Course Description:

This course introduces the East Asian religious traditions of Confucianism, Daoism and East Asian Buddhism in relation to the emerging field of religion and ecology. This overview course identifies developments in the traditions that highlight their ecological implications into the contemporary period. In particular, it relates religious concepts, textual analysis, ritual activities, and institutional formations within the traditions to engaged, on-the-ground environmental projects. It investigates the symbolic and lived expressions in religious ethics, and practices that can be defined as religious ecologies. Similarly, it identifies narratives in Confucianism, Daoism, and East Asian Buddhism that orient humans to the cosmos, namely, religious cosmologies. This interrelationship of narratives and religious environmentalism provides pathways into the study of religion and ecology.

At present the rapid modernization of East Asia is causing extreme environmental problems. This course will investigate Asian religions in relation to this ecological crisis. Both the problems and promise of religions are acknowledged. Religions are now widely seen as significant social, intellectual, and spiritual forces that both shape and are shaped by cultural worldviews. Moreover, religions are containers of symbolic language that often evoke nature’s processes and reflect nature’s rhythms. The multiform roles of religions, then, provide historical sources for reflection upon human behavior guided by values embedded in individual and social bodies, projected onto ecosystems, and molded into cosmological narratives.

Course Rationale:

For many years science, engineering, policy, law, and economics were considered indispensable for understanding and resolving environmental problems. We now have abundant knowledge from these disciplines about environmental issues, but still not sufficient will to engage in long-term change for the flourishing of the Earth community. Thus, there is a growing realization that religion, spirituality, ethics, and values can make important contributions, in collaboration with science and policy, to address complex ecological issues. We will examine those contributions, acknowledging both the problems and promise of religions. In addition, we view religion and ecology amid the broader emergence of environmental humanities, namely, the examination of the roles of humans in nature through the lens of history, literature, philosophy, music, and art.

Course Format:

This six-week online course is offered for Yale students, both graduate and undergraduate. In particular, it will engage students in the School of Forestry and
Environmental Studies, the Divinity School, and the Department of Religious Studies. Two credits will be offered for the course.

**Course Requirements:**
Students are expected to complete each week:
- 3 hours of viewing online lectures and videos
- 3 hours of reading books and articles
- online assignments posted to Canvas
- group discussions (online and in the classroom for one hour per week)

**Course Grading:**
Grades will be determined on the basis of the completion and quality of course readings, assignments, participation in postings, and group discussions online and in the classroom.

The software program Canvas is equipped to record completion of online readings and assignments and allows for faculty evaluation of written work. The following areas will be assigned for completion and grade evaluation each week:
- viewing online lectures and videos (3 hours viewing each week) for 10%
- reading online articles (3 hours each week) for 10%
- weekly writing assignments for 20%
- weekly responses to other students' posting for 20%
- attendance and group discussions in classroom (1 hour each week) for 15%
- students will complete a 5 page paper for 25%

**Required Texts:**

**Online Journal / Daedalus**

**Encyclopedia of Religion** online articles
1) on Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism;
2) on Confucianism and Ecology, Daoism and Ecology, Buddhism and Ecology

Selected articles from:


**Background Readings for East Asian Religions:**


Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge University, 2000)


Ken Kraft and Stephanie Kaza, eds., *Dharma Rain* (Shambala, 2000)

Stephanie Kaza, ed., *Hooked: Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume* (Shambala, 2005)

**Suggested Primary Texts**


Wm. Theodore deBary, ed. *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China, and Japan* (Random House, 1969)

**Course Outline**

**Week 1: Introduction and Overview – Confucianism**

**Section 1 – Confucian Worldview**

**Readings:** Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucianism: An Overview” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, online

Readings online from: *Analects, Mencius, Hsun Tzu, Great Learning, Doctrine of Mean*, Chu Hsi on “humaneness,” Chang Tsai, “Western Inscription”

Multimedia:

**Online Lectures** – Tucker, “Confucian Worldview”  
ME Tucker & J Grim, “Scriptures and Commentaries”

**Interview on Analects** with Annping Chin, Yale University

Assignments:

Take one idea from Confucianism – such as relationality, cultivation, nature – in the readings, e.g. chapter 7 in *Ecology and Religion*, and relate it to this week’s lectures and Interview with a focus on Confucianism and ecology.

Post your response to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate questions in response to two of them. Post your questions for class discussion.

**Section 2 – What is Confucianism**


Multimedia:

**Chautauqua Interview** – Mary Evelyn Tucker  
(http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia/conversations-on-religion-and-ecology/).

Video on Chinese environmentalist, Wu Lihong, and his fight for Lake Tai  

Website: **Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale**  
(http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/confucianism/).

Assignments:

Focus on a seminal feature of Confucianism emphasized in the readings and videos, for example, ch’i, continuity of being, or “forming one body.” Discuss the ecological implications of that feature.

Post your response to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to one of them. Post your response for class discussion.
Week 2: Confucianism and Ecology into the Present - Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing and Transforming


Rodney Taylor, "Companionship with the World," in *Confucianism and Ecology*.


https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/pubContent.aspx?d=1300

Multimedia:

**Online Lecture** – ME Tucker, “Confucianism Into the Present”

**Interview** with Tu Weiming by Bill Moyers –
www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/archives/ming.html

Website:
www.tuweiming.net

Assignments: Answer one question

1. How does Rodney Taylor answer the question “Can the East help the West to value nature?”
2. How do Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker elaborate the term anthropocosmic in relation to ecological concerns?

Post your response to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to one of them. Post your response for class discussion.

Week 3: Introduction and Overview – Daoism

Section 1 – Dao as Way and the Dialogue of Identity


James Miller, “Ecology and Daoism,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, online

Multimedia:

**Online Lectures** –
J Grim, “Dao as Way” and “The Daoist Dialogue of Identity

**Chautauqua Interview** – James Miller

**Assignments:**
Metaphors of the *Dao* are highly developed in Daoism and have significant environmental implications. Describe one of these metaphors, discuss how it appears in a reading and one of the lectures, and explain its implications for Daoism and Ecology.

Post your response to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to one of them. Post your response for class discussion.

**Section 2 – Daoism: Scriptures and Commentaries**

**Readings:**  Selections from *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*, online


James Miller, “Envisioning the Daoist Body in the Economy of Cosmic Power,” in *Daedalus: Religion and Ecology*
([https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/pubContent.aspx?d=1301](https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/pubContent.aspx?d=1301))

**Multimedia:**

**Online Lectures** –
ME Tucker and J Grim, “Comparison of Confucianism and Daoism,” and “Scriptures and Commentaries?

**Interview** with James Miller on “Daoist Body and Cultivation”

**Websites:**  **Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale**
([http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/daoism/](http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/daoism/))

www.jamesmiller.ca

**Assignments:**  **Answer one of these questions**

1. Describe the microcosm and macrocosm relations of the body in Daoism?
2. Can “non-action” (wu-wei) be the basis for an environmental ethic?

Post your response to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to one of them. Post your response for class discussion.

**Week 4: Daoism and Ecology into the Present - Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing and Transforming**

**Readings:**


**Multimedia:**

*Interview* with Livia Kohn, Boston University, Emeritus Professor

**Assignments:** Answer one question

1. How does inner transformation of the person relate to transformations in nature?
2. What types of Daoist practices promote environmental awareness?

Post your response to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to one of them. Post your response for class discussion.

**Week 5: Introduction and Overview – Buddhism**

**Section 1 – The Life of the Buddha and His Teachings**


*Scriptures* Dhamapada, Mahayana Buddhism, online

**Multimedia:**

*Online Lectures* – ME Tucker and J Grim, “The Life of the Buddha and His Teachings,”
Chautauqua Interview – Christopher Ives
(http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia/conversations-on-religion-and-ecology/).


Assignments:

In the formation of Buddhism, the concept of “dependent origination” draws together central teachings in this tradition about suffering, compassion, and enlightenment. Give your understanding of these teachings for environmental awareness integrating the readings and the online lectures.

Post your response to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to one of them. Post your response for class discussion.

Section 2 – Buddhist Schools and Scriptures


Multimedia:

Online Lectures –
ME Tucker and J Grim, “Buddhist Schools and Scriptures”

Interview with Dekila Chungyalpa, McCluskey Fellow, FES, Yale on Tibetan Buddhism

Article on Dekila Chungyalpa

Website: Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale (http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/buddhism/).

Assignments:

In the major schools of Southern Buddhism, meditation for personal enlightenment is emphasized. In Northern Buddhism, in addition to meditation, the bodhisattva concept and compassion for sentient beings is emphasized. How do both of these perspectives play a role in Buddhism and ecology?

Post your response to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to one of them. Post your response for class discussion.
Week 6: Buddhism and Ecology into the Present – Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing and Transforming

Readings:

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*

Graham Parkes, “Voices of Mountains, Trees, and Rivers: Kukai, Dogen, and a Deeper Ecology,” in *Buddhism and Ecology* online

Graham Parkes on Zen Gardens: [http://home.clcillinois.edu/com417/Parkesinterviewfinal.htm](http://home.clcillinois.edu/com417/Parkesinterviewfinal.htm)

Multimedia:

Online Lecture –
ME Tucker and J Grim, “Buddhism and Ecology into the Present”

Website:

Ecological Buddhism
[ecobuddhism.org](http://ecobuddhism.org)

Assignments:

How do you understand Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of “interbeing?” How can it be the grounding for a Buddhist environmental ethics?

Post your response to this week's discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to one of them. Post your response for class discussion.