading Discussions; **Journal 3 Due (Turn it in)**

F: Peer Review of Journal 3 in class.

READINGS: *Reflecting on Nature*, Section 5, “Climate Change”; Climate Literacy (online).

**November 24, 26, 28: No classes; American Academy of Religion Meeting and Thanksgiving week. Work on Catching up / Final projects.**

Week 14: December 1, 3, 5: The Planetary Future

M: Lecture **Revised Journal 3 due (in class); Monday December 1.**

W: Course Wrap up and reading discussions

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

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

Week 15: Finals Week

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