

Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

Online Course Western Religions and Ecology F&ES 784a, REL 990H

Instructors: John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker

Fall 2014 – October 13 to December 5

Course Description:

This course introduces the Western religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in relation to the emerging field of religion and ecology. This overview course identifies developments in the traditions that highlight their ecological implications into the contemporary period. In particular, it relates theological and religious concepts within the traditions to engaged, on-the-ground environmental projects. It investigates the symbolic and lived expressions in religious texts, ethics, and practices that can be defined as religious ecologies. Similarly, it identifies narratives in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that orient humans to the cosmos, namely, religious cosmologies. This interrelationship of narratives and religious environmentalism provides pathways into the study of religion and ecology.

Course Rationale:

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.

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 midnight on Sunday of each week
 - For example, Posts for Assignment 1.1 and 1.2 are due midnight October 26th in advance of the first in-class discussion of Judaism on October 29th
- Online discussions: responses and comments to classmates' posts submitted by Tuesday at midnight each week
 - E.g., comments for Assignment 1.1 and 1.2 are due midnight October 28th in advance of the first in-class discussion of Judaism on October 29th
- Attend and actively participate in class meetings – Wednesdays 4-5pm ISPS, 77 Prospect, Seminar Rm. A001

Course Grading:

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

The software program Canvas is equipped to record completion of online readings and 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)
- reading online materials as well as required texts
- writing assignments relating online readings and lectures (paragraph responses for posting)
- group discussions in classroom (1 hour each week)

Required Texts:

Online Journal / *Daedalus*

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, eds., "**Religion and Ecology: Can the Climate Change?**" *Daedalus*, Fall 2001. (<https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/publication.aspx?d=845>).

Encyclopedia of Religion online articles

- 1) on Judaism, Christianity and Islam;
- 2) on Judaism and Ecology, Christianity and Ecology, Islam and Ecology

Recommended Texts:

Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word. Edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2002, selected articles, online.

Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans. Edited by Dieter Hessel and Rosemary Radford Reuther, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000, selected articles, online.

Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust. Edited by Richard Foltz, Frederick Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2003, articles, online.

Background Texts for Western Religions:

John Esposito, Darrell Fasching, Todd Lewis, eds., ***World Religions Today.*** Oxford, 2013. Chapters on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

F.E. Peters, ***The Children of Abraham.*** Princeton University Press, 2005.

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, eds., ***Worldviews & Ecology: Religion, Philosophy and the Environment.*** Orbis Books, 2000.

Websites: **Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale**
(<http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/>).

Friends of the Earth Middle East
(<http://foeme.org/www/?module=home>).

Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction and Overview – Judaism

Section 1: Formation and Figures, Scripture and Commentary

Readings: ***Encyclopedia of Religion*** article on Judaism by Michael Swartz, online

Multimedia: **Online Lectures** – Grim, “Formation and Figures,”
“Scripture and Commentary”

Assignments: Choose one religious idea from the five periods of Jewish history outlined in the ***Encyclopedia of Religion*** article and relate that idea to one of Grim’s lectures with a focus on Judaism and ecology.

Post your response to this week's discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate questions in response to two of them. Post your questions for class discussion.

Section 2: Beliefs and Practices

Readings: *Daedalus: Religion and Ecology*,
Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan, "Nature in the Sources of Judaism"
(<https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/pubContent.aspx?d=1294>).

Multimedia: **Online Lectures** – Grim, "Beliefs and Practices"

Chautauqua Interview - Rabbi Lawrence Troster
(<http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia/conversations-on-religion-and-ecology/>).

Website: **Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale**
(<http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/judaism/>).

Assignments: Compare and contrast Tirosh-Samuelsan's and Troster's approaches to Judaism and ecology. What are the seminal features of Judaism that they emphasize and what are their ecological implications?

Post your response on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate a response to two of them. Post your responses for class discussion.

Week 2: **Judaism and Ecology into the Present - Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing, and Transforming**

Readings: *Encyclopedia of Religion article*,
Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan, "Ecology and Judaism," online

Edward Kaplan, "Reverence and Responsibility: Abraham Joshua Heschel on Nature and the Self," in *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*. Pp. 407-422. Edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2002, online

Multimedia: **Online Lecture** – Grim, "Judaism and Ecology into the Present"

Renewal film- "Ancient Roots"

Website: Rabbi Lawrence Troster, "10 Teachings on Judaism and the Environment"

([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabbi-lawrence-troster/10-teachings-on-judaism-a b 844973.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabbi-lawrence-troster/10-teachings-on-judaism-a-b-844973.html)).

Assignments: What elements of Judaism and ecology are highlighted by Tirosch-Samuels, Kaplan, or Troster that also appear in the *Renewal* "Ancient Roots" video?

Post your response on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate a response to two of them. Post your responses for class discussion.

Week 3: Introduction and Overview – Christianity

Section 1: Formation and Figures, Scripture and Commentary

Readings: *Encyclopedia of Religion* article on Christianity by Jaroslav Pelikan, online

Lynn T. White, jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (no. 3767), 1967, online.

Multimedia: Online Lectures - Tucker and Grim, "Formation and Figures," "Scripture and Commentary"

Chautauqua Interview - Heather Eaton

(<http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia/conversations-on-religion-and-ecology/>).

Interview with Matthew Riley on Lynn T. White, jr.

Assignments: Choose one religious idea from those outlined in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* article on Christianity and relate that idea to one of Tucker and Grim's lectures with a focus on Christianity and ecology.

Post your response on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate a response to two of them. Post your responses for class discussion.

Section 2: Beliefs and Practices

Readings: John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker, "Christianity as Orienting to the Cosmos," Ch 6 in *Ecology and Religion*, Island Press, 2014, online.

Multimedia: Online Lectures – None.

Video – "The Adriatic: A Sea at Risk," James Becket. Ojai, CA: BecketFilms
<http://www.Becketfilms.com> (DVD, 42 minutes).
<https://vimeo.com/94672340>). Password: RSE

Website: **Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale**
[\(http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/christianity/\)](http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/christianity/).

Assignments: From your reading of Chapter 6 in *Ecology and Religion* and viewing the film on the Green Patriarch's symposium on the Adriatic Sea, respond to the following question: What are the theological contributions of the Patriarch and why are they ecologically significant? How do his Orthodox theological contributions compare with the schools of Christianity (Catholic or Protestant) that appear in the other readings?

Post your response to this week's discussion forum on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate responses to two of them. Post your responses for class discussion.

Week 4: Christianity and Ecology into the Present - Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing, and Transforming

Readings: *Daedalus: Religion and Ecology*, Sallie McFague, "New House Rules: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living"
<https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/pubContent.aspx?d=1295>).

Encyclopedia of Religion article, John Cobb, "Ecology and Christianity," online

Thomas Berry, "Christianity's Role in the Earth Project," in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*. Edited by Dieter Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000, online

Multimedia: Online Lecture - Tucker and Grim, "Christianity and Ecology into the Present"

Interview with Fred Simmons, Yale Divinity School

Renewal film- "A Crime Against Creation", "Interfaith Power and Light", "Going Green", "Sacred Celebration"

Websites: **Interfaith Power & Light**
[\(http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/\)](http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/).

Green Faith
[\(http://greenfaith.org/\)](http://greenfaith.org/).

Assignments: What theological themes embedded in Christian traditions and texts highlighted by Cobb, McFague, and Berry also appear in the *Renewal* video? That is,

the religious environmentalism featured in Renewal activates and motivates Christian environmental connections with the natural world. Expand on and deepen your reflection on these characteristics of Christian traditional religious ideas in modern environmental practice.

Post your response on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate a response to two of them. Post your responses for class discussion.

Week 5: Introduction and Overview – Islam

Section 1: Formation and Figures, Scripture and Commentary

Readings: *Encyclopedia of Religion* article on Islam by Fazlur Rahman, online

Indonesian Muslim Council Issues a Fatwa to Protect Endangered Species.
News Article. World Wildlife Fund.

(http://www.wwf.or.id/en/about_wwf/whatwedo/forest_species/?32002/MUIKeluaranFatwaPerlindunganSatwaLangkaIndonesia).

Multimedia: Online Lectures – Grim, “Formation and Figures,” “Scripture and Commentary”

Assignments: Choose one religious idea from those outlined in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* article on Islam and relate that idea to one of Grim’s lectures with a focus on Islam and ecology.

Post your response on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate a response to two of them. Post your responses for class discussion.

Section 2: Beliefs and Practices

Readings: *Encyclopedia of Religion* article, Richard Foltz, "Ecology and Islam," online

Multimedia: Online Lectures - Grim, “Beliefs and Practices”

Chautauqua Interview - Safei al-Hamed

(<http://fore.research.yale.edu/multimedia/conversations-on-religion-and-ecology/>).

Websites: **Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale**

(<http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/islam/>).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Islamic Art.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/museum-departments/curatorial-departments/islamic-art>).

Assignments: Compare and contrast Foltz's and al-Hamed's approaches to Islam and ecology. What are the seminal features of Islam that they emphasize and what are their ecological implications? Discuss the significant role of the *Qur'an* in the features you identify.

Post your response on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate a response to two of them. Post your responses for class discussion.

Week 6: Islam and Ecology into the Present – Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing, and Transforming

Readings: *Daedalus: Religion and Ecology*, S. Nomanul Haq, "Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction"
<https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/pubContent.aspx?d=1296>).

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam, The Contemporary Islamic World and the Environmental Crisis," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*. Edited by Richard Foltz, Frederick Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2003, online.

Fazlun Khalid, "Islam, Ecology, and Modernity: An Islamic Critique of the Root Causes of Environmental Degradation," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*. Edited by Richard Foltz, Frederick Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2003, online.

Multimedia: Online Lecture – "Islam and Ecology into the Present"

Interview with Fazlun Khalid, Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, UK

Renewal film - "Food for Faith"

Websites: **Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences**
<http://www.ifees.org.uk/>).

Yogyakarta Farmer Pioneers Islamic Environmentalism | The Jakarta Globe (October 2013).
<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/features/yogyakarta-farmer-pioneers-islamic-environmentalism/>).

Welcome to Bumi Langit.

(http://bumilangit.org/englishversion/The_farm.html).

Khaleafa, A Sacred Trust. (<http://khaleafa.com>).

Assignments: What legal (*shari'a*) themes embedded in Islamic traditions and texts are highlighted by Haq and Nasr that also appears in the *Renewal* video section, "Food for Faith?" What activates and motivates the Islamic religious environmentalism featured in *Renewal* that opens connections with the natural world? Expand on and deepen your reflection on these characteristics of Islamic traditional religious ideas in modern environmental practice.

Post your response on Canvas. Then read the posts of your classmates and formulate a response to two of them. Post your responses for class discussion.