

**Religion and Ecology**  
ENVS 195, Spring 1996

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Tues/Thur 2:00-3:15  
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This is a new course reflecting a world-wide interest and movement variously called the "greening of religion", ecotheology, or ecospirituality. We will explore a wide diversity of sources and traditions, keeping in mind the powerful role religion can play in shaping everyday habits and in addressing moral issues regarding the environment. The course is geared to the introductory level; more materials are available on reserve for those who wish to explore one tradition or approach to ecospirituality in depth.

Course Purpose:

- 1) To explore traditional world religions as resources for ecological beliefs and practices;
- 2) To understand the important role of religion in everyday ecological choices;
- 3) To gain exposure to new interpretations of religious traditions and ecospiritual alternatives in the modern "greening of religion";
- 4) To investigate specific religious concepts and practices as they can be adapted to one's personal life and environmental awareness.

Course Texts:

- 1) SE Social Ecology of Religion, Vernon Reynolds and Ralph Tanner (NY: Oxford, 1995)
- 2) Sacred This Sacred Earth, ed. Roger Gottlieb (NY: Routledge, 1995)
- 3) W&E Worldviews and Ecology, ed. M.E. Tucker and J. Grim (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993)
- 4) N/S Ecotheology North and South, ed. David Hallman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995)
- 5) EP Earth Prayers, ed. E. Roberts and E. Amidon (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990)

**I: The Role of Religion in the Ecology of Everyday Life**

JAN	18	Thur	Introductions	
	23	Tues	The Role of Social Ecology, Religion and Environmental Practices	SE 1-50, N/S 235-247
	25	Thur	The Population Question	SE 53-130, N/S 300-311
	30	Tues	The Responsibility for Reproduction	SE 131-184
FEB	1	Thur	Ecological Impacts of Death and Disease	SE 211-312

**II: World Religious Beliefs and Practices about the Environment**

	6	Tues	Indigenous Traditions: North America (set up research groups)	<u>DUE</u> : Self-Assessment Paper W&E 41-54, N/S 213-217 Sacred 470-479
	8	Thur	Indigenous Traditions: Island Peoples	N/S 207-212, Sacred 125-146
	13	Tues	African Traditions	Sacred 174-180, N/S 155-172
	15	Thur	Hinduism/Jainism	Sacred 151-163; W&E 138-149 Reserve: Prime 8-35, 70-79

	20	Tues	Buddhism (my specialty)	Sacred 147-150; Reserve: ch 1 Buddhism & Ecology ch 17 Earth & Spirit, ch 6 Spirit & Nature, ch 15 Liberating Life
	22	Thur	Taoism/Confucianism	W&E 150-162, Sacred 67-70
	27	Tues	Judaism	Sacred 87-103, W&E 55-70
	29	Thur	Christianity	Sacred 104-124, W&E 71-82
MAR	5	Tues	Town Meeting	(catch up on reading!)
	7	Thur	Christianity cont'd	N/S 28-51
	12	Tues	Islam/Bah'ai	W&E 83-112, Sacred 164-173, Reserve: ch 5 Spirit & Nature
	14	Thur	Interfaith Council	<u>DUE</u> : R & E Practices Paper
	18-22		Spring Break	

### **III: Addressing the Ecological Crisis: New Approaches**

	26	Tues	Christianity Revisited (set up Earth Week groups)	Sacred 41-43, 184-229, 251-269
	28	Thur	The Greening of Christianity and Judaism	Sacred 286-296, 451-469, 611-619, reserve: McDaniel, "Green Grace"
APR	2	Tues	Research Project Presentations Voices of North and South (two per day)	<u>DUE</u> : Research Projects N/S selections from 65-148, 248-253 as appropriate
	4	Thur	"	"
	9	Tues	"	(catch up on reading!)
	11	Thur	"	"
	16	Tues	Spiritual Deep Ecology	Sacred 18-28, 403-422, 436-444, 499-500
	18	Thur	"	Sacred 516-531; W&E 207-227
	20	Sat	Earth Day	
	23	Tues	Ecofeminist Christianity; the Goddess revival	W&E 181-189, Sacred 322-345, 369-381
	25	Thur	Ecofeminist Voices: North and South	Sacred 346-360, 364-368, 382-385; N/S 186-197
	30	Tues	Buddhism; closing reflections	<u>DUE</u> : Write-ups of Earth Week services; Sacred 484-498

## **Religion and Ecology ENVS 195 Assignments**

### Course Format:

Classes will be a variety of formats, including workshop exercises, lectures, discussions, oral presentations, guest speakers. Student participation is critical to my approach to teaching and learning. I expect you to attend all classes. You will be missed if you are not there! Please make every effort to attend, both as a gift to yourself and to the community of your peers.

### Reading:

We will be covering a tremendous amount of material in a short time, so it will be important for you to stay current on the reading. I will not be lecturing on the reading but rather expecting to discuss your response to it as we clarify the main points. Please come to class prepared to speak to the substance of the assigned material. We are blessed with several outstanding brand new texts reflecting the evolution of thought in this field. The reading is diverse and evocative; I hope you enjoy it and are inspired by it!

### Group Work:

You have two projects and one short presentation in which you work with others in a small group. This requires outside meeting time in addition to time provided in class. Write-up of these projects will be minimal; oral presentations will be used to explain your process and results. Please plan and rehearse your presentations carefully to use the time well and involve all group members. To whatever extent possible, include posters, overheads, slides, music, visuals to make your presentation creative and effective.

### Written Assignments:

You have two papers in the first half of the semester. Please take time to write these thoughtfully, with clear organization and structure. Be concise but offer specific examples to illustrate your points. Both papers are subjective in nature, but please feel free to draw on the readings where appropriate. Some guidelines for preparing these:

- 1) All written work should be completed on a word processing program and printed out in either "Faster" or "Best" settings or on a laser printer. Do not hand in work printed at the "Draft" setting or handwritten. These are difficult to read. Double-space your papers, allowing normal 1.25" margins for comments. Number your pages, and staple all pages together for safety. Consider the visual presentation of your work; check for computer errors and broken lines or unformatted paragraphs and strange hyphenation.
- 2) Spellcheck and proofread your work before handing it in; use the spellcheck programs on the computers.
- 3) Use inclusive language; i.e. be conscious of your use of gender pronouns and referents. Use "people" or "humankind" instead of "man", and "he or she" or "they" instead of simply "he".
- 4) Turn work in on time, i.e. in class on the day it is due. Late work is subject to penalties, the most important one being my lack of attention. Because I am teaching three classes this semester, late papers stand a high chance of getting lost in the complex shuffle. Don't let your paper be the one buried in the pile! Your grade will drop a half grade each day the paper is late unless you have a medical excuse. I will do my best to read all the papers at once after they are turned in and try to return them to you within two weeks.

**Grading:**

There are two papers, two projects, and one group oral presentations for a total of 400 points. .  
In order of due dates, these are:

Self-Assessment Paper (5-6 pages)	points 50	due February 6th
Religion & Ecology Practices Paper (10-12 pages)	100	due March 14th
Research Projects (includes oral presentation)	100	due April 2nd
Earth Week Service	100	due around April 20th
Class Opening	<u>50</u>	as signed up over the semester
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>400</b>	

**Grading Philosophy:**

I do not believe that grades are central to the learning experience. In fact, they can be quite distracting. This course, however, is about more than grades; it is about your personal commitment and understanding of the role of spirituality and religion in approaching human-environmental relations. Given the limits of grades, I will do my best to be fair, open, honest, and communicative about the grading process. I will try to be clear about the assignments and my criteria for excellent work and give you good feedback on your papers. If you are in trouble and falling behind for any reason, please come in and talk to me.

**Cooperative Learning:**

Almost all successful environmental work is done in cooperative groups and through joint efforts. You will be working closely with others in the class on your assignments, sharing resources and ideas and helping each other with direction, focus, and clarity. Please make an effort to work effectively in a group. The more you learn with each other, the less you will be solely engaged with me in a learning relationship and the more capable you will be of undertaking group environmental work in the future.

**Teaching Approach:**

I am very interested in seeing you develop your capacity for creative response to the environmental situation, drawing on personal and cultural strengths not necessarily typical in academic settings. I encourage you to offer yourself to the course and speak with spirit and presence as you participate. We can push each other to a very high caliber of discourse if we give our attention to synergy, openness, and integrity. Please be prepared to create this discourse by reflecting on the subject matter outside of class and doing as much of the reading you can before you come to class!

Stephanie Kaza, Assoc Professor  
ENVS 195, Religion and Ecology

DUE Tues, February 6th  
In class, 2:00pm

### SELF-ASSESSMENT PAPER

#### Purpose:

- 1) To explore the way in which your attitudes towards religion and the environment were shaped by experience, institutions, and the people in your life;
- 3) To recognize specific religious or spiritual "messages" from your culture or your personal history which you carry in your orientation towards the environment;
- 3) To articulate the connections between these messages and your actions and behavior towards the environment.

#### Assignment:

- 1) Spend some time reflecting on the following questions to suggest the significant events, people, or institutions that have influenced your personal experiences and exposure to religion as they relate to the environment.
  - a) Significant People: How have your parents and other relatives or close friends influenced your ideas about religion and the environment? How has your particular upbringing, family history, and interaction with others affected how you think about religion/spirituality and environment issues?
  - b) Church: If you were raised with a religious tradition, did it promote a particular orientation or philosophy toward the environment or natural world? Did your church have services or projects related to the environment? How did you feel about your church's position on this topic?
  - c) School/College: Have any events at school been important in affecting your attitudes towards different religions, especially in promoting or refuting stereotypes?
  - d) Work: In the jobs you have held, have your co-workers or perhaps the customers affected your attitudes towards different religions or spiritual attitudes towards the natural world? Have you experienced situations of conflict with people of different opinions from you? How did you address the conflict?
- 2) Choose 4-6 significant events, "messages", or key people to discuss in depth. Consider the role of each event in helping to shape the attitudes you hold today. Interpret the relative importance of each aspect to you and show how these are related over time in your mind.
- 3) Write a 5-6 page doublespaced paper summarizing what you personally "learned" about the relationship between religion,/spirituality and the environment and how this affected your behavior toward the natural world and other people.