SYLLABUS

COURSE: ANTH/REL 444 SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY (Theory) 3 credits
(Exploring the Interface between the Supernatural and the Natural)

TIME: 12:00-1:15 TTh, Spring Semester 2013

PLACE: Webster Hall 203
University of Hawai`i at Manoa

INSTRUCTOR:
Dr. Les Sponsel
Professor Emeritus
Department of Anthropology UHM

Office: Saunders Hall 321
Office hours: 1:30-3:00 TTh by appointment
Office phone: 956-3770
Email: sponsel@hawaii.edu

Website: http://www.spiritualecology.info
(For information about the instructor see Author file).

ORIENTATION

“Throughout history, it [religion] has expressed the deepest questions human beings can ask, and it has taken a central place in the lives of virtually all civilizations and cultures.... Religion persists and is on the rise, even as scientific and non-religious perspectives have become prominent” (American Academy of Religion, “Why Study Religion?,” www.aarweb.org).
“Most anthropologists like to think of themselves as scientists, and that of course includes anthropologists who study religion. But science is not only a way of gathering data and testing hypotheses; it is also a belief system in its own right.... the study of one belief system by proponents of another belief system is going to raise problems” (Morton Klass, 1995, *Ordered Universes: Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, p xiii).

“The notion that fact can be cleanly separated from value is absurd. The notion that our understanding of the material world can be cleanly separated from our experience of the spiritual world is impossible. The magisteria [science and religion] are mixed, shuffled, irremediably joined” (Bruno Guiderdoni, astrophysicist at the Observatory of Lyon, France) [quoted in *Science and Spirit* May-June 2006 17(3):59].

“Contemporary spiritualities combine practices of particular religious traditions with concern for the global situation and the life of the planet.... are pluralistic and diverse; they search for a global ethic, are concerned with ecology, encourage the cultivation of healthy relationships, support feminism, and pursue peace.... Given the increasing scholarly attention in conferences and publications to the role of spirituality in contemporary culture, it is clear that the academy has recognized spirituality as a subject of study both within and independent of the study of religion” Mary N. MacDonald, 2005, “Spirituality,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Second Edition), Lindsay Jones, Editor-in-Chief, New York, NY: Thomson Gale 13:8719, 8721.

“... the upsurge of Spirit is the only plausible way to stop the ecological destruction of our planet. Even people who have no interest in a communal solution to the distortions in our lives will have to face up [to] this ecological reality. Unless we transform our relationship with nature, we will destroy the preconditions for human life on this planet” (Rabbi Michael Lerner, 2000, *Spirit Matters*, Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc., p. 138).


“The Environmental crisis requires changes not only in public policy, but in individual behavior. The historical record makes clear that religious teaching, example, and leadership are powerfully able to influence personal conduct and commitment. As scientists, many of us have had profound experience of awe and
reverence before the universe. We understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred” (statement from “Preserving the Earth: An Appeal for Joint Commitment in Science and Religion,” *Global Forum, Moscow, January 1990*).

*Spiritual ecology refers to scientific and scholarly studies of the vast, complex, diverse, and dynamic arena at the interfaces of religions and spiritualities on the one hand, and on the other environments, ecologies, and environmentalisms.* The term spiritual ecology is used simply because it is more inclusive than religion, referring to individual as well as organizational ideas and actions in this arena, and because it parallels the names of other major approaches within ecological anthropology like historical ecology and political ecology.

This advanced course pursues a systematic and thorough holistic survey and critical analysis of spiritual ecology in anthropological and cross-cultural perspective. Spiritual ecology is a most exciting and positive new interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary frontier for research, teaching, and practice that has been growing exponentially since the 1990s. Here the anthropological method of cultural relativism will be applied by suspending judgements on different religious beliefs and actions, although some criticisms will be considered, particularly from the “New Atheists” in the last class meeting.

The instructor will discuss his own research and publications on various aspects of this subject, including his continuing long-term fieldwork on the relationships among Buddhism, sacred places, ecology, and biodiversity conservation in Thailand drawing on his forthcoming book *Natural Wisdom: Explorations in Buddhist Ecology and Environmentalism*.

**FORMAT**

The course material will be surveyed by a few lectures with PowerPoint (Spiritual Ecology Overview, Buddhism and Nature, and St. Francis); seminar discussions of readings through a division of labor among students; and a succession of very carefully selected documentary films. *A unique feature of this course is its emphasis on an experiential as well as intellectual exploration of spiritual ecology through film.* Long films that consume the entire class period will be discussed on the Laulima course website, while the class discussion of shorter films may continue on the website as well. Beyond class viewing, a wealth of other films, mainly from YouTube
and most of them very short, are listed in the course schedule as recommended, but these are optional depending on the interests of individual students.

Students are required to be open minded as well as courteous and professional in class. *Any student can say anything as long as it is relevant, concise, and polite.* The ideals of academic freedom and democracy apply in this class, even if they are restricted elsewhere. Being concise is important because there is a wealth of course material to cover in the very limited time of each class meeting, and because everyone who wishes should have an opportunity to contribute to discussion, rather than one person or a few dominating the class for an entire semester.

The only prerequisite for this course is Anth 152 Culture and Humanity or 200 Cultural Anthropology, although 415 Ecological Anthropology, 422 Anthropology of Religion, and related courses such as in religion, ecology, and environmental studies would be helpful. However, most of all, one simply needs an *open mind* together with intellectual curiosity and serious commitment, attributes of any reputable scientist or scholar worthy of the title.

**OBJECTIVES**

The three primary goals of this course are to:

1. provide a broad, systematic, and in-depth *cross-cultural* survey of the relationships between religion/spirituality and nature/environmentalism with an emphasis on an anthropological perspective;

2. allow each student to penetrate especially deeply into the ecology of the religion or other topic of her or his choice with an emphasis on its *cultural and natural contexts*; and

3. provide an inventory of *key resources* on spiritual ecology, including books, periodicals, articles, reference works, videos, and internet sites for present and future study and research (see Reading and Resources below plus the instructor’s book and complementary website [http://www.spiritualecology.info](http://www.spiritualecology.info)).

The learning outcomes for achieving these three objectives will be measured by several graded exercises as indicated below.
The final course grade will be calculated as follows:

1. class attendance with active and meaningful participation in the discussion of assigned readings, films, and other resources in class and on the Laulima course website (20%);

2. weekly journal entries of at least one solid paragraph summarizing and reacting to key points in the course material, the first installment due March 5 and the second April 30 (30%);

3. book review essay of two to three pages single-spaced emailed as an attachment to the instructor and posted on the Laulima course website for other students who may be interested due April 30 (20%);

4. a reflective essay on the entire course of four pages single-spaced for the take-home final examination due May 7 (30%).

Please see Appendix I in this syllabus for guidelines about the journal, book review essay, and final examination essay.

Student work will be evaluated for:

1. achieving the primary objectives of the course;

2. general knowledge of all required reading assignments and of all material presented by the instructor in lectures and from class discussions, films, and so on;

3. clear, concise, logical, analytical, and critical thinking; and

4. regular, active, and meaningful participation in class discussions of assigned readings in class and on the course website.

Students pursuing an A grade should do more than the minimum requirements; that is, do additional reading and view extra films as recommended in the course Schedule.

Undergraduate and graduate student work will be graded separately, and greater sophistication is expected for the latter including a higher quantity and quality of work. Graduate students are also expected to undertake extra readings of their choice in
pursuing their own special topical and regional interests.

Attendance will be taken at every class meeting during the first ten minutes of the period. Students are expected to arrive on time to class, stay and remain attentive throughout the entire period, and to come to every single class meeting throughout the entire semester. To be approved an absence requires a convincing excuse, ideally with documentation such as a memo from an appropriate official like a medical doctor. The final course grade will be reduced by one whole letter grade for every three unapproved absences.

Any students who wish to sleep or to carry on private conversations should do so outside of the classroom to avoid distracting other students and the instructor. In short, like the instructor, students are expected to take this course seriously. Anyone who does not is wasting their time and that of other students and the instructor; thus, they should drop the course immediately instead of waiting until the end of the semester to receive a poor or failing grade.

Extra credit may be earned by writing a one-page reaction (not summary) to a video, journal article, book chapter, lecture, or class discussion from any of the material covered in the syllabus or class. Five high quality extra credit papers can make the difference for a borderline course grade (e.g., B+ to A-), while ten such papers can elevate the course grade to the next higher level (e.g., B to A). Other alternatives for more extra credit include writing a review of an extra book or an extra report based on library or field research; however, the specifics have to be approved in advance by the instructor. Thus, in principle, with enough high quality work any student can earn an A in this course.

**SPECAL NEEDS**

If any student feels the need for reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a disability, then she or he should contact the KOKUA Program in QLCSS 013 (phones 956-7511 or 956-7612), and/or speak to the instructor in private to discuss specific needs. The instructor is quite willing to collaborate with any student and KOKUA about needs related to a documented disability.

**READING**

Students are required to discuss in class and on the Laulima course website one of the following three textbooks of their choice; read one additional book of their own choice, write a review, send it as an email attachment to the instructor and post it on the
Laulima course website; and read a few carefully selected additional assigned journal articles, book chapters, and handouts.


Please see Appendix II for more resources.

You are encouraged to pursue your individual interests in exploring some of the resources identified in this syllabus including viewing extra videos and surfing websites. Students who take advantage of as many of the resources provided here as feasible will obtain a systematic and thorough overview of the subject.

Please alert the instructor if there is a problem with any of the websites listed in this syllabus or recommended during class.

Please see Appendix III for topics at a glance.

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SCHEDULE

JANUARY

PART I – ORIENTATION

8T  Introduction
Recommended films: “Welcome to the Anthropocene” (3.5 minutes)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjAcSsL1Pag. “Stephen Wollaston’s A Meditation About GreenSpirit” (6)  

10Th Film: “Butterfly” DVD 8340 (90), S-1

Recommended films: “Forests of Reverence in India” (8.5)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7pXo6FMEpY. “Reviving Faith: Saving the Forests of Himalayas” (56.5)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DBfYYJd1Ho. “Pagan Tree Worship in Finland” (5)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtIk2GN6v6I. “Awakening Our Relationship with Trees” (10) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7702KWymIT4


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15T Film: “Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai” (80), S-16


17Th Lecture: Spiritual Ecology Overview, G-1, T-1,2

Recommended films: “Fritjof Capra on The Web of Life” (12) 
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLiRXM2oZ_U. “Sacred Balance – Gaia Hypothesis” (4.5) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44yiTg7cOVI. “Spiritual Awakening: Get Ready for Earth Changes” (7) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMw5_Idqbxo.


PART II – PIONEERS

22T Film: “Spirit and Nature” (88)

Recommended films: “Mountain Stream” (10) http://www.youtube.com/user/okanokumo?v=RrL_gLM4AR0. “Spirits of Nature” (5) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAMoCQI95EQ. “Maria Alice Campos Friere About the Preservation of Spirit and Nature” (4) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xU2THiAODc. “Boris Petrovic on the Brazilian Ecovillage Movement” (6.5) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT2Qw-LOkSw.


24Th Indigenous Peoples: The Original Spiritual Ecologists S-2,3,4


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29T  Lecture: Buddhism and Nature  S-5


31Th  Film and Lecture: “St. Francis of Assisi” (30)  S-6

Recommended films: “Brother Keith Warner on Franciscan Care for Creation” (6) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUrAS1G1-9Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUrAS1G1-9Y). “Father Charles Cummings on Simplicity of Life” (38) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNU4KwDyWPE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNU4KwDyWPE). “Franz Liszt’s St. Francis Preaching to the Birds by pianist Anthony Byrne” (8) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2o1HC7OEMI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2o1HC7OEMI).

FEBRUARY

5T  Film: “Thoreau at Walden Pond” VHS 21767 (21)  S-7, T-3 & Appendix

Recommended films: “Thoreau’s Walden” VHS 9922 (27). “Henry David Thoreau on Walden Pond” (6)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Quw_RPB0U.
“Tiago Sousa’s Walden Pond Monk” (5)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Bds8Z5-xyQ.
“Barry Wood on Thoreau’s Life at Walden Pond” (83)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=464a_VYqU0Y.
“Radically Simple” (35).


7Th  Film: “John Muir in the New World” (85)  S-8

“Meditation: A Walk through the Sierras”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tpgx-LkvHGE. “John Muir Trail” (10)


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12T  Film: “Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time” DVD 10699 (73).
Recommended films: “Aldo Leopold: A Prophet for All Seasons” (56). “Leopold Education Project” (10)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSotChN0fGk.


PART III – ENVIRONMENTALISM

14Th Radical Environmentalism    T-4, S-15

Recommended films: “Earth Days” [PBS American Experience on environmental movement] Leeward CC DVD 0454 (108)
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/earthdays/player/.
“David Suzuki: An Elder’s Vision For Our Sustainable Future” (73)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4ut85q6tEE&list=PL3667EACE1A427841.
“Earth Liberation Front: Igniting a Revolution” (20)
“Burning Rage 60 Minutes” (13)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFhx9o30fps. “She’s Alive… Beautiful… Finite… Hurting… Worth Dying For” (5)


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19T Film: “Renewal: Stories from America’s Religious-Environmental Movement” (90).

Recommended film: “Bill McKibben at screening of Renewal” (6.5)
“Sally Bingham on A Religious Response to Global Warming” (11) 


21Th Religious Environmentalism  G-3,4,7


26T Film: “Mountain Mourning” (78)

Recommended films: “Is God Green? Bill Moyers On America” (50)
“Mountain Top Removal” (various films)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPixjCneseE&list=PLA48EE6F00EFC3D50.

Recommended reading: Christians for the Mountains

28Th Film: “A Conversation with America’s Poet Laureate: W.S. Merwin with Leslie Wilcox on PBS Hawai’i” (50) S-13

Recommended films: “W.S. Merwin/Bill Moyers Journal” (50)


MARCH

5T Film: “The Practice of the Wild” (Gary Snyder) (52)
Recommended films: Gary Snyder Interview
“Satish Kumar on Beyond Deep Ecology” (8) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlmTLvHMg-g.

Recommended poetry reading: Gary Snyder Mountains and Rivers without End

Recommended reading: Gary Snyder Biography at Poetry Foundation


DUE: Journal 1

PART IV – SPIRITUALITY AND RITUAL

7Th Film: “Spiritual Earth: Aloha Waves” (28) T-7


Hawaiian Culture and Conservation in Hawai‘i

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12T Film: “A Celebration of Creation: The Blessings of the Animals at New York’s The Cathedral of Saint John the Divine” (59)


14Th Film: “Confessions of a Burning Man: Experience the Journey” (87) S-17


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PART V – ACADEMICS

19T Film: “Thomas Berry: The Great Story” (49)

“Thomas Berry and the Earth Community” (7) 
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0XBltUQ8qU. “Mary Evelyn Tucker on Thomas Berry The Great Work Parts 1 & 2” (11 & 8) 
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1I2-usobL_E, 


21Th Film: “Journey of the Universe” DVD 11243 (56)


26T SPRING RECESS
28Th continued

APRIL

2T Academic Growth and Development S-11, 12 (9-10 optional)


Recommended reading: Tucker, Mary Evelyn, with Judith A. Berling, 2003, Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase, LaSalle, IL: Open
PART VI - ISSUES

4Th Terrapolitan Earth Religion T-6,7,8


11Th Film: “Mauna Kea: Temple Under Siege” DVD 2902, VHS 21514 (57).


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16T Film: “Earth Pilgrims” (90)


“Satish Kumar on Soil, Soul, and Society” (25) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_EQ1HtzXxQU.

“A Day with Satish Kumar” (120) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCW-qkbyezs.

18Th Film: “Ecopsychology: Restoring Earth, Healing the Self” VHS 14703 (26)

Recommended film: “Theodore Roszak on Towards an Ecopsychology” (11)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83VHiA2HhkM.  “Matt Butler on Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves with Nature” (10)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB6FTNHDtR8.  “Ralph Metzner on Entheogen Awakening” (12)  

Recommended radio interview: “Ralph Metzner on Shamanism and Mythology” (104)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kH4wICimAvA.

Recommended reading: Foundation for Global Community  
http://www.globalcommunity.org,  International Community for Ecopsychology  
http://ecopsychology.org,  Ecopsychology UK  

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23T Film: “The Great Turning” Joanna Macy (36)  S-14  

Recommended films: “Joanna Macy: The Great Turning” (90).  “Earth, Spirit and Action with John Seed” (59)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7L-1DwM4bw.  “An Introduction to the Findhorn Foundation” (8)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syRtxAzYbC0  

http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/.

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25Th Film: “Mother Ganga: A Journey along the Sacred Ganges River” (55)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qTFzu-ArQk.  Green Patriarch


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**30T** Difficulties G-2,8, S-19,20,21, T9

the Bleep Do We Know!” (108).


DUE: Journal 2, and Book Review (latter may be submitted earlier)

MAY
7T DUE: REFLECTIVE ESSAY FOR FINAL EXAMINATION

APPENDIX I. GUIDELINES FOR EXERCISES

JOURNAL

Regularly write one entry per week of at least one substantial paragraph (4-5 sentences) identifying and summarizing plus reacting to 3-5 key points covered during that period in the class discussions, readings, and films. Through the journal entries you must prove that you are following and understanding the course material and faithfully doing the readings.

Keep weekly entries in a single file and in chronological order from first to last with the dates clearly marked.

The first journal is due March 5, while the second journal is due April 30. Please send the journal as an email attachment to the instructor (sponsel@hawaii.edu) who
will respond with some brief comments and the grade. Thereafter the instructor will delete the file as it is your personal intellectual diary in the course. But you should save the journal as part of your class notes for writing your reflective essay for the final examination. Also, be sure to keep good class notes throughout the semester rather than rely on memory for specifics.

BOOK REVIEW

The purpose of the book review is to allow you to explore in more depth some specific aspect of spiritual ecology that is of special interest to you. If you email the instructor with the religion, culture, region, issue, or other topic of special interest, then he can probably recommend an appropriate book. However, any book cited in the course syllabus or bibliography of the instructor’s book and the complementary website is likely to be appropriate. (For the latter see the file called New under Supplemental Information on the website http://spiritualecology.info). The book you select must be approved in advance before you read it and write the review.

Your review should provide a comprehensive summary of the book; identify the author’s main thesis along with the argument developed and the evidence marshaled to sustain it; critique the book; and relate the book to the subject of spiritual ecology in general and this course in particular.

The review should be about two to three pages typed single-spaced. It should be sent as an email attachment to the instructor (sponsel@hawaii.edu) with the subject identified as 444 Review and also posted on the Laulima course website identified with the title of the book for any other student who might be interested in reading it.

The review is due by April 30, but may be submitted beforehand which is most advisable.

FINAL EXAMINATION

One or more letter grades will be subtracted from the final examination grade for failure to adhere to the following guidelines.

Your final essay should reflect on the entire course based on your experience in class, class notes, journals, readings, films, and other material. The primary matter to consider is the meaning, significance, achievements, potentials, and limitations of spiritual ecology.
Your essay should be clear and concise but substantial and penetrating. Go beyond generalizations to specifics including particular examples. Your essay should be limited to four pages typed single-spaced. Include introductory and concluding paragraphs. Explicitly identify by number 3-5 main points. Instead of quotes use paraphrasing, don’t waste space. Use the spelling and grammar check on your computer to try to catch any errors in the final draft of your essay, although the grade will be based solely on the quality and relevance of the content.

Ultimately your essay must be the product of your own individual scholarship and creativity. Any plagiarism will be rewarded with an automatic F for the final course grade and reported to the office of the Dean. However, you are most welcome to consult with any individual as well as any print and internet resources, although covering the required readings for the course is by far the most important. Just be careful to properly acknowledge any source for specific information, ideas, and the like. Also, be sure to include your own insights, comments, reactions, questions, and criticisms.

Be careful to cite your course textbook and other sources including lectures, videos, case studies, websites, class discussions, and handouts. In each reading citation include the author and page (e.g., Gottlieb p. 60, or Gottlieb pp. 65-70). Other kinds of sources can be documented as follows: (lecture Jan. 17), (class discussion Feb. 19), (video title), or (personal communication with Albert Einstein). It is not necessary to append a bibliography with the full citation of sources if they are already in the course syllabus or textbook.

The purpose of the essay is to: (1) convincingly demonstrate your familiarity with the course material; (2) present a critical analysis of it; and (3) discuss your own reactions to it. Your grade will be based on this purpose plus satisfying the above guidelines and the grading criteria and course objectives listed earlier in the syllabus.

The final examination is due May 7. Send it as an email attachment to the instructor with the subject identified as 444 Final at sponsel@hawaii.edu.

APPENDIX II. RESOURCES

Any of these six books would provide very useful background for the entire course:


These are especially useful reference works:


When presenting a class discussion of a particular religion in relation to ecology it is useful to consult other sources such as a relevant book below from the Harvard University Press series on Religion and Ecology:


Chapple, Christopher Key, and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., 2000, *Hinduism and*
The website of the Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE) at Yale University includes a brief summary for each “world religion” in relation to ecology as well as a wealth of other information: http://fore.research.yale.edu. Also see the website of Bron Taylor at the University of Florida: http://www.brontaylor.com.


The instructor’s book Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution includes an unusually extensive bibliography that lists films and websites as well as print publications. The complementary website for the book contains a wealth of information; see especially the section “Supplemental Information” including the topically arranged “Resource Guide” in the 2010 course syllabus:
APPENDIX III. TOPICS AT A GLANCE

ORIENTATION
Introduction
Julia saving redwood
Maathai planting trees
Spiritual ecology overview

PIONEERS
Spirit and nature
Indigenous peoples
Buddhism and nature
St. Francis
Thoreau at Walden
Muir’s cathedral
Leopold’s land ethic

ENVIRONMENTALISMS
Radical environmentalism
Religious environmentalism
Mountaintop removal in Appalachia
Ecopoet Merwin
Ecopoet Snyder

SPIRITUALITY AND RITUAL
Sea
Animal blessing
Burning Man

ACADEMICS
Berry
Journey of the Universe
Growth and development
ISSUES
Terrapolitian earth religion
Avatar
Mauna Kea
Earth pilgrims in Andes
Ecopsychology
Great Turning
Ganges
Difficulties