Description and Objectives

Can religious traditions provide the impetus to halt actions that are accelerating the rate of species’ extinction, degrading and destroying ecological systems, threatening the integrity of Earth’s biosphere, and, thereby, adversely affecting vulnerable humans? Ongoing abuse of the environment has prompted an increasing number of scholars of religions to pose this question and to explore ways of thinking that might motivate believers to act in ways that are more compatible with the well being of our planet and its many varied constituents. Students in Theology 4440 are afforded an opportunity to participate in this ongoing "greening of religion" by examining teachings of the world’s major religions and discerning the extent to which they provide promising foundations for environmental ethics.

During the first part of the semester, we will examine Christian calls to address ecological concerns in texts by popes, the United States Catholic bishops, and leaders of other Christian denominations. Emphasis will be placed subsequently on critically retrieving and creatively reformulating concepts in the Bible and works by eminent theologians in order to respond to current ecological problems that concern you. Focus will shift during the second part of the semester to the ecologically promising orthopraxis suggested in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Stressed throughout is the need for religious discourse to be informed by broad scientific findings, particularly cosmology and biology. The semester will close with critically examining models of the human that have surfaced in assigned readings and identifying the most helpful.

Students in this course will aim to achieve the following: (1) Accurately identify and explain orally and in writing key concepts with corresponding principles in the Christian and other world religions that appear promising for addressing ecological concerns as indicated during class discussions, slide presentations, journal entries, and world religions examination; (2) critically assess the extent to which these concepts/principles provide ways of thinking about and living more compatibly within the ecosystems of Earth as indicated in journal entries, slide presentations, and world religions exam, and one that appears most promising to you in the final examination; (3) adequately research an ecological problem on which to test the viability of religious concepts/principles examined in this course as indicated in your report on an ecological problem; (4) work cooperatively with other students to critique assigned texts and evaluate religious ideas for their effectiveness as indicated in class discussions; and (5) critically evaluate models of the human that are suggested in the assigned readings and choose one that you think will be most helpful to guide your actions in the near future as indicated in the final examination.

The major objective of this and other third-level Theology courses is to refine your theological judgment so it will enable you to craft responsible positions on moral and religious questions. This objective is achieved by (1) building upon the learning outcomes of the pre-requisite first and second level Theology courses that are aimed at describing theologically the basic content of the Catholic faith in relation to other Christian and religious traditions, (2) interpreting theological texts and frameworks in their historical contexts, and (3) articulating implications of Christian faith for growth in holiness and promotion of justice in the contemporary world.

Basis for Evaluation

Research report on an ecological problem (10%); in-class presentation of a theological theme or a set of principles from a world religion applied to the ecological problem researched (15%); class participation including substantive contribution to class discussion of assigned reading, news reporting, and other tasks assigned to enhance participation (15%); five reflective journal entries on five different theological themes in the Christian tradition applied to the ecological problem researched and identification/explanation of one theme that appears most promising (20%); a world religions exam (15%); and, a cumulative final exam (25%).

Texts and Other Sources

Pope John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility" (USCC 1990)
United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, “Renewing the Earth” (1991)
J. Schaefer, Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics (Georgetown UP 2009)
Dædalus 130.4 Religion and Ecology (Fall 2001)
Healing a Broken World (Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat, Society of Jesus, 2011)
Forum on Religion and Ecology at Harvard University <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/>
Class Attendance Policy
Because presence in class is crucial to understanding and assessing assigned and presented materials, attendance is mandatory. Four absences will warrant your withdrawal from the course with a WA notation. Frequent tardiness will also reduce your grade by a half letter (e.g., B to BC). Students should plan to use the restroom BEFORE class begins.

Academic Honesty Policy
Each student is expected to represent his or her own efforts in all assignments and examinations. Penalties for academic dishonesty will be rigorously administered per the 2013-2014 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#academichonestypolicy>

Tentative Schedule of Class Sessions, Assignments and Examinations

**MODULE 1 Setting the Stage**
August 27--Introduction to the Course  
Overview of course; identification of ecological problems and directions report due September 3; review of environmental ethics research starting points; introductory lecture on various foundations for environmental ethics with emphasis on the distinctiveness of religious foundations; directions for next assignment.

August 29--Why Religious Communities Should Respond to Ecological Degradation  
Student perspectives; viewing/discussion of *Keeping the Earth* (Union of Concerned Scientists video); examples of responses by leaders of religious communities.  
ASSIGNED: Statements by Pope John Paul II, Patriarch Bartholomew, and others on D2L.

September 3--Perspectives of the US Catholic Bishops and the Jesuits  
Discussion of *Renewing the Earth*, Catholic social teaching, and *Healing a Broken World*.  
ASSIGNED: *Renewing the Earth* and *Healing a Broken World* on D2L.  
SUBMIT: Eco-problem declaration form.

September 5--Impediments to Overcome in the Christian Theological Tradition  
Student insights; lecture on some impediments and introduction to a method for overcoming them; overview of assignments in next module.  
ASSIGNED: McFague’s "Our Common Creation Story" on D2L and “Introduction” to *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*.

September 10–Organizing for Slide Presentations  
Grouping of students to begin preparing slide presentations on ecological problems addressed through concepts and principles in Christianity and other world religions; directions for slide presentations.  
SUBMIT: Ecological problem report.

**MODULE 2 Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics**
September 12--The Goodness of Creation  
ASSIGNED: *Theological Foundations* chap 1.

September 17--The Beauty of Creation  
Application of Goodness/Valuing to ecological problems and discussion of chap. 2, “The Beauty of Creation and Ethics of Aesthetic Appreciation”  
ASSIGNED: *Theological Foundations* chap 2.  
SUBMIT: “Beauty” journal entry (first of five due).

September 19--The Sacramentality of Creation  
Student presentation on the Beauty/Appreciation theme applied to the ecological problem researched; lecture on/discussion of chap. 3, “The Sacramentality of Creation and Ethics of Reverence."  
ASSIGNED: *Theological Foundations* chap 3.  
SUBMIT: “Beauty” journal entry.
September 24--Creation’s Praise for God
   Student presentation on the Sacramentality/Reverence theme applied to the ecological problem researched; lecture on/discussion of chap. 4, “Creation’s Praise for God and the Ethics of Respect.”
   SUBMIT: “Sacramentality” journal entry.

September 26--The Functional Unity of Creation
   Student presentation on Praising/Respect theme; lecture on/discussion of chap. 5, "The Functional Unity of Creation and Ethics of Cooperation."
   ASSIGNED: Theological Foundations chap 5.
   SUBMIT: “Praising” journal entry.

October 1--The Kinship of Creatures
   Student presentation on Unity/Cooperation; lecture on/discussion of chap. 6, "The Kinship of Creatures and Ethics of Companionship."
   SUBMIT: “Unity” journal entry.

October 3--The Restrained and Grateful Use of God’s Blessings
   Student presentation on Kinship/Cooperation; lecture on/discussion of chap. 7, "The Restrained and Grateful Use of God’s Blessings."
   ASSIGNED: Theological Foundations chap 7.
   SUBMIT: “Kinship” journal entry.

MEMORIAL OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI--October 4

October 8--Living Virtuously within an Ecologically Endangered Planet
   Student presentation on Restrained/Grateful Use; lecture on/discussion of chap 8. “Living Virtuously” with emphasis on the moral virtues of prudence and justice.
   ASSIGNED: Theological Foundations chap 8.
   SUBMIT “Restrained Use” journal entry.

October 10--Loving Creation
   Student presentation on Living Virtuously; lecture/discussion of chap. 9, “Loving Creation.”
   SUBMIT “Loving Virtuously” journal entry.

October 15--Assessment of Concepts and Corresponding Ethics
   Student presentation on Loving concept; assessment of concepts/ethics; introduction to next module.
   ASSIGNED: Tucker/Grim’s “The Emerging Alliance of World Religions and Ecology,” Daedalus 1-20
   SUBMIT “Loving” journal entry and final entry on the most effective concept for addressing the problem you researched.

MID-SEMESTER BREAK October 17-18

MODULE 3 Mining Other World Religions in Response to Ecological Degradation
October 22--Judaism and Ecology
   Background lecture on Judaism, students on revered Judaic texts, and discussion of promising Judaic foundations for ecological ethics.

October 24--Judaism and Ecology
   Student presentation on beliefs/practices of Judaism applied to the ecological problem researched; discussion with scholar of Judaism.

October 29--Islam and Ecology
   Background lecture on Islam, students on revered Islamic texts, and discussion promising Islamic foundations for ecological ethics.
October 31--Islam and Ecology
Student presentation on beliefs/practices of Islam applied to ecological problem and possible discussion with an Islamic environmental activist.

November 5--Hinduism and Ecology
Background lecture on Hinduism, students on revered Hindu writings, and discussion of promising Hindu foundations for ecological ethics.

November 7--Hinduism and Ecology
Student presentation on Hindu beliefs/practices applied to ecological problem; possible discussion with scholar of Hindu sect.

November 12--Buddhism and Ecology
Background lecture on Buddhism, students on revered writings, and discussion of promising Buddhist foundations for ecological ethics.

November 14--Buddhism and Ecology
Student application of Buddhist principles/practices and examination of Dalai Lama statement.
Assigned: Dalai Lama Statement.

November 19--Small group identification of principles shared by world religions and those that differ; pros/cons of developing a global system of ethics; directions for world religions exam.
ASSIGNED: Callicott’s “Multicultural Environmental Ethics,” *Dædalus* 77-94.

November 21--World Religions Examination

November 26--Native American Spiritualities

THANKSGIVING BREAK November 27-December 1

MODULE 4: Modeling the Human in an Age of Ecological Degradation
December 3--Criteria for Modeling
Lecture/discussion of criteria for modeling the human today; assessment of models already; selecting a model; modifying a model.
ASSIGNED: *Theological Foundations* chap 10

December 5--Summation of Course and Directions for Final

**Final Exam Thursday, December 12, 8-10 a.m.**

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