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IDS 3261: Sustainability, Religion, Spirituality

Since Lynn White's groundbreaking article in 1967, debate has raged among scholars, activists, and members of religious communities about the role(s) of religion and of specific religions in fostering unsustainability and in achieving sustainability. As part of this debate, some have proposed the existence and importance of a spirituality unconnected with historical or new religions as a key component of moving toward sustainability. This course provides an interdisciplinary introduction to these questions both in their historical and contemporary forms.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will be able to articulate at least three sets of claims about the religious causes of unsustainable behavior and the evidence and reasoning on which those claims rest;
2. Students will be able to articulate at least three contrary responses to those claims and the evidence and reasoning on which those claims rest;
3. Students will demonstrate through an in-class presentation an in-depth knowledge of the mutual interpenetrations of one religious tradition and ecology;
4. Students will demonstrate through examination the ability to summarize in one paragraph key components of the mutual interpenetrations of religion and ecology in eight religious traditions;
5. Students will be able to articulate the idea of deep ecology and the evidence and reasoning supporting it, and at least three critiques of deep ecology and the evidence and reasoning for them;
6. Students will be able to articulate the difference between the idea of religion and the idea of spirituality, and to articulate at least two arguments in support of their necessary integration and at least two arguments in support of their intrinsic separation, and evidence and reasoning supporting them;
7. Students will be able to identify the meaning of humanism in the context of the religion and sustainability conversation, and articulate the main argument that humanism is the only appropriate course to sustainability and the main argument that humanism is a quasi-religion at the root of unsustainability.

Grading:

Class participation	20%
First mid-term	20%
Presentation	20%
Second mid-term	20%
Final exam	20%

The primary texts, available at the bookstore, will be:

Hay, Peter. 2002. *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

Kearns, Laurel and Keller, Catherine, eds. 2007. *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*. Fordham Univ. Press, distributed by NYU Press.

The Religions of the World and Ecology book series, distributed by Harvard University Press. (Each student will purchase one of these.)

Other readings will be provided on-line through the library reserves page.

Readings and Assignments:

Week One:

1. Introduction
2. Lynn White, 1967. "On the Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis"
Eckberg, Douglas Lee and Blocker, Jean, 1989. "Religious Involvement and Environmental Concerns: Testing the Lynn White Thesis" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28 (4) 509-517.
Moncrief, Lewis W. 1970. "The Cultural Basis for The Environmental Crisis: Judeo-Christianity is Only One of Many Cultural Factors Contributing to the Environmental Crisis" *Science*, 170 (3957) 508-512.

Students will be assigned to small groups, each group will choose one of the nine texts from the Harvard Series *The Religions of the World and Ecology*. (Indigenous Traditions, Confucianism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Judaism, Islam, Jainism). Group reports on these texts will be due during weeks six through ten.

Week Two:

Hay, "Preface," and "The Ecological Impulse"

Kearns and Keller,

Kearns and Keller, "Preface," and "Introduction: Grounding Theory – Earth in Religion and Philosophy"

Week Three:

Hay, "Ecophilosophy"

Kearns and Keller:

McDaniel, "Ecotheology and World Religions"

Peterson, "Talking the Walk: A Practice-Based Environmental Ethic as Grounds for Hope"

Reuther, "Ecofeminist Philosophy, Theology, and Ethics: A Comparative View"

Week Four:

Hay, "Ecofeminism"

Kearns and Keller,

Keller, "Cooking the Truth: Faith, Science, the Market, and Global Warming"

Mazis, "Ecospirituality and the Blurred Boundaries of Humans, Animals, and Machines"

Week Five:

Pepper, D. 1993. "Anthropocentrism, Humanism and Eco-Socialism: A Blueprint for the Survival of Ecological Politics." *Environmental Politics*, 2, 428-52.

Selections from Ehrenfeld, David. 1978. *The Arrogance of Humanism*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Take home mid-term.

Weeks Five-Nine:

Each student group will take one class period to present their text from *The Religions of the World and Ecology*. This will take nine classes - (Indigenous Traditions, Confucianism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Judaism, Islam, Jainism). The tenth class will be devoted to a general discussion of religious traditions and sustainability.

Additional readings:

Conservation Biology, December 2002, "Four Challenges of Sustainability," "Spirituality and Sustainability," "Sustainability without Spirituality: A Contradiction in Terms?," "Sustainability and Spiritual Renewal: the Challenge of Creating a Politics of Reverence."

Kearns and Keller:

Muraca, "Getting over 'Nature': Modern Bifurcations, Postmodern Possibilities"

O'Brien, "Toward an Ethics of Biodiversity: Science and Theology in Environmental Dialogue"

Grim, "Indigenous Knowing and Responsible Life in the World"
Primavesi, "The Preoriginal Gift – and Our Response to It"
Rigby, "Prometheus Redeemed? From Autoconstruction to Ecopoetics"
Wallace, "Sacred-Land Theology: Green Spirit, Deconstruction, and the Question of Idolatry in Contemporary Earthen Christianity"
Troster, "Hearing the Outcry of Mute Things: Toward a Jewish Creation Theology"

Take home mid-term.

Week 11:

Hay, "Green Critiques of Science and Knowledge,"
Kearns and Keller:
Higgins, "Toward a Deleuze-Guattarian Micropneumatology of Spirit-Dust"
Wood, "Specters of Derrida: On the Way to Econstruction"

Week 12:

Hay, "Reclaiming Place: Seeking an Authentic Ground for Being,"
Kearns and Keller:
Betcher, "Grounding the Spirit: An Ecofeminist Pneumatology"
Bauman, "Creatio ex Nihilo, Terra Nullius, and the Erasure of Presence"

Week 13:

Hay, "Green Political Thought: The Authoritarian and Conservative Traditions"
Kearns and Keller:
Gorman, "Surrogate Suffering: Paradigms of Sin, Salvation, and Sacrifice"
Lee, "The Hope of the Earth: A Process Eschatology for South Korea"
Spencer, "Restoring Earth, Restored to Earth: Toward an Ethic for Reinhabiting Space"

Week 14:

Hay, "Environmental Liberalisms: Green Thought Meets the Dismal Science"
Kearns and Keller:
Spencer, "Restoring Earth, Restored to Earth: Toward an Ethic for Reinhabiting Space"
Grau, "Caribou and Carbon Colonialism: Toward a Theology of Arctic Place"
Daniell, "Divining New Orleans: Invoking Wisdom for the Redemption of Place"

Week 15:

Hay, "Green Political Thought: The Socialist Traditions"

Kearns and Keller:

Bohannon II, "Constructing Nature at a Chapel in the Woods"

Roskos, "Felling Sacred Groves: Appropriation of a Christian Tradition for Antienvironmentalism"

Tucker, "Ethics and Ecology: A Primary Challenge of the Dialogue of Civilizations"

Week 16:

Hay, "Seeking *Homo Ecologicus: Ecology, Democracy, Postmodernism*," "Thoughts by Way of Conclusion: The Tenacity of Environmentalism."

Kearns and Keller:

Harper, "Religion and the Earth on the Ground: The Experience of GreenFaith in New Jersey:

Nickell and Troster, "Cries of Creation, Ground for Hope: Faith, Justice, and the Earth Interfaith Worship Service"

Elkins and Wood, "The Firm Ground for Hope: A Ritual Planting Humans and Trees"

Baker-Fletcher, "Musings from White Rock Lake: Poems"

Final Exam

Resources:

American Academy of Religion Religion and Ecology Group,
<http://www.religionandnature.com/aar/>

Berry, Thomas. 2006. *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as a Sacred Community*. ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Cajete, Gregory. 2000. *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers.

Canadian Forum on Religion and Ecology, <http://www.cfore.ca/>

Carroll, John E. 2004. *Sustainability and Spirituality*. Albany: SUNY.

Centre for Religion and the Biosciences, <http://www.chester.ac.uk/crb/index.html>

Conservation Biology, December 2002

Creation Care (Evangelical Environmental Network), <http://www.creationcare.org>

Earth Charter Initiative, www.earthcharter.org

Ehrenfeld, David. 1978. *The Arrogance of Humanism*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

European Christian Environmental Network, <http://www.ecen.org/>

Forum on Religion and Ecology, www.religionandecology.org

God's Green Earth: Creation, Faith, Crisis, a special issue of *Reflections*, 24, 1.

Gottlieb, Roger S. 2006. *The Oxford handbook of religion and ecology*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

2004. *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, and Environment*. New York: Routledge.

Grim, John, Ed. 2001. *Indigenous traditions and ecology : the interbeing of cosmology and community*. Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Center for the Study of World Religions.

Hay, Peter. 2002. *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Hellas, Paul, et. al. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution : Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture.

<http://www.religionandnature.com/society/>

Kearns, Laurel and Keller, Catherine. 2007. *Ecospirit : religions and philosophies for the earth*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Kellert, Stephen R. and Farnham, Timothy J. 2002. *The Good in Nature and Humanity: Connecting Science, Religion, and Spirituality with the Natural World*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Merchant, Carolyn. 2005. *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World*. New York: Routledge.

Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa,

<http://www.neccsa.org.za/>

Shepard, Paul. 1999. *Encounters with Nature: Essays by Paul Shepard*. Florence R. Shepard, ed. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Shepard, Paul. 2003. *Where We Belong: Beyond Abstraction in Perceiving Nature*. Florence Rose Shepard, ed. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press.

Snyder, Gary. 1969. *Earth House Hold: Technical Notes & Queries to Fellow Dharma*

Revolutionaries. New York: New Directions.

The Religions of the World and Ecology book series, distributed by Harvard University Press

White, Lynn, “On the Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis”

Wilson, E. O. 2006. *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*. New York: Norton.

World Council of Churches Ecumenical Earth, <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/ecology.html>

**Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality:
Points of Commonality, Points of Departure**

- Peter C. Hill,
- Kenneth II. Pargament,
- Ralph W. Hood,
- Jr., Michael E. McCullough,
- James P. Swyers,
- David B. Larson &
- Brian J. Zinnbauer