

Lecture Course - F&ES 80071 01 / REL 817 01 / RLST 280 01 / RLST 872 01 (S09)
World Religions and Ecology: Asian Religions
Spring 2009

Professors: Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

Office: Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics, 238 Prospect

Websites: <http://www.yale.edu/religionandecology>
www.religionandecology.org

Time: Tuesday 3-6p.m.

Classroom Location: Sterling Divinity Quadrangle,
409 Prospect St., Room S104

Course Description:

Religion and ecology involves the study of humans and communities within the horizon of interdependent life. In particular it investigates the symbolic expressions of this interconnection in diverse religions as well as religious practices arising from human-Earth relations.

At present the rapid modernization of Asia- especially India and China- 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.

For many years science, engineering, policy, and law alone 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 change human behavior. Thus, there is a growing realization that religion, spirituality, ethics, and values can make important contributions to address complex environmental issues. This course will explore those contributions.

This course will examine the various ways in which religious ideas and practices have contributed to cultural attitudes and human interactions with nature. **Examples will be selected from Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism.** The course will examine such topics as: symbols, images and metaphors of nature in canonical texts, views of the divine as transcendent to the world, the indwelling of the sacred in the Earth, the ethics of using and valuing nature, ritual practices that link humans to the

natural world, and cosmology as orienting humans to the world and embedding them in place.

Required Texts

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (eds.), Religion and Ecology: Can the Climate Change? *Daedalus* (Fall 2001) Available online:

<http://www.amacad.org/publications/fall2001/fall2001.aspx>

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase (Open Court, 2003)

Christopher Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water (Harvard University Press, 2000)

Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Williams, eds., Buddhism and Ecology: The Intersection of Dharma and Deeds (Harvard University Press, 1998)

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong, eds., Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans (Harvard University Press, 1998)

N.J.Giraradot, James Miller, and Liu Xiaogan, eds., Daoism and Ecology: Ways Within a Cosmic Landscape (Harvard University Press, 2001)

Suggested Primary Texts

Ainslie Embree, ed., Sources of Indian Tradition (Columbia, 1988)

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

Wm. Theodore deBary, ed. Sources of Chinese Tradition (Columbia University Press, 2003)

Wing-tsit Chan, trans., Source Book of Chinese Philosophy (Princeton, 1963)

Suggested Secondary Texts

*Mary Pat Fisher, Living Religions (5th edition,) (L.B.Taurus & Co, 1997)

Lance Nelson, ed., Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India (SUNY, 1998)

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)

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

Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., Confucian Spirituality
2 vols. (Crossroads, 2003-2004)

James Miller, Daoism: A Short Introduction (Oxford, 2003)

Course Requirements

1. regular attendance and participation in class discussion: 15%
2. mid-term take-home essay exam due March 3rd or paper: 40%
3. final take-home essay, or paper exam due beginning of exam week: 45%

Course Exams

There will be a **Mid-term exam** and a **Final exam** in this course. Each exam will be a **Take-Home** and a week is given for completion. Undergraduates will have three essay questions, graduates will have four essay questions.

Schedule of Classes and Readings

JANUARY 13 The Emerging Field of Religion and Ecology

Introduction: Dimensions of religion; tradition and modernity
Perspectives on valuing the environment

The problems and promise of religion

Readings:

Tu Weiming, "Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality," in Confucianism and Ecology pp. 3-21.

Yale website: <http://www.yale.edu/religionandecology>

Read introductory articles for Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Look at bibliographies and sacred texts.

Questions for discussion:

1. According to Tu Weiming what characterizes the "Enlightenment Mentality," and which traits are less and more helpful for our way forward?
2. Choose a sacred text from one of the Asian religions on the Harvard website and show how it could relate to ecology.

JANUARY 20 The Challenge of the Environmental Crisis to the Religions - Overview

Readings:

ME Tucker and John Grim, "Series Forward" from any Harvard volume in world religions and ecology series

ME Tucker and John Grim, "Introduction," in *Daedalus* Fall 2001

<http://www.amacad.org/publications/fall2001/fall2001.aspx>

Questions for discussion:

1. Why have religions been late in coming to environmental issues?
2. In what ways have religions changed in response to modern challenges?
3. Can religions raise effective moral questions regarding a range of issues such as global warming and species extinction?

Intersecting disciplines

Readings:: in *Daedalus* Fall 2001

<http://www.amacad.org/publications/fall2001/fall2001.aspx>

Michael McElroy, "Perspectives on Environmental Change," pp. 31-56;

Donald Brown, "The Ethical Dimensions of Global Environmental issues," pp. 59-76;

Baird Callicott, "Multicultural Environmental Ethics," pp. 77-96

Harvard website: <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion>

Look at dialogue sections on Science, Economics, Education, and Policy

Questions for discussion:

4. What are the challenges to religions being in dialogue with other disciplines?
5. Can there be an ethics that addresses climate change?
6. What prevents the human community from formulating a multicultural environmental ethics? Is a global ethics necessary for human flourishing?

JANUARY 27 The Transformative Context of Religions

Readings:

ME Tucker, Worldly Wonder, pp. 1-54

Questions for discussion:

1. What does "the cosmological context" have to do with religion and ecology?
2. In what ways can religions reclaim and reconstruct themselves in response to the environmental crisis?
3. Is the restoration of wonder in the modern world of disenchantment possible?

Commentary by Judith Berling and Response - Readings:
ME Tucker, Worldly Wonder, pp. 57-147

Questions for discussion:

4. With which points made by Berling and the audience do you agree or disagree?
 5. What would be your question to Tucker?
 6. Which of the appendices had the greatest appeal for you and why?
- Note especially the Earth Charter. See also www.earthcharter.org

Brief Introduction to Hinduism

FEBRUARY 3 Hindu Concepts of Nature

Early Hinduism - Readings:

Hinduism and Ecology "Introduction" pp. xxxiii- xlvi;
Articles by Rao and Patton pp. 23-58

Questions for discussion:

1. What particular characteristics do Gadgil and Guha present as necessary for understanding India's response to its environmental crisis?
2. What is one traditional Hindu concept of nature in India and how does it relate to the environmental concern of a particular group or region?
3. What is Patton's critique of nature romanticism and India?

The debate of Dharma (Duty) and Bhakti (Devotion) - Readings:

Hinduism and Ecology - Articles by Nelson and Agarwal pp. 127-179

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the problem of detachment for environmental action?
2. What are some of Agarwal's reservations about Hinduism and ecology?

FEBRUARY 10 Environmental Activism in India

[Reading Week for YDS - class will be held]

Rivers, pilgrimages, and dams - Readings:

Hinduism and Ecology - Articles by Alley, Deegan, and Fisher pp. 355-421

Questions for discussion:

1. Why are "sacred rivers" in India a barometer for actual environmental concern on the part of religious adherents?
2. Describe the ways in which a particular pilgrimage or ritual in Hinduism is related or adapted to environmental action?
3. What are the tradeoffs with dams in terms of modernization processes?

Non-violent activism - Readings:

Hinduism and Ecology - Article by James pp. 499-530

Questions for discussion:

4. What religious ideas and practices motivated the Chipko resistance?

Brief Introduction to Buddhism**FEBRUARY 17 Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Buddhism****Buddhist perspectives on nature - Readings:**

Buddhism and Ecology "Introduction" xxxv-xlii; Article by Lancaster pp. 3-18;

Article by Eckel pp. 327-349

Questions for discussion:

1. What does Lancaster mean by the "collective perception of nature" and how does this relate to Chinese Buddhism?
2. Can we accurately attribute harmonious attitudes to nature in Buddhism?

A critique - Readings:

Buddhism and Ecology - Article by Sponberg pp. 351-376

Questions for discussion:

3. How does "Green Buddhism" relate to "basic Buddhism"?
4. Does hierarchy serve a role in environmental values?

FEBRUARY 24 Theravada and Mahayana Views of Nature**Theravada (Hinayana or Southern) Buddhism - Readings:**

Buddhism and Ecology - Articles by Swearer and Sponsel pp. 21-68

Questions for discussion:

1. What particular Theravada Buddhist concepts foster environmental action?
2. What role(s) have the Theravada monks played in creating a Buddhist environmental ethics?

Mid-Term Exam given out due March 4th**Mahayana (or Northern) Buddhism - Readings:**

Buddhism and Ecology - Articles by Habito and Lori pp. 165-184

Questions for discussion:

3. What particular Mahayana Buddhist concepts foster environmental action?
4. In what ways does Zen mindfulness engage ecological concern?
5. Can Buddhist precepts be the basis of an environmental ethics?

MARCH 3 American Buddhism

American Zen Buddhism - Readings:

Buddhism and Ecology - Articles by Barnhill and Kaza pp. 187-248

Questions for discussion:

1. What does Gary Snyder intend by the phrase "Great Earth *Sangha*?"
2. What kinds of environmental activity are taking place in American Buddhist Zen centers?

Applications of Buddhist Worldviews - Readings:

Buddhism and Ecology - Articles by Gross and Rockefeller pp. 291-324

Questions for discussion:

4. In what ways does engaged Buddhism respond to issues of energy, over-population, consumption and global ethics?

Brief Introduction to Confucianism

Mid-Term Exam due [Spring Break March 6-22]

MARCH 24 Classical Confucian and Neo-Confucian Thought

Early Confucianism - Readings:

Confucianism and Ecology - "Introduction" pp. xxxv-xlv;
Articles by Tu and de Bary pp. 3-34

Questions for discussion:

1. In what ways do Tu and de Bary agree and disagree?

Context for Response - Readings:

Confucianism and Ecology - Articles by Taylor and Ivanhoe pp. 37-76

Questions for discussion:

2. How does Taylor answer the question "Can the East help the West to value nature?"
3. How does Ivanhoe address the problem of anthropocentrism?

MARCH 31 Conceptual Resources from China, Korea, and Japan

China - Readings:

Confucianism and Ecology - Article by Tu pp. 105-121; Article by Kuwako pp. 151-168

Questions for discussion:

1. How is the “continuity of being” in Confucianism a resource for environmental ethics?
2. In what ways does cosmology and self-cultivation in Confucianism relate to environmental concern?
3. What does correlation mean in Confucian thought?

Korea and Japan - Readings:

Confucianism and Ecology - Articles by Ro and Tucker pp. 169-207

Questions for discussion:

4. Distinguish the ecological implications of the philosophy of *ch'i* in Korea and Japan.
5. Are there any problems with a monism of *ch'i*?

APRIL 7 Contemporary Confucianism

Philosophy - Readings:

Confucianism and Ecology - Article by Berthrong pp. 237-263

Questions for discussion:

1. How does cosmology, ecology, and ethics relate to the formation of personhood in Confucianism?
2. Of the 8 elements for a new Confucian ecological vision choose one and relate it to your own ecological understanding.

Practice - Readings:

Confucianism and Ecology - Article by Weller and Bol pp. 313-341

Questions for discussion:

3. In what ways can Confucian perspectives influence policy in Taiwan?

Brief Introduction to Daoism

APRIL 14 Ecological Readings of Daoist Texts

Introduction - Readings:

Daoism and Ecology - “Introduction” pp. xxxvii-lxiv; Article by Kleeman pp. 61-69

Questions for discussion:

1. Has Daoism been over-idealized as promoting harmonious relations between humans and the earth?

2. What images of nature in Daoism are pertinent to contemporary ecological thought and why?

Cultural context - Readings:

Daoism and Ecology - Articles by Anderson and Field pp. 157-200;
"Sectional discussion" pp. 237-241

Questions for discussion:

3. How do folk practices relate to Daoism and ecology?
4. How does *fengshui* orient human interaction with the environment?

APRIL 21 Philosophical and Practical Ecological Concerns in Daoism

Wu wei debates (non-purposeful action) - Readings:

Daoism and Ecology - Article by Kirkland pp. 283-304; Article by Liu pp. 315-339;
"Sectional discussion" pp. 341-347

Questions for discussion:

1. Can "non-action" (*wu-wei*) be the basis for an environmental ethic?

Contemporary Daoism - Readings:

Daoism and Ecology - Articles by Miller, Zhang, and Kohn pp. 351-390

Questions for discussion:

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

Final take home essay exam handed out - due opening of exam week