

Religion, Ethics & Nature

Rel 3492, 0668, M 10-E1, Tur 2319
The University of Florida

Course Instructor

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Course Description

As concern over the well-being of the planet spreads, people frequently find themselves in conflict over how to balance conservation with the use of natural resources, about visions for our common future, and the wisdom of development. Such conflict stems in important ways from varying understandings of values and responsibilities, grounded in religious worldviews, about what is good and right. This course examines the complex relationships between cultures, religions, and ecosystems, with special attention to religious environmental ethics, and the way nature-related values are related to human impacts on the earth's living systems.

Role of the Seminar in the General Education Curricula

This course serves as a Humanities elective.

Required Readings

Richard Foltz, *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment*

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*

Hyperlinked articles [**in dark blue**] from *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, and *Ecological Resistance Movements*, other sources at the syllabi website.

Course Objectives

1. To introduce students to the study of culture/religion/nature interactions.
2. To provide students with an understanding of the range of perspectives on human responsibility toward the environment with special attention to religious perceptions and behaviors.
2. To strengthen students abilities to examine critically moral arguments about environmental obligations.
3. To acquaint students with the social movements which correlate with and carry various perspectives on human responsibility toward the environment.
4. To promote the intellectual skills necessary for reflective capability: reading, writing, critical and constructive thinking.

Format

Introductory lectures; careful reading, analysis, journal preparation, and discussion of texts; debates and forums; guest presentations.

Requirements and Evaluation

1. **Weekly Reading and Lecture Assignments.** This ground of this course is the assigned readings and consequently this course is heavily dependent on careful reading and note taking. Moreover, certain lectures in class, and mandatory presentations outside of class, are also fundamental. Various assignments will be used to evaluate student learning of the key ideas presented in the weekly readings and presentations. **See and follow the guidelines in [Writing Well](#) for all written work.**

a. Almost every week there will be some reading-related assignment. These may involve a short in-class quiz, an internet-based assignment, such as an essay question that is turned in by email (as a word or if pre-arrange word perfect attachment). (Students wishing to submit word perfect document attachments must send such a document (of a page or two of anything) to Dave Wiles dwiles@religion.ufl.edu by midnight 1 September. If he cannot retrieve this document, you will have to find a way to submit your work as a word or more recent version of word perfect.) **STUDENTS MUST PAY SCRUPULOUS ATTENTION TO THE WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS IN THE SYLLABI, WHICH MAY BE CHANGED OR MODIFIED WEEKLY.** These reading assignments will total a significant amount of the course grade (usually 25% or more), and must be taken seriously to perform well in the course. Important note: beginning 8 September, all readings are to be completed before the class meets, as indicated by the date to the left of the row in which the assignment is listed.)

The key objective in weekly readings is to understand the major argument(s) made by these authors. As you read and take notes, answer these sorts of questions: *What are the central arguments? How do the author(s) develop them?, and What sorts of evidence do they cite?* If the reading is not explicitly an argument, ask yourself: *Why did the author write it? What does the author think is at stake? What is the perspective reflected in it?*

Secondly, it is critical that you understand how the readings relate to one another. So analyze and take notes asking yourself: *What are the main types of perspectives being debated or discussed? Upon what points do the authors agree and disagree? What are the differing assumptions and the evidence upon which the positions are based? What are the differences between one or more readings (or one or more readings of a kindred type)? Why does any of this matter, in the mind of the writers, or the minds of those who the author you are reading is discussing?* Be prepared to show that you are making connections between the readings and other things you are learning in the course.

b. Short essays or quizzes will also focus on guest and other lectures. These will appear below or to be announced in class.

2. **Three, in-class examinations.** These will normally have multiple-choice questions, short answer fill-in sections, and full essay questions. Details will be forthcoming. The third will be cumulative, during finals week, and worth twice the earlier two.

3. **Essay Review and Extra Credit.** You will write an essay review of the novel *Ishmael* in this way: In 500 words or less, analyze the book, describing its overall moral perspective and the kind of evidence provided related to this perspective. Make an argument about what you take to be the strengths and/or weaknesses in the book's assertions.

Use your word processor's word count feature, and include the word count at the end

of your essay. Print the essay on no more than two, double-spaced pages, with 1” margins (side) and no less than ½ inch margins (top). Include “Ishmael Essay” and your name on the first line. These are to be turned in 1 December 2003.

4. **Attendance and participation.** Students are expected to attend and participate in class – this is part of the learning process. **Students who miss the equivalent of three weeks of class will suffer a one-grade reduction; those missing more than this will fail the course.** Students who distinguish themselves by contributing significantly to classroom discussions may receive extra points for doing so. I will be looking for the following: Do you demonstrate that you have read and understood the course readings and can you engage in discussions in an informed and civil manner? Do you regularly commit “fallacies of moral reasoning” as discussed early in the course? How well do you integrate what you are learning in this course with information gathered elsewhere?

We will regularly arrange forums and debates and hold them in class. Although I will not award points based on the *quantity* of participation, regular participation will insure that I have enough experience of you to evaluate. Do not miss class.

5. **Monitoring course website.** Routine course logistics will be largely handled through the online syllabus. This will be modified regularly and students should consult it two or more times a week and rely on the on-line version, not versions printed at an earlier time. All students will be expected to check weekly their email. *As the course progresses, the list of assignments and the readings are subject to modification.*

Points Possible for Required Assignments

Assignment	Points per Assignment	Approximate Points
Weekly Reading Assignments	10-20 points, about 10 times during the semester	150
Exams	60,50,100	210
Essay/Review of <i>Ishmael</i>	50	50
	Approximate Total Possible Points:	410

Calculating Grades

At the end of the semester, the total number of points earned by each student will be divided by the total number earned by the highest-scoring student. The resulting percentage will be used to calculate each student’s grade for the course. Put in a formula, it looks like this:

$$\frac{\text{the score of each individual student (your score)}}{\text{(divided by) the highest score earned by a student}}$$

The percentage arrived at by means of this formula will be evaluated according to the following scale:

95%	A
90%	A/B

85%	B
80%	B/C
70%	C
65%	C/D
60%	D
59%	F

This kind of scoring is fairer than many other forms of grading because: (1) It is based on what students actually achieve rather than some preconceived standard held by the professor; (2) Each student can receive a high grade; (3) Hard-working students will not be penalized for staying in a demanding course full of equally industrious students. With a traditional curve, demanding courses that “weed out” less industrious students, leaving hard-working ones, can unintentionally harm good students putting them in competition with each other. This will not occur in this course. To further insure fairness, any extra credit points will be added to the individual student’s score, *only after the highest score earned by a student has been established*. This ensures that the extra credit earned will not increase the difficulty of the grading scale. *I reserve the right to lower or raise course grades based on classroom contributions or upon absences. I also reserve the right to change course requirements.*

Late or Missing Assignments. Students who do not turn in an assignment on time will not receive points. The total number of points *possible* for the review essay will be reduced by 20% for each day it is late.

Returned Assignments. Assignments will normally be returned to students during the class session subsequent to the one in which they were due. At the end of the semester, unreturned course work will be available for six weeks in the department office in Anderson Hall 107, then recycled.

Appointments and Office Hours. I will be available for office hours every day after class, and before class, by making an appointment. Please make an appointment, preferably prior to the day you would like to meet. This can be easily done by telephone or e-mail. Alternately, you may call or email me with your questions and concerns. The course teaching assistant, David Wiles, will also make known his office hours.

Academic Dishonesty. Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty will fail the course, not only the specific assignment, and will be subject to other disciplinary measures.

Course Schedule and Readings (Important note: beginning 8 September, all readings are to be completed before the class meets, as indicated by the date to the left of the row in which the assignment is listed.)

Note: For supplementary/recommended readings on the Bush Administration’s environmental policies see the articles posted by the [National Resources Defense Council](#), and from *Mother Jones* online, their “[Ungreening of America](#)” series, which includes an article focusing on a critically important nearby watershed containing the [Suwannee River](#).

Dates	Topics	Readings, Assignments, and due dates.
25 Aug	Course Introduction and State of the Planet Report The Environmental State of the World (pt I): “Basic Facts and Environmental Ethics” (powerpoint presentation) “Religious Environmental Ethics from Scotland to the United States of America through Disney Worlds and Back Again.” Video: Battle For Wilderness (56m/bt)	Steve Holmes, John Muir Steve Naylor, Gifford Pinchot Matthew Glass, National Parks and Monuments Alastair McIntosh, handouts and online: “Scotland” and “Fairie Faith in Scotland” and “Rotting Tree Fairie” Hill+others [handout only] “Environmental Resistance and Radical Environmentalism in Scotland” Alex Plows, Donga Tribe Bron Taylor, Disney Worlds at War
Wed, 27 Aug. Special Event	<i>Alastair McIntosh: “Reclaiming Native Land Rights in Scotland: Reversing the Highland Clearances while Restoring the Land and Celtic Identity” [MANDATORY ATTENDANCE]</i>	Wednesday August 27, 8:00PM at HPNP Auditorium Further information and directions for Alastair McIntosh For further Information on these presentations see
28 Aug. Special Event	<i>Alastair McIntosh: “Celtic Indigenous Insights on Cultural, Personal and Earth Healing” [EXTRA-CREDIT OPPORTUNITY, SEE ASSIGNMENTS]</i>	Thursday August 28, 7:00PM at HPNP Auditorium
1 Sept.	No class (labor day) ~ Continue reading assignments. 250 word essay on Alastair McIntosh’s presentation, due at noon, 5 September. Email this to dwiles@ufl.edu as a Microsoft word attachment. This document should be one page, double spaced, with margins at least ½ inch top/bottom/sides, with your name and “Alastair McIntosh” on the first line, and the number of words in parentheses after the last word. This is worth 10 points. Up to 5 points extra credit if you do the same for the second (Thursday night) presentation. If you attend the second presentation, try to say something about the audience as well as the speaker!)	Required: Foltz, Introduction, “Introduction” 1-6. Foltz, Ch 2, “First Peoples,” 79-110. Berkes— Traditional Ecological Knowledge Bernard— Water Spirits and Indigenous Ecological Management (South Africa) Krech— American Indians as First Ecologists Glass— Mother Earth Arnold+Lyons— Haudenosaunee Confederacy (North America) Peterson, Brandt— Indigenous Environmental Activism (Latin America) Recommended Peruse the EPAs State of Oceans Report
8 Sept	Indigenous Religions and Ecology * Discussion of McIntosh Presentations	Bron Taylor— Environmental Ethics In Foltz, Lynn White’s “Historical Roots...”, 30-37. Elspeth Whitney— Lynn White Thesis

	<p>* Moyers interview with Oren Lyons, <i>The Faithkeeper</i></p> <p>State of the Planet Report The Environmental State of the World (pt II): "Biodiversity" (Powerpoint Presentation) In Class Reading Quiz</p>	<p>Hardin—Tragedy of the Commons Feeney—Tragedy of the Commons 25 years later</p> <p>Recommended: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Research, summary for policymakers.</p>
15 Sept	<p>State of the Planet Report, powerpoint presentations: The Environmental State of the World (pt III): "Toxic Pollution" The Environmental State of the World (pt IV): "Deforestation"</p> <p>Ecocentric and Biocentric Spirituality/Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic and Baird Callicott's Environmental Ethics. • Deep Ecology Spirituality • Spiritual Ecology and Ritual as Strategy • The Council of All Beings 	<p><i>The Land Ethic Readings</i> Foltz—Ecocentrism and Radical Environmentalism, 430-431 In Foltz, Aldo Leopold on the Land Ethic, 431-434 Meine—Aldo Leopold Nelson—Baird Callicott Callicott—Natural History as Natural Religion</p> <p><i>Deep Ecology Readings</i> Taylor & Zimmerman—Deep Ecology & the Deep Ecology Platform In Foltz, Devall & Sessions on Deep Ecology, 434-40 Jacobsen—Arne Naess Naess—Ecosophy T [Recommended not required] In Foltz, Macy on the Ecological Self, 441-46 Macy—Council of All Beings Taylor—John Seed Seed—Re-Earthing</p>
Thursday 17 Sept	<p>J. Baird Callicott – Two Extra Credit Opportunities</p> <p>"Marrying Bears and Beavers – American Indian Land Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study" (Thursday, September 18th at 10:00 AM, University Memorial Auditorium, Friends of the Music Room (# 203)</p>	<p>For full descriptions see Callicott Presentations</p> <p>"Naturalizing the Boundary between Humanity and Nature", Tuesday, September 18th at 4:00 PM, Keene Faculty Center, Dauer Hall, Room 103</p>
22 Sept	<p>Ecocentrism (continued):</p> <p>Radical and Pagan Environmentalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front! (United States and United Kingdom) 	<p><i>Radical Environmentalism Readings</i> In Foltz, Taylor on Earth First!, 447-455 Taylor—Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island, from American Sacred Space, 97-151 library reserve Harvey—Paganism Pearson and Pike—Wicca</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i> In Foltz, Gottlieb, 554-560</p>
29 Sept D Wiles	<p>EXAM 1 TAKE-HOME SECTION (the second portion of the exam will be administered in class, Sept. 29)</p>	<p><i>Ecofeminism</i> Hobgood-Oster, Ecofeminism Baker-Fletcher, Womanism and Alice Walker</p>

	<p>Ecofeminism and the “Logic of Domination.” What is the “logic of domination” that ecofeminists critique? Are women and nature linked? If so, how and what impacts does this have? Is Ecofeminism plausible/compelling? New Ecocentric Cosmologies and Cosmogonies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Tielhard de Chardine to Thomas Berry • James Lovelock and Gaia Theory • The Universe Story and New Cosmologies 	<p>Levine—A critique of ecofeminism</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i> In Foltz, Ecofeminism, 456-489</p> <p><i>Continued on next page</i> <i>New Cosmologies Readings</i> Tucker, Thomas Berry Berry, Thomas—Thomas Berry on Religion and Nature Potts—James Lovelock James Lovelock—Gaian Pilgrimage In Foltz, James Lovelock, 531-540</p> <p><i>Recommended</i> In Foltz, Thomas Berry, 524-531 Monahan—Gaia In Foltz, Riane Eisler, 540-550</p>
6 Oct	<p>Powerpoint Presentation: Ethics Introduction Powerpoint Presentation: Key Questions in Environmental Ethics</p> <p>Monotheistic Traditions</p> <p>Judaism and nature-related ethics</p>	<p><i>Judaism Readings</i> In Foltz, Judaism, 279-317 Tal—Israeli Environmentalism Gerstenfeld—Paganism-A Jewish Perspective Steinberg—Redwood Rabbis</p>
8+9 October	<p>Special Event: Presentations by world renowned Deep Ecologist and Rainforest Activist John Seed. Weekend Workshop also available.</p> <p>Analysis of Seed Presentation due 17 October by midnight to David Wiles.</p>	<p>Review articles about and by John Seed: Taylor--John Seed Biography Seed—Re-Earthing</p> <p>Presentation and workshop overview Details on weekend workshop (directions)</p>
13 Oct	<p>Islam and nature-related ethics</p> <p>Special Guest Lecturer: Professor Hafiz Yahya, presenting on India, Religion, and Nature, with a special focus on Hinduism and Islam.</p>	<p><i>Islam Readings</i> Foltz—Islam Khalid—Islamic Basis for Environmental Protection Afzaal—Sufism</p> <p><i>Recommended</i> In Foltz, Islam, 357-392 <i>Christianity Readings (initial)</i> Richard Foltz, <i>Worldviews...</i>, <i>Introduction and Chapter I, “Seeds of a Green Theology”</i> pp. 1-37. Peterson (in Foltz), pp. 319-332</p> <p><i>Recommended</i> Foltz, chapter 2, “Humans, Nature, and Modernity,” pp. 38-78.</p>

20 Oct	<p>Christianity and nature-related ethics</p> <p>Possible Videos: Video: Halting the Fires <u>What would Jesus Drive?</u></p> <p>South Asian Traditions (especially religions originating there, Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism)</p> <p>Contemporary environment-related social movements in South Asia</p>	<p><i>Christianity Readings (continued)</i> Hessel—Ecojustice in Theology and Ethics [6] Myers—Anarcho Primitivism and the Bible [5] Mburu—Kenya Greenbelt Movement [5] Kiernan—African Independent Churches [4] Munkonyora—Masowe Wilderness Apostles [2]</p> <p><i>South Asia Readings: India (Hinduism & Jainism)</i> Narayanan in Foltz, 130-141 [11] Jacobsen—India [8] Narayanan—Hinduism [not yet available-6] Chapple—Jainism [4] Chapple—Yoga and Ecology [6] Lal—Gandhi [2] Jacobsen—Ahimsa [2] Craddock—Chipko Movement [2] Lal—Bishnoi [2]</p>
27 Oct	<p>Buddhism and Buddhist eco-social movements</p> <p>EXAM 2 – TAKE-HOME (the second portion of the exam will be administered in class, November 3rd.)</p>	<p><i>South Asia (continued/recommended)</i> Haberman—Yamuna [3] Lodrick—Domestication [3] Lodrick—Goshalas [2] Narayanan—Dharma [3]</p> <p><i>Buddhism Readings</i> Schmidhausen—Buddhism [8] Chapple—The Buddha [4] Kraft—Engaged Buddhism [3] Poceski—Indra’s Net [2] Darlington—Thai Buddhist Monks Ian Harris, in Foltz 171-81. S. Kaza, in Foltz 193-205</p> <p><i>Recommended</i> In Foltz, Gross 163-171; Swearer 181-191.</p>
3 Nov	<p>Chinese and Japanese Traditions and eco-social Movements</p> <p>Exam 2 Take Home Due/in class exam</p> <p>Social Science, Religion, and Environmental Behavior</p> <p>Starhawk in Gainesville – extra-credit opportunity; for details click HERE</p>	<p><i>Chinese Traditions Readings</i> Paper—Chinese Traditional Concepts of Nature [10] Tu Weiming, in Foltz 209-216 [7] Tucker—Confucianism [6] Martens—Chinese Environmentalism [2]</p> <p><i>Japan Readings</i> Miyamoto—Japanese Religions [5] Barnhill—Japanese Gardens [2] Habito—Zen Buddhism [5] Kallend in Foltz, 260-66 Proctor—Social Science on Religion and Nature [6]</p>
10 Nov	African Religions and Environmental Action	<i>Africa and Animism Readings</i>

		<p>Chidester—Animism [5] Ranger—Animals in African Legend and Ethiopian Scriptures [5] Sarpong—Asante Religion [5] Adekule—Yoruba Culture [6] Chidester—Credo Mutwa [14] Abram—Magic, Animism, and the Shaman’s Craft [4] Quinn—Animism: Humanities Original Worldview [15] Harvey—Animism: A contemporary Perspective [4]</p>
17 Nov	<p>Special Guest Lecturer: Professor David Chidester from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, presenting on “Authentic Fakes” in Religions, with special attention to nature religions (during our regular class time, but NOTE: CLASS/GUEST LECTURE TO BE IN THE FLORIDA GYM, RM 270, AT 5:00 P.M. Extra credit available for those attending Tuesday’s lecture (the 18th); see David Chidester Presentations for additional details. Other Topics: Clashing Radical Ecologies: “Deep” and “Social” and “Socialist” Ecology</p>	<p><i>Readings on Religion and Social Philosophy</i> Bookchin--“What is Social Ecology” Taylor—Deep Ecology as Social Philosophy</p>
24 Nov	<p>No class—read Ishmael novel!</p>	<p>Read <i>Ishmael</i> and write the review. Goodall—Primate Spirituality</p>
1 Dec	<p>Discussion of Chidester and Quinn on Animism and Green Religion</p> <p>Discussion of Religion and Social Philosophy – dystopian and utopian dreams; bioregionalism versus green internationalism, versus green anarchism and anarcho-primitivism or other visions.</p>	<p>Essay on Quinn Novel Due in Class</p>
8 Dec Last Class	<p>Discussion of the past and future study of Religion and Nature</p> <p>Powerpoint Presentation on the “A Green Future for Religion?”</p>	<p>The Earth Charter—See www.earthcharter.org The John Birch Society’s claim that the Earth Charter is ‘The New World Religion’ Taylor—Religious Studies and Environmental Concern Taylor—A Green Future for Religion?</p>
11-19 Dec Final TBA	<p>FINAL EXAM: In class short answer to be taken in class and take home section</p>	<p>EXAM DATE AND TIME (Double check this date and time yourselves, on ISIS, before making travel plans) Tuesday, December 16, 5:30-7:30 pm</p>