Ethicist Larry Rasmussen has written that the biggest story of the twentieth century was the fundamental change in the relationship of the human world to the rest of the earth: never before have human technology and human numbers been powerful enough to alter and destroy planetary life systems. Rasmussen then quotes Daniel Maguire to pose a challenge: "If current trends continue, we will not. And that is qualitatively and epochally true. If religion does not speak to [this], it is an obsolete distraction."

This course reflects a world-wide movement -- variously called the “greening of religion”, ecotheology, ecospirituality, or simply religion and ecology – whose practitioners seek to respond to Rasmussen’s observation and Maguire’s challenge. Together we will explore a 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 earth and our environments. We will focus on three primary religious traditions: North American Native American religions and spirituality, Christianity, and Buddhism, though contributions from other religious traditions will also be considered.

Goals of the course include:
1. To explore in depth three religious traditions as resources for ecological beliefs and practices;
2. To understand the important role of religion and spiritual values in everyday ecological choices;
3. To gain exposure to new interpretations of religious traditions and ecospiritual alternatives;
4. To investigate specific eco-religious concepts and practices as they might apply to one’s personal life.

REQUIRED TEXTS

ERES Readings (from: http://eres.lib.umt.edu/)

Useful Websites:
  Forum on Religion and Ecology  http://fore.research.yale.edu/
  National Religious Partnership for the Environment  www.nrpe.org
  Evangelical Environmental Network  www.creationcare.org/

**Requirements**

- Regular class attendance and participation that demonstrates a grasp of the reading assignments
- Self-Assessment essay
- Two critical response papers to the readings
- Facilitation of a class discussion with 2-3 other students
- Journal on Place, Reflection, and Religious Practices
- Religious tradition reflection/analysis final paper

**Assignments and Classes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic and Assigned Readings</th>
<th>[Recommended Reading in brackets]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introduction: Laying the Groundwork</td>
<td>*Student-led Discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8/28  TU 1  **Introduction: Laying out themes and structure of the course**

  Class member introductions

8/30  TH 2  **Starting Question: Why Examine Religion and Ecology?**

  Gary Gardner: Engaging Religion in the Quest for a Sustainable World (ERES #1)
  Mary Evelyn Tucker: Selections from *Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase*” (ERES #2)

  Continue Class member introductions
  *Go over Journal assignment; Begin journal entries*

9/4  TU 3  **Setting the Context: Humans, Nature, and Modernity**

  Carolyn Merchant: “Dominion over Nature” (ERES #3)
  David Loy: “The Religion of the Market” (ERES #4)

  *Go over Self-Assessment Essay guidelines*

  Weekly *AH* meditation: 3-22

9/6  TH 4  **Myth & Storytelling: A Discussion of *Ishmael* Part I**

  *Ishmael* Chs 1-8 (pp. 3-148)
Sign up for Class Facilitation periods

SAT  Ewam Buddhist Festival of Peace, Arlee: 12-6 pm

9/11  TU 5  Myth & Storytelling: A Discussion of Ishmael Part II

Ishmael Chs 9-13 (pp. 151-263)

Self-Assessment Essay due in class
Go over Ishmael response essay

Weekly AH meditation: 23-37

Faiths Scan: Religious Traditions and Ecology

I. North American Native American Traditions and Ecology

9/13  TH 6  Lakota Perspectives: The Visions of Black Elk I

Black Elk Speaks: Foreword; Chs. 1-4
Bruce E. Johansen: “Black Elk” (ERES #5)
[John James Collins: “The Plains Culture Area and Plains Religion” (ERES #6)

Speaker: Kate Shanley, Native American Studies

9/18  TU 7  Lakota Perspectives: The Visions of Black Elk II

Black Elk Speaks: [5-6], 7-8, [9], 10-12
Joseph Epes Brown: The Sacred Pipe (ERES #7)

Evening: Sweat ceremony with Tachini Pete

Weekly AH meditation: 39-51

9/20  TH 8  Lakota Perspectives: The Visions of Black Elk III

Black Elk Speaks: Chs. 13-18, [19-22], 23-25; Author’s Postscript

Go over Religious Traditions Analysis assignment

First collection of journals

9/25  TU 9  Native American Ritual and the Land

Vine Deloria: “Is Religion Possible? An Evaluation of Present Efforts to Revive Traditional Tribal Religions” (ERES #8)
Winona LaDuke: “Quilled Cradleboard Covers, Cultural Patrimony, and
Wounded Knee” (ERES #9)

*Video: “The Spirit of Crazy Horse”

**Ishmael Response Essay (or Camas alternative) due in class**

Review Class Facilitation guidelines

Evening: Sweat ceremony with Tachini Pete

Weekly AH meditation: 55-76

*9/27 TH 10 Early Native Voices: Vine Deloria & George Tinker

Vine Deloria: “Sacred Lands and Religious Freedom” (ERES #10)
George Tinker: “Liberation and Sustainability” (ERES #11)
George Tinker: “Native Americans and the Land: ‘The End of Living and the Beginning of Survival’.” (ERES #11A)

*10/2 TU 11 Native Environmentalism: The Work and Writings of Winona LaDuke

Winona LaDuke: “Wild Rice: Maps, Genes, and Patents” (ERES #12)
Winona LaDuke: “Recovering Power to Slow Climate Change” (ERES #13)

Evening: Sweat ceremony with Tachini Pete

Weekly AH meditation: 77-90

II. Western Religious Traditions & Ecology: Christianity

10/4 TH 12 Biblical Perspectives on Creation and Nature

John Austin Baker: “Biblical Views of Nature” (ERES #14)
Hebrew Bible excerpts on creation: (ERES #15)

10/9 TU 13 Perspectives on Creation in the Book of Job

Job selections (ERES #16)
Bill McKibben: Selections from “The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job, and the Scale of Creation” (ERES #17)
Diane Jacobson: “Creation, Birth, and the Radical Ecology of the Book of Job” (ERES #18)

Second collection of journals

Weekly AH meditation: 91-109

10/11 TH NO CLASS (catch up on reading!)
10/16 TU 14 Christianity: The Critique and Response

Lynn White, Jr.: “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” (ERES #19)
James Nash: “The Ecological Complaint Against Christianity” (ERES #20)

Go over Black Elk / Job response essay assignment

Weekly AH meditation: 111-126

10/18 TH 15 Christian Biblical Responses Reconsidered

Theodore Hiebert: “Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Nature in the Bible” (ERES #21)
Gene McAfee: “Ecology and Biblical Studies.” (ERES #22)
Diane Jacobson: “Biblical Bases for Eco-Justice Ethics” (ERES #23)

10/23 TU 16 Christianity and the Postmodern Context

John Cobb, Jr.: “Postmodern Christianity in Quest of Eco-Justice” (ERES #24)
John Cobb, Jr.: “Christianity, Economics, and Ecology” (ERES #25)

Response Essay on Black Elk Speaks, and Job due in class

Weekly AH meditation: 127-145

*10/25 TH 17 Ecological Christianity?

Sallie McFague: “An Ecological Christology: Does Christianity Have It?” (ERES #26)
Kwok Pui-lan: “Response to Sallie McFague” (ERES #27)

Proposals for Final Paper due in class

*10/30 TU 18 Ecofeminist Christian Theology

Lois. K. Daly: “Ecofeminism, Reverence for Life, and Feminist Theological Ethics” (pp. 88-96) (ERES #28)
Rosemary Radford Ruether: “Ecofeminism: The Challenge to Theology” (Foltz 464-471) (ERES #29)
Heather Eaton: “Response to Rosemary Radford Ruether” (ERES #30)

Weekly AH meditation: 149-155, 167-172

11/1 TH 19 Introduction to Islam and Ecology

Richard Foltz: “Islamic Environmentalism in Theory and Practice” (ERES #31)
K. L. Afrasiabi: “Toward an Islamic Ecotheology” (ERES #32)
Selections from the Qu’ran (ERES 33)

11/6 TU 20 Issues in Islam and Ecology

Nawal H. Ammar: An Islamic Response to the Manifest Ecological Crisis”(ERES #34)
Fazlun M. Khalid: “The Disconnected People” (ERES #35)
Saleem H. Ali: “Ecological Themes in Islam and Islamic Societies” (ERES #36)

Weekly AH meditation: 173-193

III. Eastern Religious Traditions & Ecology: Buddhism

11/8 TH 21 The Greening of Buddhism: An Introduction

Stephanie Kaza: “The Greening of Buddhism: Promise and Perils” (ERES #37)
_Dharma Rain_: Introduction: pp. 1-13
_Dharma Rain_: Lotus Sutra: “Dharma Rain” pp. 43-48

Video: Buddhism & the Dalai Lama

Third collection of journals

11/13 TU 22 Contemporary Interpretations of Buddhist Teachings

_Dharma Rain_: 81-82
Thich Nhat Hanh: “The Sun My Heart” (DR: 83-91)
Lily de Silva: “Early Buddhist Attitudes toward Nature” (DR: 91-103)
Sulak Sivaraksa: “Buddhism with a Small b” (DR: 117-1124)
Gary Snyder: “Blue Mountains Constantly Walking” (DR: 125-141)

[William LaFleur: “Enlightenment for Plants and Trees” (DR: 109-116)]
[Joanna Macy: “The Third Turning of the Wheel” (DR: 150-160)]

Weekly AH meditation: 195-211

WED Rocky Mountain Buddhist Center Sangha Night: 7-9 pm
540 S. 2nd St West (at Cottonwood): [www.fwbomissoula.org/program/](http://www.fwbomissoula.org/program/)

Also: Open Way Mindfulness Center, 702 Brooks; [www.openway.org/](http://www.openway.org/)

11/15 TH 23 Buddhism in the World

_Dharma Rain_: 163-164
The Dalai Lama: “The True Source of Political Success” (DR: 165-169)
Sulak Sivaraksa: “The Religion of Consumerism” (DR: 178-182)
Sulak Sivaraksa: “Development As If People Mattered” (DR: 183-190)
Susan Darlington: “Tree Ordination in Thailand” (DR: 198-203)
The Dalai Lama: “Make Tibet a Zone of Peace” (DR: 231-235)

[Pipob Udombipong: “Thailand’s Ecology Monks” (DR: 191-197)]
[Galen Rowell: “The Agony of Tibet” (DR: 222-230)]
11/20  **No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday**

11/27 TU 24  **Environmental Activism as Buddhist Practice**

* **Dharma Rain**: 239-240
  * Philip Kapleau: “Responsibility and Social Action” (*DR*: 241-245)
  * Joanna Macy: “Encouraging Words for Activists” (*DR*: 252-256)
  * Chögyam Trungpa: “Renunciation and Caring” (*DR*: 261-271)
  * Rita Gross: “Toward a Buddhist Environmental Ethic” (ERES #38)

Weekly *AH* meditation: 213-230

**11/29 TH 25 Buddhism: Home Practice, Wild Practice**

* **Dharma Rain**: 305-306
  * Stephanie Kaza: “The Attentive Heart” (*DR*: 307-311)
  * Patrick McMahon: “Meditating with Mountains and Rivers” (*DR*: 312-318)
  * Wendy Johnson: “Garden Practice” (*DR*: 335-339)
  * Alan Sponberg: “Green Buddhism and the Hierarchy of Compassion” (ERES #39)

  [Peter Matthiessen: “In Search of the Snow Leopard” (*DR*: 319-322)]
  [Bodhin Kjolhede: “Compassion for All Beings” (*DR*: 344-346)]

**12/4 TU 26 Challenges in Buddhist Thought and Action**

* **Dharma Rain**: 355-356
  * William Ophuls: “Notes for a Buddhist Politics” (*DR*: 369-378)

Weekly *AH* meditation: 231-247

12/6 TH 27  **Wrap-up and Class Review**

* **Final collection of journals**

**Final Exam Period:** Monday, December 10, 3:20-5:20 pm. **Final essays due.**

**Grading Policy**

**Note Re Papers:** Papers are due in class **on or before** the date listed in the syllabus. Unless you have made a prior agreement with me, I will take off one grade level (A becomes A-) for each
class day an assignment is late. Papers with an undue number of errors of punctuation, spelling, or grammar will be marked down and may be returned ungraded for correction. Written work will be evaluated in terms of your depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, clarity of writing, and ability to address issues raised in the text and in class on the topic at hand. Grades given reflect the following criteria of judgment:

F: Failure to meet minimum requirements  
D: Unsatisfactory, but some effort to meet minimum requirements  
C: Satisfactory; meets minimum requirements of assignment but not much more  
B: Good to Very Good: thoughtful reflection, good analysis, clear writing style  
A: Excellent depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, and writing style; demonstrate creativity and mature analytical skills in going beyond the primary requirements of the assignment

Attendance: Regular attendance and participation in the class is expected. More than three (3) absences will result in losing any benefit of the doubt on your final grade. More than five (5) absences will result in one grade reduction. More than seven (7) absences will result in a failing course grade. Late arrivals in class will count as an absence. (Note: If you have a valid reason for missing several classes, such as illness or other conflicting commitments, you still must speak with the instructor).

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: All work submitted is expected to be the student's own. Any acts of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course, and may result in further academic punishment. If you have any doubts about definitions of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please review the relevant sections of the University Catalog (p. 22).

WEIGHT AND TIMELINE OF ASSIGNMENTS

The total number of points available for class assignments is 500 points. In order of due dates, the assignments are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-Assessment essay</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Sept 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Ishmael</em> response essay</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Sept 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Black Elk/Job</em> response essay</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Oct 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Journal</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Sept 20, Oct 9,</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 8, Dec 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Class facilitation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Religious Traditions Analysis</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Dec 10</td>
</tr>
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Note: final grades will use pluses and minuses.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

1. Self-Assessment essay. Instructions will be handed out in class.
2. **Ishmael response essay:** Write a 6-8 page critical response to Daniel Quinn’s novel, *Ishmael*. Give a thoughtful exposition of Quinn’s main points and arguments, and then provide your response. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of Quinn’s arguments, and why? What do you see as some of the central insights you have gained from the book, and how do they help you to think about religious and cultural responses to the environment? Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not? (*Note:* Your essay must contain specific references to and relevant quotes from the text to support your exposition and argument).

*Camas Essay Alternative:* Articles in *Camas* cover cultural and environmental issues in the West, and can include essays connecting themes of religion, spirituality, and ecology. If you are interested in writing an essay that deals with some aspect of ecology, spirituality and/or religion, you may – with instructor’s prior approval – write and submit such an essay to Camas, and substitute it for the *Ishmael* response essay. The Camas deadline is October 1, 2007, so you should submit your essay to me no later than Sept 25, so that I can read and evaluate it and give you feedback before the October 1 deadline. Please let me know by Sept 18 if you are interested in this option, and how you would like to shape your essay. (For information on the *Camas* essay parameters, go to www.umt.edu/camas).

3. **Black Elk/Job response essay:** Examine *Black Elk Speaks* and *The Book of Job* from the Hebrew Bible, and write a 6-8 page critical comparison and response. Start by giving a clear exposition of the main views of nature and the sacred found in each text. Then compare and contrast them, noting where they are similar, where different, and why. Consider such question as: How would you compare their respective views of nature, and nature’s relationship to both the sacred (God/gods) and to humanity? What are the central insights you gain from each text about humanity’s relationship to nature / the earth? What insights, if any, do you think these texts have for understanding our human relationship to nature / the environment today? Do they have any relevance for contemporary environmental ethics? Why or why not? (*Note:* Your essay must contain specific references to and relevant quotes from the texts to support your exposition and argument).

4. **Journal on Place, Reflection, and Religious Practices:** In *The Attentive Heart*, Stephanie Kaza writes: “The landscape has taught me well, cultivating a mind of place, a mind in place, a place of mind.” A central challenge to the academic study of religion is that religions and spirituality are lived experiences and realities; hence much of their power and content easily evades traditional academic study. The journal assignment is designed to help the student to develop an experiential and reflective component to the study of religion and ecology. You should make regular entries in your journal throughout the semester; I will collect it and read it four times: at the end of each of the sections: Introduction (Sept 20), Native American religions (Oct 9), Christianity (Nov 8), and Buddhism (Dec 6). We will use weekly readings in Stephanie Kaza’s *The Attentive Heart* as a springboard to journaling in and on a place you select to spend time in regularly throughout the semester.

There are three components to your journal upon which I would like you to reflect and write:

A. **Connections to Place:** Many religious traditions place emphasis on the sacredness of place, and discerning the sacred within a particular place. For this portion of your journal assignment, pick a place that you can commit to spending at least one hour per week during the semester. Try to spend time in this place during different times of the day as the seasons...
change, getting to know it intimately. Write down regularly your observations and reflections on this place, and what dimensions – if any – of the sacred you discern over time there. Pay particular attention to describing your place carefully: what do you need to describe to help a reader of your journal “know” your place better? How might your encounter with this place inform your reflection on the intersections between religion and ecology?

B. Connections to the Readings: In the context of your spending time in one place, reflect on the insights you gain from our encounter with each of the three religious traditions on which we focus (Native American, Christianity, Buddhism), particularly through class readings. How do these insights inform your encounter with place, and how does your encounter with place inform the insights and questions you have about each of the religious traditions? Are there insights from *The Attentive Heart* that connect to your own experience of place and reflections?

C. Connections to Practice: During the month or so that we focus on each religion, attend or participate in one or more religious practices connected to that tradition that can enhance your attention to the natural world. We will discuss options for this in class. Include reflections in your journal about these practices and what insights you gain from them.

Here’s a suggested format for your initial entries; once you develop your own rhythm of place feel free to adopt your own practice:

- Read the Kaza entry before you go so that it is fresh in your mind.
- Spend the first 10-15 minutes simply observing your place, without writing anything down. What is particularly striking to you about it today? What if anything has changed since you were last here? What time of day is it? What’s the weather like? What characterizes the native flora and fauna of this place? Has it been altered by human actions or presence?
- Spend 5-10 minutes simply writing down and describing what you’ve noticed, and any thoughts this generates.
- Spend some time thinking about and responding to the Kaza entry for this week. Does it draw you attention to any aspects about your place?
- Spend some time thinking about the other class readings for the week. What have been some of the most important themes or questions the readings have raised for you?
- What other thoughts or reflections do you have today on the intersection of religion, spirituality, place, and ecology?

Final Entry: as the semester draws to a close, step back and reflect on what you have gained from a several month encounter with this place in light of our discussion of religion and ecology. Bring your journal to the final class session where we will use insights from the journals to structure our final discussion together.

5. Facilitation of Class Discussion: Each student will have the opportunity to facilitate class discussion of one set of readings from one of the sections of the class focusing on Native American (Sept 27, Oct 2), Christian (Oct 25, 30), or Buddhist perspectives (Nov 29, Dec 4). The class should be organized as a discussion of the texts, not a presentation. Creativity of format is encouraged!

6. Religious Traditions Analysis: Instructions will be handed out in class.
Preliminary proposals are due in class on Oct 25. The project itself is due during the final exam period Monday, December 10, 3:20-5:20 pm.

7. Opening Prayer, Reading or Meditation: We will begin each class period with a short opening prayer, reading, or meditation (2-5 min.) that is related to the topic or religious tradition that day. Each student will have the opportunity to sign up and facilitate this opening exercise for one class. This is a nongraded assignment that I hope each of us will engage in and enjoy!

Email Policy: As of July 1, 2007, the University requires that only official UM email addresses be used for all course correspondence and any correspondence between faculty and students. Please use your UM address for all correspondence related to this class; I will be unable to respond to personal email addresses. Please also check your UM email account daily, as I will be using it for periodic class announcements.

Important University Policies, Dates and Deadlines

9/17: Last day to drop and add courses by Cyberbear. Last day to receive a full refund for classes dropped. Last day to pay fees or finalize registration otherwise registration is cancelled.

10/8: After this date classes may be added or dropped; or grade options changed only by petition.

11/30: Last day to withdraw from courses for Spring 2007.

Credit/No Credit Grade option: A minimum grade average of D- (60) is required for a CR grade in the CR/NC Grade option.

Incomplete Grade: Please see the criteria that must be met for an Incomplete on p. 21 of the University Catalog. No exceptions will be made for these criteria.

ERES: To access the ERES readings:

a. Go into http://eres.lib.umt.edu/
b. Click on Electronic Reserves and Course Materials
c. Under Instructor, find and select SPENCER, Daniel
d. Click on the course name (EVST 594).
e. Enter the password, "green"
f. The first entry, "Reading List," is a Table of Contents. The rest of the readings are entered in the order of the Table of Contents and are numbered on the first page of the reading. The readings are in PDF format.

If you don't like using ERES, there are also hard copies of all the readings on Reserve in the Library where you can read them or make copies.


11A. Tinker, George. “Native Americans and the Land: ‘The End of Living and the Beginning of Survival’.” In Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, eds. Constructing


33. Selections from the Qu’ran (ERES 33)


