Online Course: Introduction to Religion and Ecology
F&ES 783E, REL 903H

Instructors: John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker

Spring 2015: January 11 to February 18

Course Description:

This course introduces the newly emerging field of religion and ecology and traces its development over the last several decades. It explores human relations to the natural world as differentiated in religious and cultural traditions. In particular, it investigates the symbolic and lived expressions of these interconnections in diverse religious texts, ethics, and practices. In addition, the course draws on the scientific field of ecology for an understanding of the dynamic processes of Earth's ecosystems. The course explores parallel developments in human-Earth relations defined as religious ecologies. Similarly, it identifies narratives that orient humans to the cosmos, namely, religious cosmologies.

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. This course is a prerequisite for the other classes on World Religions and Ecology.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to complete each week:

- Three hours of viewing online lectures and videos
- Three hours of reading books and articles
• Attend and actively participate in class meetings – Wednesdays 4-5:15pm, ISPS, 77 Prospect, Seminar Room A001

• Online assignments posted to Canvas: students must post their submissions to Canvas by midnight on Sunday of each week
  o For example, Posts for Assignment 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 are due by midnight January 18th in advance of the first in-class discussion (“Our Journey into Religion and Ecology”) on January 21st

• Group discussions (online): discussion responses should be posted by 11:59pm on Tuesday of each week
  o For example, Responses for 1.1-1.3 are due by midnight Tuesday January 20th

*Please note that this course will not be offered for audit during the Spring 2015 semester*

Course Grading:

Grades will be determined on the basis of the completion and quality of course assignments, participation in postings of other students, and group discussions online and/or in the classroom.

The software program Canvas is equipped to record completion of 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 and reading assigned articles (30% of course grade)
• Attendance and active participation in the in-person group discussions (30% of course grade)
• Online posts for each section via Canvas (30% of course grade)
• Online comments to other students’ posts (10% of course grade)

Required Text:


• The text is available at the following locations: downtown at the Yale Barnes and Noble, the Yale Divinity School bookstore, and online (e.g., Amazon Kindle edition).
Class Schedule

Overview:

**Due to the abbreviated nature of the course (just six weeks), postings for the first week will be due before our first class meeting on January 14th**

**Please also note that there are Lectures each week, which are required viewing in addition to the readings and other multimedia listed below**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-class meeting</th>
<th>Topic: Intro to R&amp;E</th>
<th>Posts due</th>
<th>Responses due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 14th</td>
<td>Introduction - Our Journey into Religion and Ecology (Assignments 1.1, 1.2, 1.3)</td>
<td>Jan 11, 11:59pm</td>
<td>Jan 13, 11:59pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 21st</td>
<td>The Nature of Religious Ecology: Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing, Transforming (Assignments 2.2, 2.3)</td>
<td>Jan 18, 11:59pm</td>
<td>Jan 20, 11:59pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 28th</td>
<td>Religious Ecology and Views of Nature in the West (3.2, 3.3)</td>
<td>Jan 25, 11:59pm</td>
<td>Jan 27, 11:59pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 4th</td>
<td>Ecology, Conservation, and Ethics (4.1, 4.2, 4.3)</td>
<td>Feb 1, 11:59pm</td>
<td>Feb 3, 11:59pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 11th</td>
<td>Emergence of the Field of Religion and Ecology (5.2, 5.3)</td>
<td>Feb 8, 11:59pm</td>
<td>Feb 10, 11:59pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 18th</td>
<td>Building on Interreligious Dialogue: Toward a Global Ethics (6.2, 6.3)</td>
<td>Feb 15, 11:59pm</td>
<td>Feb 17, 11:59pm</td>
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**Week 1: Introduction: Our Journey into Religion and Ecology**

Chapter 1, Problems and Promise of Religions: Limiting and Liberating

Section 1.1: Personal Story, the Harvard Conferences, and the Forum on Religion and Ecology.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Videos and Multimedia:

• Online Lecture - J Grim and ME Tucker ([http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/stm/edevnts/CampusEvents/PastLectures/20121/10-17-2013.html](http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/stm/edevnts/CampusEvents/PastLectures/20121/10-17-2013.html)). (45 min lecture, 30 min discussion).

• Tucker, Mary Evelyn and John Grim. “Religion and a New Environmental Ethic,” (12:50). ([http://youtu.be/BG0bQ3SwDI8](http://youtu.be/BG0bQ3SwDI8)).

• “Welcome to the Anthropocene” (3 min). ([http://www.anthropocene.info/en/home](http://www.anthropocene.info/en/home)).

Assignment:

• Begin by completing the "Getting Started" section on the course homepage on Canvas (which includes making a profile and reading the "how to" guide). Then write a paragraph on the relationship of your personal journey to this course on religion and ecology. Include your background, if any, in studies in ecology and religion. Post your paragraph on Canvas. Next, read the posts of your classmates and comment on two of them giving a response or observation.

**Section 1.2: Characteristics, Persistence, and Diversity of Religion.**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**

**Videos and Multimedia:**

- View Video Interviews Below
- Video series - Mary Evelyn Tucker, interviewer, June 2013,
- “Conversations on World Religions and Ecology,” (~10 minutes each). Watch four interviews of your choice. To watch these videos, visit
  - Buddhism and Ecology, with Chris Ives
  - Christianity and Ecology, with Heather Eaton
  - Confucianism and Ecology, with Mary Evelyn Tucker
  - Daoism and Ecology, with James Miller
  - Hinduism and Ecology, with David Haberman
  - Indigenous Traditions and Ecology, with John Grim
  - Islam and Ecology, with Safei-Eldin Hamed
  - Jainism and Ecology, with Christopher Chapple
  - Judaism and Ecology, with Lawrence Troster
  - Religion, Ethics, and Animals, with Paul Waldau
- For more video recordings of lectures on the intersection of religion and ecology, visit: [http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia](http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia)

**Assignment:**

- Watch at least 4 of the videos listed under “Multimedia” Section 1.2 then choose one tradition to explore in greater depth via the “World Religions” section of the Forum on Religion and Ecology website [http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/](http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/).
  - Spend 30 minutes exploring the resources provided for that tradition (e.g. the sacred texts, statements, annotated bibliographies, and so forth). Then write a paragraph summary of what you learned and also list two questions that you still have about the religious tradition that you chose and its relationship to ecology. Post your summary and questions to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to the questions and summaries of two of them.

**Section 1.3: The Force of Religious Environmentalism.**

**Required Readings:**

Recommended Readings:


Videos and Multimedia:


Assignment:

- Respond to one of the questions for Chapter 1, *Ecology and Religion*, p. 171 and relate your comments to one section of the "Renewal" video. Post your answer and questions to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them.


Section 2.1: What is Religion? Symbol Systems and Symbolic Knowing

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Section 2.2: Defining Religious Ecology

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

**Assignment:**
• Go to the “News” section of the Forum on Religion and Ecology website ([http://fore.research.yale.edu/news/](http://fore.research.yale.edu/news/)). Read two of the current event articles listed there. Write a response describing how the news item you chose demonstrates the concept of “religious ecology.” Post your summary to this week’s discussion forum on Canvas. Read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them by asking questions about how they chose to define “religious ecology” in their post.

**Section 2.3: Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing, Transforming**

**Required Readings:**

**Multimedia:**
• The Chinese Garden Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Narrated by Maxwell Hearn, curator, Department of Asian Art (9:34). ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C92bYFQDTzA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C92bYFQDTzA)).

**Assignment:**
• Respond to one question from Chapter 2, *Ecology and Religion*, p. 171-72 and post it to Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them.

**Week 3:** Chapter 3. Religious Ecology and Views of Nature in the West

**Section 3.1: From Animism to Monotheism - From Purpose to Ambivalence**

**Required Readings:**
• Indigenous section of the Forum on Religion and Ecology website ([http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/indigenous/](http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/indigenous/)).
Recommended Readings:

**Section 3.2: From Holism to Rationalism - From Romanticism to Transcendentalism**

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**Assignment:**
- Respond to one question from Chapter 3, *Ecology and Religion*, p. 172 and post your response on this week’s discussion forum. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them.

**Section 3.3: From Anthropocentric to Anthropocosmic Thought**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**Videos and Multimedia:**
• Selection from Thomas Berry Speaks (3 min) (http://www.renewalproject.net/film/story/thomas_berry_new_dedicated_page).

• Go to the Hubble Telescope website and take an “image tour” of the Cat’s Eye Nebula (http://hubblesite.org/gallery/tours/tour-catseye/) and the Whirlpool Galaxy (http://hubblesite.org/gallery/tours/tour-m51/).

Assignment:

• Choose two audio or video recordings of Thomas Berry http://www.thomasberry.org/Biography/

• Reflect on one idea from Thomas Berry and post a reflection on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and comment on two of them regarding an insight or new observation.

Week 4: Chapter 4. Ecology, Conservation, and Ethics

Section 4.1: Forms of Ecology and Emergence of the Field of Ecology

Required Readings:


• Outline of chapter 4 by Joanna Dafoe

Recommended Readings:


Assignment:

• What is the science of “ecology”? Write your own definition of “ecology” and then discuss the connection between the field of religion and ecology today and the life and work of a 19th century historical figure such as John Muir or Henry David Thoreau. Post your reflection on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and comment on two of them regarding an insight or new observation.

Section 4.2: The Development of Ecology in the United States – From Holism to Metrics
Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Videos and Multimedia:
- Selections from *Green Fire* - about Aldo Leopold (In class, Wednesday)

Assignment:
- Respond to one question from Chapter 4, *Ecology and Religion*, p. 172 and post your response on this week’s discussion forum. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them.

Section 4.3: Ecology, Conservation, and Ethics in the American Environmental Movement

Required Readings:
  o  http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/about/blogs/yale-collection-american-literature/2014/09/22/religion-and-ecology

Recommended Readings:

Videos and Multimedia:
- Rachel Carson, *A Sense of Wonder* PBS (60 minutes)
Assignment:
- Session in the Yale Beinecke Library viewing Rachel Carson's papers. Write a personal reflection on her sense of wonder or another topic that interests you.

Week 5: Chapter 5. Emergence of the Field of Religion and Ecology

Section 5.1: Approaches to the Study of Religion and Ecology

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Videos and Multimedia:

Section 5.2: Christian Theologians

Required Readings:
- “Common Declaration of John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew I.” In Grim, John, and Mary Evelyn Tucker, pp. 185-188.

Recommended Readings:

Videos and Multimedia:
• Recordings from Paul Winter's Earth Mass (*Missa Gaia*).

**Assignment:**

• Respond to one question for Chapter 5, *Ecology and Religion*, p. 173 and post your response on this week’s discussion forum. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them.

**Section 5.3: Religious Ecologies in World Religions**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Videos and Multimedia:**


**Assignment:**

• Choose one religious tradition, that you have not chosen earlier, in the “Conversations on World Religions and Ecology” series and relate it to the speaker in that tradition in *Spirit and Nature*. Do you notice differences between the scholars’ approach and the practitioners’ approach? Post your response on this week’s discussion forum. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them.

**Week 6:** Chapter 10. Building on Interreligious Dialogue: Toward a Global Ethics

**Section 6.1: Earth Charter and the Parliament of World Religions**

**Required Readings:**


• “The Earth Charter.” In Grim, John, and Mary Evelyn Tucker. *Ecology and Religion*, pp. 200-207. ([http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content](http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content)).
Recommended Readings:


Videos and Multimedia:

- Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne, Australia (MET and JG) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el6__TNZf3c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el6__TNZf3c).

Section 6.2: Interreligious Dialogue and the Emergence of Global Ethics

Required Readings:


Multimedia:

- Culminating Conference at the American Museum of Natural History

Assignment:

- Respond to one question from Chapter 10, *Ecology and Religion*, p. 174-5 and post your response on this week’s discussion forum. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them.

Section 6.3: Epilogue. Challenges Ahead: Creating Ecological Cultures

Required Readings:

• Pan Yue’s speech, Appendix B in *Ecology and Ecology*, pp. 189-90.
• James Miller website on ecological culture in China. 
  (http://www.jamesmiller.ca/research/religion-and-sustainability-in-china/).

**Recommended Readings:**

**Videos and Multimedia:**
• Becket, James, Green Patriarch, His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. nd. The Arctic: The Consequences of Human Folly.

**Assignment:**
• Write a reflection on how you understand "ecological culture" and what it would look like in your country. Post your response on this week’s discussion forum. Then read the posts of your classmates and respond to two of them.
Additional Resources

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

**Annotated Bibliography of World Religions and Ecology:**

**Overviews of the Field of Religion and Ecology:**

**Literature Review:**


**Peer-Reviewed Journals:**

• *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology.*

**Encyclopedias:**


**Films:**