Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

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

Instructors: John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker

Fall 2014 – August 27 to October 10

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:
- 3 hours of viewing online lectures and videos
- 3 hours of reading books and articles
- online assignments posted to Canvas: students must post their submissions to Canvas by noon on Friday of each week
- group discussions (online): discussion responses should be posted by 11:59pm on Sunday of each week
- class meeting – Wednesdays 4-5pm ISPS, 77 Prospect, Room A001

**Please note that this course will not be offered for audit during the Fall 2014 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 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 (3 hours viewing each week)
- writing assignments (paragraph responses for posting)
- group discussions both online (by Canvas) and in classroom (1 hour each week)

**Required Text:**


The text is available at the Yale Divinity School bookstore and can also be purchased as an eBook from Amazon.com.

**Week 1:**  
**Introduction: Our Journey into Religion and Ecology**  
**Chapter 1, Problems and Promise of Religions: Limiting and Liberating**

**Section 1: Personal Story, the Harvard Conferences, and the Forum on Religion and Ecology.**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**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).

  **Video -**

**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 2: Characteristics, Persistence, and Diversity of Religion.**

**Required Readings:**

Recommended Readings:


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:

* 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

To watch these videos, visit:  
http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia/conversations-on-religion-and-ecology/

For more video recordings of lectures on the intersection of religion and ecology, visit: http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia

Assignment:

Watch at least 4 of the videos listed under “multimedia” for week 1, section 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/). 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 3: The Force of Religious Environmentalism.

Required Readings:
Recommended Readings:


Multimedia:

- View *Renewal* film


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 1: What is Religion? Symbol Systems and Symbolic Knowing

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Multimedia:

- Online Lectures –
  - ME Tucker - What is Religion
  - J Grim – Symbol Systems and Symbolic Knowing

Section 2: Defining Religious Ecology
Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Multimedia:
• Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker

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 3: Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing, Transforming

Required Readings:

Multimedia:
• Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker
  • Video -
    • 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 1: From Animism to Monotheism - From Purpose to Ambivalence

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Multimedia:
- Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker

Section 2: From Holism to Rationalism - From Romanticism to Transcendentalism

Required Reading:

Recommended Readings:

Multimedia:
- Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker

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: From Anthropocentric to Anthropocosmic Thought

Required Readings:
Recommended Readings:

Multimedia:
- Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker
- Video -
  - Selection from *Thomas Berry Speaks* (3 min) ([http://www.renewalproject.net/film/story/thomas_berry_new_dedicated_page](http://www.renewalproject.net/film/story/thomas_berry_new_dedicated_page)).

Assignment:
- Choose two audio or video recordings of Thomas Berry [http://www.thomasberry.org/Biography/](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 1: Forms of Ecology and Emergence of the Field of Ecology**

Required Readings:
- Outline of chapter 4 by Joanna Dafoe

Recommended Readings:
Multimedia:
Online Lectures - ME Tucker and J Grim

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 2: The Development of Ecology in the United States – From Holism to Metrics

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Multimedia:
Online Lecture - J Grim

Video -
- 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 3: Ecology, Conservation, and Ethics in the American Environmental Movement

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

**Multimedia:**
Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker

Video –
• Interview with Gene Odum. American Institute of Biological Sciences. 2000 (15:51). ([http://youtu.be/iLYLe0ce-is](http://youtu.be/iLYLe0ce-is)).

• Rachel Carson, *A Sense of Wonder* PBS (60 minutes) (In class, Wednesday)

**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 1: Approaches to the Study of Religion and Ecology**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**Multimedia:**

**Section 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:

Multimedia:
  Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker
  Audio -
  • 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 3: Religious Ecologies in World Religions

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Multimedia:
  Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker
  Video -

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 1: Earth Charter and the Parliament of World Religions

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Multimedia:
- Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker
- Videos -
  - Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne, Australia (MET and JG) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el6_TNZf3c).

Section 2: Interreligious Dialogue and the Emergence of Global Ethics

Required Readings:
- *Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth* (http://pwccc.wordpress.com/programa/).

Multimedia:
- Online Lectures - ME Tucker
- Video -
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 3: Epilogue. Challenges Ahead: Creating Ecological Cultures

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Multimedia:
- Online Lectures - J Grim and ME Tucker
- Video -

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.

• *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture*.

**Encyclopedias:**


**Films:**

