

Christian Ethics

REL 3938 Sect 5616

Fall 2002

Department of Religion

The University of Florida

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Course Description

Christians have long struggled with the ethics of Jesus, who consider him to be at least a prophet of God, and more often the Son of God, whose ethical teachings must therefore be taken seriously.

Why has it been a struggle to determine the relevance of the moral teachings of Jesus? In part because he set a high standard, urging those who would follow him to leave their possessions and pursue a life characterized by a difficult unconditional love, one which embraces even enemies. Moreover, he taught in parables, which can be variously interpreted. And as a Jew he was drawing on a religious tradition already rich in its own right, leaving unclear the extent to which that tradition was morally binding on those who would follow him. Complicating matters further, he seemed to believe in an imminent end of the world, raising the question after it failed to materialize as to whether there are different ethics for our earthly existence, and our future one. All of this raises the further question: To what extent is Jesus's own life a model, and morally binding, on his followers? The answer to this question is complicated by the belief that in an important way, Jesus is unlike ordinary humans, who are not considered in any way divine by most Christians. Is it then proper or even fair to expect humans to model their own moral life on the life of the Son of God? If Christians are to model their life on that of Jesus, does this include the supreme sacrifice, giving up one's own life for the well being of others?

These questions introduce only a few of the conundrums that have been faced by Christians trying to figure out the moral significance of what they consider to be the incarnation, namely, the "Christ event" wherein God became a man, in order to redeem the creatures he created in his own image. This course explores the plural and contested nature of Christian Ethics. It will have a strong contemporary dimension, focusing especially on Christian Ethics in the following learning modules:

1) Christian Environmental Ethics and Economic Justice; 2) Christian Ethics and American Moral Narratives; 3) Christian Ethics and Violence (War, Insurrection, and Terrorism); 4) Gender, Sexuality, and Ethics; 5) Ethnic Diversity, Prejudice, & Affirmative Action; 6) Abortion & Euthanasia.

The course will also weave in a strong historical dimension, tracing the evolution of Christian ethical ideals and behaviors in different places and times, for it is only by doing so that we can make intelligible the diversity and contested nature of contemporary Christian Ethics.

Taking on Christian Ethics in this way will be a fascinating but demanding endeavor. So read well this syllabus and be sure not fall behind in your preparation.

Course Objectives

1. To introduce the discipline of ethics and the academic study of Christian Ethics and its role in human culture.
2. To explore and illuminate the diversity and internally contested nature of Christian ethical approaches to a wide range of contemporary moral conundrums.
3. To illuminate the ways in which such ethics are culturally relative, in other words, emerging from diverse places geographically and chronologically, and shaped by those times, places, and circumstances.
4. To promote the intellectual skills necessary for reflective capability: reading, writing, critical and constructive thinking, especially in the area of ethics.
5. To provide a supportive but critical environment to personally struggle with one's own worldviews and ethics, whatever the nature of one's own faith commitments.

Course Requirements and Readings

All students are required to provide an email address and to check for messages at least every other day in order to pick up course materials or other instructions.

There will be a number of graded assignments: quizzes, research assignments, or brief writing assignments, that will be turned in nearly every week. These will total about 100 points. There will be several take home essay assignments, which will be delivered as a MS Word or Word Perfect attachment. (Students must be sure to be using a recent version of these programs to prepare these assignments -- if in doubt whether you have a recent enough word processing program, create a document and send it to me to see if I can retrieve it before the first written assignment is due). These essays will be worth about 300 points, will be distributed in class, and will be due during the subsequent class. Extra credit may be awarded to students attending and writing 250-500 words on Christian Ethics relevant, designated events. No points will be received for tardy assignments. Students without a documented medical excuse who do not attend class will have ½ of their points deducted if they otherwise submit their assignments on time.

Calculating Grades

It is not possible, given the fluid nature of this course, to determine with precision at the outset how many points it will be possible to earn during a given semester. The method of grading, however, will be the same at the end of the semester, regardless of the number of total possible points: 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:

*the score of each individual student (your score)
(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.

Academic Dishonesty. Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the Student Discipline Code, will fail the course, and may be subject to other disciplinary measures. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism and other dishonest practices.

The remaining course requirements follow. The specifics for learning module 2-5 will be supplied toward the end of unit one.

Required Texts

Richard Betsworth, *Social Ethics: An Examination of American Moral Traditions*
Yoder, John Howard, *The Politics of Jesus*

Recommended Texts (books on reserve)

Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*

Hessel, Dieter and Rosemary Radford Ruether. *Christianity and Ecology*. Harvard U.P., 2000

Roland Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*

Handouts and Web-placed and Emailed Articles

Handouts will be distributed regularly in class or otherwise made available. Internet links or electronic documents will regularly be sent by email, and will appear in color in the electronic version of the syllabus, which will be emailed to the student's email address of record. Many of the articles will be from *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, which I am editing, and will be available over the internet as Adobe Acrobat files. You will be among the first to read these materials. If your computer does not automatically open these links when clicking on you the link in your electronic syllabi, you may need to install Adobe Acrobe Reader, which is available for free from www.adobe.com.

This course will be dealing with current events and students are responsible for all materials developed during the course and made available in the above-mentioned ways, as well as those listed below in the initial syllabus, and in subsequent updates that will be forthcoming.

All aspects of this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Such changes will be announced in class and/or by email, and students must be aware of all announced changes.

Course Foci – Fall 2002

Learning Module I: **Christian Environmental Ethics and Economic Justice**

This semester begins on the occasion **World Summit on Sustainable Development**, the fourth such global conference devoted to the global environmental crisis sponsored by the United Nations. Informally known as the Earth Summit, the conference is being held in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Our collaborative investigation of will begin by examining Christian approaches to Nature, using the Earth Summit as its central, contemporary case study. In this inquiry, students will conduct their own research to learn as much as they can about the Summit, the alternative "People's Earth Summit", so labeled to signal its opposition to what its organizers consider the corporate and nation-state dominated, and anemic "official" response to environmental deterioration. Meanwhile, Dr. Taylor, the course instructor, will provide through various media first-hand reports from both venues. Together, like detectives, we will make the role of Christian organizations, movements, and leaders the centerpiece of our collective inquiry during this first part of the course. We will endeavor to understand how such actors are influencing and being influenced by the others involved in this event, while also contrasting those involved with those who for their own religious and ethical reasons, demur from such participation.

Our first night will introduce the course with a video from the instructor, course logistics from the teaching assistant, and an introduction to some of the challenges being faced at the United Nations Sustainability Summit, by looking at two alternative models of environmental respect which were decisively influenced by Christianity.

On the one hand, we'll learn about Gifford Pinchot, who over a century ago pioneered the discipline of Forestry, and became the first Chief of the United States Forest Service. Pinchot is well known for promoting a utilitarian, cost-benefit approach to valuing forests. He was responsible for the philosophy of the US Forest Service, and for opening up large tracks of land to "multiple uses",

resource extraction, recreation, and so on, all to promote the greatest average well being of all citizens. A social progressive, he thought the forests should benefit everyone, including future generations, so they needed to be wisely conserved. Far less well known is that Pinchot was inspired by the Social Gospel tradition that was strong in the US at the turn of the last century. In class we'll take a few minutes to read up on this aspect of Pinchot's motivations:

[Naylor--Gifford Pinchot](#)

On the other hand, we'll learn about John Muir, who founded the Sierra Club and whose 'preservationist' philosophy undergirds the official mission (but not always the practice) of the National Parks in the United States. Better known in Muir than Pinchot, but still inadequately understood, is Muir's religiosity, and how it was profoundly shaped by the strict and conservative Protestant Christianity of his youth. For an introduction to Muir, read together:

[Holmes--John Muir \[temp\]](#)

While the relevance of these two figures to the Sustainability summit may not be obvious, their different approaches (Pinchot's anthropocentric and utilitarian conservationism versus Muir's biocentric preservationism) remain a major fault line in contemporary debates about our moral responsibilities toward each other and the natural world. The "battle for wilderness" depicted in the video you will see the first class will certainly be reflected at the World Sustainability Summit. This is one way in which understanding something about Christian Ethics will illuminate this critically important global conclave.

Week One's Assignments (complete by week two, and so on, throughout the class).

Independent Research

Every student is to visit the websites associated with the Johannesburg Summit and write a brief description of the event, and what, if anything, religion seems to have to do with it (in no more than 500 words). Email this as a regular email message to bron@ufl.edu and tabest@earthlink.com by no later than Friday, midnight. Websites to start with include: <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/>

Readings (to be read in order as introduced in the narrative introductions)

Some Christians have what can be called an apocalyptic worldview, envisioning an imminent end of the world as we know it, with one or another form of divine rescue, at least for believers. Critics say this kind of worldview leads to indifference to contemporary suffering and injustice, as well as to environmental deterioration, which exacerbates both. The first two readings are from popular magazines, *Time* and *Outside*, and spotlight several forms of Christianity with differing environmental ethics implicit, or explicit, emerging from them. Read them and consider what obligations to the earth's living systems, if any, these approaches involve:

Time Magazine, "The Bible and the Apocalypse", 1 July 2002, pp. 40-47; 50--53. [Handout]

The International Response to the Environmental Crisis and the role of Christians in it.

(These sources are especially relevant to understanding Christian responses to the Earth Summit):

The first United Nations Conference on the Environment was held in Stockholm in 1972. Soon afterward in 1975, the World Council of Churches (WCC) held its fifth Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, calling for a "just, participatory, and sustainable society." In 1983, the subsequent Assembly in Vancouver, revised the theme to include "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation." As Larry Rasmussen writes:

The activity of the World Council of Churches is instructive [when it comes to understanding the evolution of Christian environmental concern]. Among the churches, it gave significant leadership, some of it in close cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church. The language of "sustainable society" itself seems to have been initiated by a group of demographers, physical scientists, economists and theologians at a WCC world conference on science and technology in Bucharest, Romania, in 1974. By 1975 the WCC had proposed a program on the "Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society" at its general assembly in Nairobi, Kenya. Yet the decisive attention to human development and nature's endangered sustainability as integral one to another came at the next general assembly, in 1983 in Vancouver, Canada. Delegates voted for the engagement of WCC member churches "in a conciliar process of mutual commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

Here is a press release dated 22 August from the World Council of Churches, which illustrates the importance the WCC ascribes to this event:

World Council of Churches
Press Release, PR-02-22
For Immediate Use
22 August 2002

Justice: the heart of sustainability
WCC sends delegation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development

"We must have the courage to admit that the market and globalization have failed more than two-thirds of the world population who live in poverty," says Dr Molefe Tsele, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). "The evidence, which is impossible to hide any longer, is that we are now living with the legacy of unparalleled inequality between North and South, impoverishment, and deprivation of the barest necessities of life and dignity."

Tsele will lead a joint SACC-World Council of Churches (WCC) delegation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September. The SACC-WCC delegation will be part of a larger Ecumenical Team that has attended all the preparatory meetings for the WSSD.

"We were present in Rio ten years ago and have accompanied the follow-up process," said Rev. Dr Martin Robra of the Justice, Peace, Creation (JPC) team of the WCC. "We know the Rio agreement for sustainable development was not fulfilled by the rich countries and the agenda was increasingly shaped by corporate interests. We have had enough of that."

Dr Aruna Gnanadason, coordinator of the WCC's JPC team asks, "Whose sustainability are we talking about? The WCC continues to

challenge the concept of sustainable development as a contradiction in terms, preferring instead the term 'sustainable communities', putting the focus back on the people. The Rio Earth summit raised expectations and hopes that there could be a change of direction. Ten years later, it seems we actually went backwards and business got its way at the expense of other sectors in society and the environment."

"This is God's earth" is the theme of a worship service, on 25 August, to mark the opening of the WSSD, to be held in Alexandra Township. The service is being hosted by the SACC for all delegates to the WSSD and the local community.

During the WSSD, the Ecumenical Team will hold three public forums in the Liban Center, Mount Libanon Weg, Johannesburg on:

- * the constantly accumulating ecological debt owed by the North to the South (29 August);
- * corporate accountability (30 August);
- * climate change (2 September), when the WCC will call for solidarity with those most affected by climate change.

For further details on WCC statements on these issues see WCC website:

<http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/wssd.html>

Christians all around the world are called by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, to celebrate 1 September as Creation Day, and to pray for the WSSD in churches around the world. His call has been taken up by the WCC and the European Christian Environmental Network (www.ecen.org). A chain of prayer will accompany the summit at the beginning of the high-level negotiations in the second week of the event.

For further information: Bob Scott, WCC Public Information Team, tel. 0041 22 791 6166

or the Ecumenical Team in Johannesburg:

Dr Martin Robra (WCC) or Sister Wendy Flannery (Sisters of Mercy) at the Cedar Park Hotel, Woodmead, Johannesburg; tel: 0027 11 804 3777; Fax: 0027 11 802 1004

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a fellowship of churches, now 342, in more than 100 countries in all continents from virtually all Christian traditions. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member church but works cooperatively with the WCC. The highest governing body is the assembly, which meets approximately every seven years. The WCC was formally inaugurated in 1948 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Its staff is headed by general secretary Konrad Raiser from the Evangelical Church in Germany.

World Council of Churches
Media Relations Office
E-mail: media@wcc-coe.org
Web: www.wcc-coe.org
PO Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Note: I received this via the internet from a WCC listserv run by Philip Jenks. His email is pej@wcc-coe.org and he could get you information on the WCC list-serve.

In 1985, The Worldwide Fund for Nature invited representative from five of the world's major religious traditions to Assisi in Italy to make its 25th anniversary a religious event. Participants issued an important statement known as 'The Assisi Declarations', which ere an important moment in the emerging, international ferment over religious responsibility toward nature. These are reprinted in a handout from:

Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity, published by the United Nations Environmental Programme and edited by Darrell Posey. [See Handout pp. 604-607; and for a more detailed Christian statement, see 611-613.]

In 1987 the United Nations' Bruntland report, *Our Common Future*, spotlighted the need for "Sustainable Development" and put forward strategies to achieve it. The UN Conference on Environment and Development (the first international event informally labeled the Earth Summit) was held in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992. An effort to promote an Earth Charter for ratification by the United Nations was unsuccessful at that time, but the idea took root and has been worked on since then, and will be presented formally to the during the Johannesburg Summit. Christians have been deeply involved in this process. Please read the Earth Charter at www.earthcharter.org/ and if you wish, you can visit also the site hyperlinked there, describing the ongoing Earth Charter Summits, which are being used to promote it: www.earthchartersummit.org

The Johannesburg summit continues the international effort to move the world toward environmentally sustainable and socially just lifeways. See especially www.johannesburgsummit.org and the WSSD Civil Society Global Forum: [www.worldsummit.org/za./](http://www.worldsummit.org/za/)

Background Articles on Christianity and Ecology – Nature in the History of Early Christianity

Several ERN entries, including the following, explore the significance of nature for Jesus and his early followers:

[Hahne--Jesus' View of Nature](#)

[Hahne--New Testament Period \[temp\]](#)

[Burton-Christie--Early Christianity](#)

Many think the so-called doctrine of the fall and 'eschatological' beliefs about the end of time have decisively shaped attitudes and behaviors toward nature in the Westerns world, and especially among Christians:

[Roskos--The 'Fall' in Christianity](#)

[Daniel--Apocalypticism in Medieval Christianity](#)

Perhaps the most famous statement on the role of Christianity in Environmental Decline as penned by the historian, Lynn White. His article is available in a handout, and an ERN entry explores its immense impact:

White, Lynn. 1967. The Historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis. *Science* 155: 1203-7. Reproduced in 'Richard Foltz, ed., *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment* [Handout, pp. 30-37]

Axelrod, L. J., and P. Suedfeld. 1995. Technology, Capitalism, and Christianity: Are They Really the Three Horsemen of the Eco-Collapse? *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 15(3): 183-95.

[Whitney--White Thesis](#)

Others, following 19th century German Sociologist Max Weber's famous thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, surmise that, contrary to White's thesis, ascetic Protestantism is most responsible for unleashing the Western world's voracious appetite for natural resources.

See, for example:

[Buchholz+Rosenthal--Protestant Ethic](#)

Finally, in preparation for our first guest lecturer, Dr. Ed Barnard, during our second class, please read the following from one of his favorite Christian environmental writers:

Wendell Berry, "The Great Economy" and "Getting along with Nature" from *Home Economics* [Handout,pp. 6-20, 54-75]

Come prepared next week having read these articles, and to ask Dr. Barnard 1)what he thinks about Lynn Whites thesis, 2)how Wendell Berry would respond to it, 3)what he thinks about the Apocalypticism that is so strong within Christianity, and 4)how he reconciles his concern for the earth's living systems with such worldview elements in Christianity.

Also think about these two general questions that we're left with at the end of this first week:

- 1) What is the Earth Summit about and what does it have to do with religion in general and Christianity in particular?
- 2) How do worldviews in general, and Christian worldviews in particular, shape environmental ethics and concerns?
- 3) Why might Christians feel defensive about their environmental behavior and ethics in such international venues, if many who participate in them are aware of the perspectives, surveyed in the readings provided here?

Week Two's Assignments

Independent Research

1)Write no more than 500 words briefly summarizing Lynn White's thesis

2)Find and send a 250 to 500 word summary of one or another Christian figure or organization's role or reaction to the Earth Summit, and email it as a MS Word or Word Perfect document, or

regular email message, to bron@ufl.edu and tabest@earthlink.com, by no later than Friday, midnight.

Readings (to be read in order as introduced in the narrative introductions)

Articles on Middle-Aged Christianity

Religion scholars often notice that religions are malleable (they change overtime), and not uncommonly in the face of criticism, and then again, not uncommonly, in the face of criticism by those of different faiths.

Certainly Lynn White's thesis, and other criticisms, caused great soul searching among some Christians. The response has been a dramatic, even though it has yet to spread widely throughout Christianity.

Before turning to illuminate further the contemporary ferment over religion and nature in Christianity, however, we will look at several short additional historical ERN entries that will provide a deeper backdrop for understanding the contemporary scene. We begin by surveying the nature-related thinking of the two preeminent Protestant reformers during the Reformation, the Martin Luther, John Calvin, and their progeny.

[Santmire--Lutheranism and Calvinism](#)

Protestantism arose from Christians who were "protesters" of what they perceived to be the corruption of the dominant, Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century in Western Europe. Its three major branches are Lutheranism, Calvinism (the "Reformed Tradition in denominations such as Presbyterianism and Evangelical Free Churches), and Anabaptism (whose most obvious contemporary representatives are the historic "peace churches", which include the Quakers, Mennonites, and Amish).

Anabaptism is often called the "third wing" of the Reformation, or referred to as the "radical reformation." Anabaptists (they gained the name for re-baptizing those already baptized by Catholics, Lutherans, or Calvinists as infants) seek to return to the earliest Christian charisma and practices. So, they rejected infant baptism in favor of the adult baptism of professing believers only. More importantly from an ethical point of view, they strictly adhere to nonviolence and usually believe in economic equality, at least among believers. Calvin Redekop provides a brief introduction to what he takes as an Anabaptist approach to nature in the following ERN entry:

[Redekop--Anabaptism](#)

Readings Beyond Western Europe and North America

Often in America, anything outside of the United States and Western Europe is largely ignored. There is, however, a branch of Christianity that never swore allegiance to Rome. Called Christian Orthodoxy it has two main branches: Eastern Orthodox (in Russia and Eastern Europe) and Greek Orthodoxy. Many scholars of the tradition believe Orthodoxy has a distinctive Christian ethics related to the natural world. See, for example, these two ERN entries:

[Chryssavgis--Christian Orthodoxy](#)
[Makrides--Christianity \(Eastern v. Western\)](#)

Another dimension of religion not often fully recognized has to do with the reciprocal relationships between religions and cultures, how all traditions are transformed as they encounter one another, and how the various actors involved in such encounters may exercise at least some agency during these processes. This is often true even when some of those actors are being repressed in one way or another. The resulting amalgamations are often called “Syncretism”, which refers to the blending of two religious (or cultural) systems into something new. A recent and more apt term is “bricolage”, which is the amalgamation of bits and pieces of various religious (or cultural) systems into a variety of fluid and changing new forms and groups. Such bricolage leaves the overarching cultural systems forever changed through a process of reciprocal influence. Such processes can be readily observed by examining regions where Christianity encountered indigenous cultures and worldviews, as, for example, in Africa.

Since we are focusing on the Earth Summit and it is in Africa, I’ve chosen ERN entries that explore the diversity, and bricolage, of Christianity and Traditional African Religions, and spotlight their intersection in Nature. We’ll, start, for example, with an entry on Afrikaner theology. This is, incidentally, the form of Calvinism that the Dutch brought to Southern Africa during the European colonial conquest and which, among other things, added to its racist dimensions a virulent anti-communist ideology that buttressed apartheid, the system that violently kept blacks and whites separate in South Africa until it was abolished after a long struggle in 1991. Interestingly, a form of Christian Liberation Theology, which emerged first in Latin America, but was adopted by Black Christians in South Africa, proved useful and played a significant role in the struggle against apartheid. (In subsequent weeks we’ll introduce more fully liberation theology and discuss the greening of it.)

[Conradie--Afrikaner Theology + Nature](#)

The rest of our fascinating Africa entries show the incredible religious creativity that has been occurring in Africa, at the intersection of the environmental crisis, Christianity, and Traditional African Religions:

[Daneel--African Earthkeeping Churches](#)
[Mukonyora--Masowe Wilderness Apostles](#)
[Papini--Church of Nazareth](#)
[Warner+Hoskins--Kimbanguism](#)
[Ranger--Animals in African Legend + Ethiopian Scriptures](#)

Week Three’s Assignments

Independent Research

In no more than 500 words, delivered by email as before, as a MS Word or Word Perfect document, or regular email message, describe the major developments and types of Christian Environmental Ethics found in this week’s readings. Send them to bron@ufl.edu and tabest@earthlink.com by no later than Friday, midnight.

Readings (to be read in order as introduced in the narrative introductions)

[The Greening of Christianity](#)

Early European figures:

[Barsam--Albert Schweitzer](#)

[Tucker--Pierre Teilhard de Chardin](#)

Early figures in North America, which were introduced previously, include Gifford Pinchot and John Muir. These figures can be reviewed at:

[Holmes--John Muir \[temp\]](#)

[Naylor--Gifford Pinchot](#)

Moving toward the contemporary period, read this overview of the “greening” of religion:

Roderick Nash, “The Greening of Religion,” in *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics*. [Handout pp. 87-120].

For more details and further developments since Nash published this historical chapter, see:

[Lucas--Eleventh Commandment Fellowship](#)

[Rasmussen--Christianity + the Intl Ecumenical Mvmnt](#)

[Rasmussen--Christianity and Sustainable Communities](#)

[Cobb--Sustainability+World Council of Churches](#)

[Grau--Jubilee & Jubilee 2000](#)

The following readings provide reflections from some of the major Christian theologians working promoting a green Christianity, mentioned in the above ERN entries:

Joseph Sittler, “A Theology for the Earth” in Richard Foltz, ed., *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment* [Handout, pp. 16-19].

[Cobb--Pilgrimage to an Earthist Christianity](#)

James Nash is a Christian Theologian formerly Executive Director and Senior Scholar with the Churches’ Center for Theology and Public Policy, and ecumenical research center in Washington D.C. Nash has resurrected the natural law tradition in Christianity. His best-known work is *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility* (Abingdon, 1991). Here is a short article that introduces his perspective:

James Nash, “Seeking moral norms in nature: natural law and ecological responsibility,” in *Christianity and Ecology*, Eds. Hessel and Ruether [Handout, pp. 227-250].

Finally, those unfamiliar with “Deep Ecology” need to know what it is about, those familiar with it should probably also read the following entry, which provides a clear exposition of the idea and its

religious dimensions. Much contemporary environmental discussion, especially in religious circles, depends on an understanding of this term and religious philosophy.

[Taylor+Zimmerman--Deep Ecology](#)

Week Four's Assignments

In class reading exam

All readings through the ones below under week four's reading assignments will be fair game in this brief, fill-in and possibly short essay exam, which will be devoted exclusively to determining whether you've been doing the readings, and how well you have understood them.

Readings (to be read in order as introduced in the narrative introductions)

This week we look at a number of additional 'greening' efforts.

The Response of Evangelical Christianity in North America.

A number of evangelical figures and organizations have been especially influential in the early efforts to "green" evangelical Christianity in North America. The Evangelical Environmental Network, for example, was formed to promote Christian environmental ethics. Stewardship is often a central moral category for these folks, and the notion is described by Peter Bakken, a scholar with the Augsburg Institute, after which Larsen describes the Evangelical Environmental Network:

[Bakken--Stewardship](#)

[Larsen--Evangelical Enviro Network](#)

The efforts of individuals including those mentioned in Larsen's article led in 1994 to:

“An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation,” reprinted in R J. Berry, editor, *The Care of Creation* [Handout, pages 17-22].

This declaration was drafted by Loren Wilkinson, who in 1981 published the first book detailing a Christian Stewardship Ethic from an evangelical perspective. Entitled *Earthkeeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources*, this volume helped foster a movement among “young evangelicals” to defend God's creation. Such developments led to the 1994 Evangelical Declaration, which Wilkinson comments on, as does another pioneer in the greening of Christian Evangelicalism,

Calvin DeWitt, in “Creation's Environmental Challenge to Evangelical Christianity” [Handout from *The Care of Creation*, p. 60-73].

Shortly after Wilkinson's book came another noteworthy one from an evangelical thinker, formerly Evangelical U.S. Senator Mark Hatfield's ghost writer (of *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*) and of *Sojourners* Magazine: Wes Granberg-Michaelson, 1984. *A Worldly Spirituality: The Call to Redeem Life on Earth*. New York: Harper & Row.

[Womersley--National Rel Partnership 4 the Env \[NF\]](#)

But the green turn in religion has not gone uncontested. In

“The ‘Declaration’ Under Siege” by Richard Wright [Handout, *The Care of Creation*, pps. 74-79]

we learn of the resistance that emerged in some Evangelical circles to the greening represented in the Evangelical Declaration. In the subsequent ERN entry by Larsen we learn also about the Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship, which was created in 1999 by the Interfaith Council for Environmental Stewardship, an organization comprised of politically and religiously conservative Christians and Jews to counter what they perceive to be the nefarious aspects of green religion.

[Larsen--Interfaith Council 4 Enviro Stewardship](#)

Also during the last few decades another important development occurred, that of “Ecofeminism,” a diverse and contested tradition that has been shaped in important ways by Christian feminists. These thinkers and activists influenced and were influenced by women of other faiths who shared the perception that there are intimate connections between the oppression of both women and nature, and the belief that the liberation of women and nature are mutually dependent. For an overview, introduction, and sources, read:

Ecofeminist Theology

[Hobgood-Oster--Ecofeminism-International Evolution](#)

And for an example of how such thinkers look at biblical texts, see:

[Elvey--Ecofeminism + Biblical Interpretation](#)

One of the major figures has been theologian Sallie McFague. She penned a manifesto for middle-class American Christians, which is excerpted here:

[McFague--Manifesto 4 American Xns](#)

Christianity & Nature in Europe

[Bergmann--Christianity in Europe](#)

[Makrides--Christianity--Greek Orthodox \(contemporary\)](#)

[Chryssavgis--Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew](#)

Roman Catholicism

Not to be left out, this entry describes some theological efforts to turn Roman Catholicism in a greener direction, including in a remarkable pastoral letter issued by Roman Catholic Bishops in North America. Especially noteworthy is the effort to respect indigenous religions and their putatively nature-beneficent lifeways.

[Hart--Sacramental Universe \(Catholicism\)](#)

[Hart--Columbia River Pastoral Letter](#)

Increasingly, Christianity and other world religions are addressing human population growth, which is perceived to have dire implications for the well being of people and other living things. For an introduction to such issues see:

[Maguire--Fertility and the World's Religions](#)

[Coward--Population+Consumption \(World Religions\)](#)

Bonus Readings: Latin and Meso-America (Recent Developments)

[Maclean--Liberation Theology+Nature](#)

[Lorentzen--Virgin of Guadalupe](#)

[Lorentzen--Ivone Gebara](#)

[Maclean+Lorentzen--Leonardo Boff](#)

Sects of Christianity beyond the Mainstream

The following entries discuss offshoots from Orthodoxy that still maintain at least some loose connection to it.

[Alexander--'Mormon' Church](#)

[Corrington--Unitarianism](#)

These figures and themes are becoming especially influential on the international scene. Thomas Berry has been the most important figure behind what we might call the “The Epic of Evolution” myth, which others are now experimenting with and fusing to diverse religious traditions, including Christianity. One manifestation of such effort has been the effort, begun at Rio, to get the United Nations to endorse an “Earth Charter”, which would articulate a shared reverence for the biosphere and an ethical commitment to protect life on earth.

[Tucker--Thomas Berry](#)

[Rue--Epic of Evolution](#)

[Rockefeller--Earth Charter](#)

[Taylor—Green Nuns](#)

****And from *Social Ethics* by Roger Betsworth, read chapter 1 (pp. 11-24).**

The following are websites with interesting documents and articles regarding the Earth Summit and related environmental ethics topics:

Civil Society website:

<http://www.worldsummit.org.za/> (see especially the Civil Society Declaration and the Programme of Action)

World Council of Churches website:

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/team.html>

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/corp-account.pdf>

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/north-owes.pdf>

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/water.pdf>

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/bangalore-statement.pdf>

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/climatechange.pdf>

Learning Module II: Christian Ethics and American Moral Narratives

Week Five Assignments

Having started Betsworth's *Social Ethics* in last week's reading, we will continue on this for the next two weeks.

Readings:

Betsworth- pp. 25-106

Writing Assignment:

In **no more than 500 words**, approximately two double-spaced pages, *describe* the central arguments, citing some examples, that Betsworth is advancing in *Social Ethics* **through page 106**. Say something at least about each chapter read (1-4). Assignment should be done in standard double-spaced format with one-inch margins and turned in during class next week. *Be sure to proofread your assignment before printing your final version.* NOTE: Assignment needs to be turned in during class...only with advance permission from Dr. Taylor can assignments be emailed now.

Week Six Assignments

Readings:

Betsworth- pp. 107-187

Writing Assignment:

In Class Essay on Betsworth 10/8/02: You will be asked to write an essay in which you will need to articulate Betsworth's basic arguments and provide the evidence to which he appeals. Additionally in some way, you will be asked to connect Betsworth the readings and discussions we've had so far.

An additional textbook for the class:

Yoder, John Howard, *The Politics of Jesus* (Eerdmans) **Should arrive at Goehring's Books (on 1st Ave next to Bageland) any day now. Be sure to check on this. Readings will be assigned starting next week, likely.

Learning Module III: **Christian Ethics and Violence (War, Insurrection, and Terrorism)**

"The world is waiting...for new saints, ecstatic men and women who are so deeply rooted in the love of God that they are free to imagine a new international order."

- Henri Nouwen (at www.sojo.net, October 2002)

Week Seven Assignments

Read and take careful notes on the following readings; be prepared to show your notes in class for up to 10 points.

Readings:

Handout: R. John Elford, "Christianity and War," from *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*. pp 171-182

Handout: Robin Gill, "The Arms Trade and Christian Ethics," from *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*. pp 183-194

John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, pp 1-63 (Chapters 1-2)

Week Eight Assignments

Read and take careful notes on the following readings; be prepared to show your notes in class for up to 10 points.

Readings:

John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, pp 64-162 (Chapters 3-8)

Internet Resources on Christian Peacemaking and Terrorism

- [Jim Wallis, "Hard Questions for Peacemakers," *Sojourners*, January 2002](#)
- [Walter Wink, "The Bonhoeffer Assumption," *Sojourners*, January 2002](#)

Week Nine Assignments

Readings:

John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, pp. 163-250 (Chapters 9-12)

Internet Resources on the War on Iraq

- [Statement by 100 Christian Ethicists against a War in Iraq](#)
- [Church Statements on prospective war on Iraq](#)
- [Peter Ackerman and Jack Devall, "With Weapons of the Will" \[or\] How to topple Saddam Hussein—nonviolently"](#)

Week Ten Assignments (beginning October 22)

Assignments:

There will be a take-home essay assignment on the readings distributed during the 10th class session (Oct. 29), due the following week during the 11th class session (Nov. 5). It will cover The Politics of Jesus AND the supplementary readings AND internet sources provided in module III.

Readings: Christianity and Insurrection

Handouts:

Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, pp. 19-43 (Chapter 2)

George Hunsinger, "Iraq: Don't Go There," *Christian Ethics Today*, pp. 4-5

John M. Swomley, "Ethics of the War on Terrorism," *CET*, pp. 6-7

Glenn Stassen, "Just Peacemaking Initiatives Can Prevent Terrorism," *CET*, pp. 8-9

Week Eleven Assignments (beginning October 29)

- Alex Moseley, "[Just War Theory](#)," [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)
- Bron Taylor, notes on [Roland Bainton's Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace](#).

Take home essay exam distributed and due next class session. If you missed class, click on this: [take home exam.](#)

Week Twelve Assignments (beginning November 5)

Handouts:

Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, “The Basic Question: How to be Christians in a World of Destitution,” in *Introducing Liberation Theology*, pp. 1-10.

***The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion*, published by the Catholic Institute for International Relations, pp. 1-28.**

[Readings and Assignments will appear at this site before each module begins]

Learning Module IV: Gender, Sexuality, and Ethics

Week Thirteen Assignments (beginning November 12)

Don S. Browning and Carol Browning, “The Church and the Family Crisis: A New Love Ethic” and Sam Torode and Bethany Torode, “Make Love and Babies” [handout]

- in Patricia and Shannon Jung, eds., *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, 2003 (7th Ed.), pp. 87-99.

John McNeill, ‘The Homosexual and the Church’ [handout].

- In Paul Jersild and Dale Johnson, eds. *Moral Issues and Christian Response* (NY: Holt, Reinhart & Winston (1976 (2nd ed): 205-217)

Week Fourteen Assignments (beginning November 19)

‘Heterosexism’ articles [handouts] (ch 11, pp 276-302)

- in Patricia and Shannon Jung, *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, 2003 (7th ed.)

‘Sexual Intimacy’ articles [handouts] (ch 3, pp. 53-86)

- in Patricia and Shannon Jung, *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, 2003 (7th ed.)

SPECIAL BULLETIN – RECENT NEWS ON THE PROSPECTIVE WAR ON IRAQ AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO IT (ACCESSED 19 NOV 02)

http://www.antiochian.org/News/Release20021009_Iraq.htm
(antiochian orthodox)

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/138/11.0.html> (Xnity today)

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/134/31.0.html> (Xnity Today)

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/bishops/iraq.htm> (US Cath. Bishops)

**Learning Module V:
Ethnic Diversity, Prejudice, & Affirmative Action**

**Week Fifteen Assignments
(beginning November 26)**

“Ethnic Diversity and Prejudice” [handouts] (ch 9, pp. 226-247)

- in Patricia and Shannon Jung, *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, 2003 (7th ed.)

Quiz & Movie Night: Tuesday, November 26

Come for a quick quiz on Module IV’s readings. Then view the award winning movie, “Romero”. Those who write a brief reaction paper on the movie, emailing it to Dr. Taylor by Monday December 2nd, will receive up to 5 extra credit points.

**Learning Module VI:
Abortion & Euthanasia**

**Week Sixteen Assignments (continued from previous week)
(beginning December 3)**

‘Abortion’ and ‘Euthanasia’ articles [handouts] (ch 7 & 8, pp. 150-204)

- in Patricia and Shannon Jung, *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, 2003 (7th ed.)

Assignment:

The take-home (essay) final distributed Tuesday 3 December. It will be due the Tuesday 10 December.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

Additional Sources on Lynn White's Thesis:

- Axelrod, L. J., and P. Suedfeld. 1995. Technology, Capitalism, and Christianity: Are They Really the Three Horsemen of the Eco-Collapse? *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 15(3): 183-95.
- Bratton, S. P. 1993. *Christianity, Wilderness and Wildlife: The Original Desert Solitaire*. London: University of Scranton Press.
- Mueller, R. F. 1987. Religion, Myths and the Environment in Science. *Earth First!* 7(7): 25,27.
- Bratton, S. P. 1986. Christian Ecotheology and the Old Testament. *Environmental Ethics* 6: 195-209.
- Keller, C. 1997. The Lost Fragrance: Protestantism and the Nature of What Matters. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65(2): 355-70.
- Hiers, R. 1984. Ecology, Biblical Theology, and Methodology: Biblical Perspectives on the Environment. *Zygon* 19(1): 43-59.
- Whitney, E. 1993. Lynn White, Ecotheology, and History. *Environmental Ethics* 15: 151-69.
- Marangudakis, M. 2001. The Medieval Roots of Our Ecological Crisis. *Environmental Ethics* 23(3): 243-60.
- Livingstone, D. N. 1994. The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis: A Reassessment. *Fides Et Historia* 26: 38-55.