

THEOLOGY 171 – FOUNDATIONS FOR ECOLOGICAL ETHICS
Fall 2002
Marquette University

Class Times: Tu|Th 11-12:15, Cudahy 114
Dr. Jame Schaefer, 115 Coughlin, 288-3742
Office Hours Tu|Th 3:30-5:00 and by appointment
schaeferj@marquette.edu

Overview and Goals

Can religious traditions provide the impetus for stopping people from causing the accelerated extinction of species, degradation and destruction of ecosystems, and threats to the integrity of Earth's biosphere? This widespread abuse of the physical environment has prompted increasing numbers of scholars of world religions to pose this question and to explore ways of thinking that might prompt believers to act in ways that are more compatible with the well being of the more-than-human others that constitute our planet. Students taking Theology 171 are afforded an opportunity to participate in this ongoing “greening of religion” by examining teachings of the major religions of the world with the aim of discerning the extent to which they provide promising foundations for environmental ethics.

During the first part of the semester, we will examine Christian bases for responding to ecological concerns. Texts by Pope John Paul II, the United States Catholic bishops, leaders of other Christian denominations, and a cutting-edge Christian theologian will be examined. Emphasis will be placed subsequently on critically retrieving and reformulating notions in the Bible and works by eminent theologians in order to respond more relevantly to current ecological problems that concern students. Our focus will shift during the second part of the semester to the orthopraxis suggested in Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Baha'i, Islam, and Judaism. Stressed throughout is the need for religious discourse to be informed by broad scientific findings, particularly evolutionary biology and ecology.

Students will aim to achieve the following goals: (1) Identify and explain key notions in the Catholic tradition and other world religions that appear relevant to addressing ecological degradation; (2) critically assess the extent to which these notions provide ways of thinking about and living more compatibly within the ecosystems of Earth and choose one that you think is most promising; (3) adequately research an ecological problem or Service Learning project on which to test the viability of theocentric notions examined in this course; (4) demonstrate analytical and integrative skills verbally and in writing by applying a religious theme to an ecological problem and assessing its capacity to respond to the problem; and (5) work cooperatively with other students to critique assigned texts.

Basis for Evaluation

Research report (two pages) on an ecological problem or Service Learning project from scholarly literature (10%); class participation including in-class presentation of theocentric theme or world religion concept applied to that problem/project, bringing revered texts of world religions to class, providing biographical information about selected authors, contributing to class discussion, and other participation occasionally requiring written preparation (15%), a reflective journal on eight theocentric themes (each one page) applied to the ecological problem or Service Learning project researched (20%), two unit exams (15% each), and a cumulative final exam (25%).

Texts and Internet Sources

Pope John Paul II, “The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility” (1990) – Blackboard Document
United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, “Renewing the Earth” (1991) -- Memorial Electronic Reserves

Sallie McFague, *The Body of God* (1993)

Dædalus 140 *Religion and Ecology: Can the Climate Change?* (Fall 2001)

Forum on Religion and Ecology at Harvard University <<http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/>>

Handouts and Thematic Readings in Christianity, External Links and Documents on Blackboard

Class Attendance Policy

Because presence in class is crucial to student understanding of assigned and presented materials, attendance is mandatory. After three absences, your class participation grade will be lowered by ten points (out of a possible 30) per absence; frequent tardiness will also lower your cp grade.

Academic Honesty Policy

Each student is expected to represent his or her own efforts in all assignments and examinations. Penalties for academic dishonesty will be rigorously administered as indicated in the *2002-2003 Undergraduate Bulletin*.

Tentative Schedule of Class Sessions, Assignments and Examinations

August 27 -- Overview of course and Blackboard enrollment instructions; directions for identifying and reporting on ecological problems and Service Learning projects to which religious themes will be applied; introductory lecture on various foundations for environmental ethics with emphasis on the distinctiveness of religious foundations; directions for next session's reading assignment.

August 29 -- Should religious communities be responsive to ecological degradation? Student sharing of responses in class; critical viewing of "Keeping the Earth" video prepared by the Union of Concerned Scientists; discussion of Pope John Paul II's "The Ecological Crisis" (Blackboard Document) and clarification of the often confused notion of human "dominion" over the rest of creation and humans as "*imago Dei*"; students on position statements by or sermons heard from within their religious communities; mini-lecture on statements issued by other leaders of major religions.

September 3 -- Introduction to Christianity and one cutting-edge theologian's approach to the ecological crisis; lecture on some Christian impediments to addressing ecological concerns; discussion of Sallie McFague's Introduction and chap 1 in *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*; opportunity to meet directors of Service Learning projects 4:00-6:00pm AMU Ballrooms A& B.

September 5 -- The significance of our "common creation story" with all Earth beings; discussion McFague's chap 2 of *The Body of God*.

September 10 -- Being "at home" on Earth; discussion of McFague's chap 4 of *The Body of God*; declaration of eco-problem or SL project due on form provided.

September 12 -- US Catholic Conference of Bishops' invitation to reflection and action in light of Catholic social teaching; discussion of USCC's "Renewing the Earth" (Marquette Electronic Reserves); student reactions to the bishops' thinking about ourselves as co-creators and stewards; consideration of alternate models of the human; directions for take-home exam on materials covered thus far.

September 17 -- Exam due; introduction to theocentric themes and lecture on the "Goodness of Creation and Ethics of Valuing" theme (Theocentric Themes folder in Course Documents on Blackboard); review of journal keeping requirements.

- September 19 -- Student presentations on the Goodness/Valuing theme applied to their ecological problems; lecture on the “Beauty of Creation and the Ethics of Aesthetic Appreciation” theme; research report on eco-problem or SL project due.
- September 24 -- Student presentations on the Beauty/Aesthetic Appreciation theme; lecture on Creation’s Praise of God and the Ethics of Respect.
- September 26 -- Student presentations on Creation Praising/Respect theme; lecture on the Sacramentality of Creation and the Ethics of Reverence.
- October 1-- Student presentations on the Sacramentality/Reverence theme; lecture on the Functional Unity of Creation and Ethics of Cooperation.
- October 3 -- Students on Unity/Cooperation theme; lecture on the Kinship of Creatures and Ethics of Companionship.
- October 8 -- Students on the Kinship/Companionship theme; lecture on the Restrained and Grateful Use of God's Blessings.
- October 10 -- Students on Use theme; lecture on Living Virtuously in the More-than-Human World with emphasis on the chief moral virtues.
- October 15 -- Students on Living Virtuously theme; small group assessment of theocentric themes.
- October 17 – Mid-semester break from classes.
- October 22 – Efforts world wide to address ecological concerns including the Assisi Declarations, the Environmental Sabbath, The Earth Charter, the Harvard Forum on Religion and Ecology, and other initiatives discussed by Tucker and Grim in “The Emerging Alliance of World Religions and Ecology” in *Daedalus* 1-17 and experienced by students; journals on theocentric themes due.
- October 24 -- Background lecture on Judaism, students on revered texts in the Judaic tradition, and discussion of Tirosh-Samuels’ “Nature in the Sources of Judaism” *Daedalus* 99-124.
- October 29 -- Student presentations on promising Judaic principles applied to their ecological problems or SL projects.
- October 31 -- Background lecture on Islam, students on revered Muslim writings, and discussion of Haq’s “Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction” in *Daedalus* 141-178.
- November 5 – Students on applied Islamic principles; background lecture on Hinduism, students on revered Hindu writings, and discussion of Narayanan’s “Water, Wood, and Wisdom: Ecological Perspectives from the Hindu Traditions” in *Daedalus* 179-206.
- November 7 -- Students on applied Hindu principles; lecture on Jainism, students on revered texts, and discussion of Chapple’s “The Living Cosmos of Jainism: A Traditional Science Grounded in Environmental Ethics” in *Daedalus* 107-114.
- November 12 -- Background lecture on Buddhism, students on revered writings, and discussion of Swearer’s “Principles and Poetry, Places and Stories: The Resources of Buddhist Ecology” in

Dædalus 225-242.

November 14 -- Students on promising Buddhist tenets; examination of statement by the Dalai Lama (handout); groups organize for reporting on Confucianism, Daoism, Baha'i and a Native American tradition during the next two sessions.

November 19 -- Group reports on Confucianism and Daoism; class discussion of fruitfulness of these notions for addressing specific ecological problems.

November 21 -- Group reports on Baha'i and a Native American tradition; class discussion of fruitfulness of these notions for addressing specific ecological problems; directions for exam on world religions.

November 26 -- World religions exam.

November 28 -- Happy Thanksgiving

December 3 -- Small group rankings of world religions with most promising tenets for dealing with ecological degradation, identification of ethical principles shared by most of the world religions to include in a global ethics system, and pros/cons of a global system of ecological ethics in reaction to Callicott's proposal in "Multicultural Environmental Ethics" in *Dædalus* 77-94.

December 5 -- Course summation and evaluation; directions for take-home final.

FINAL EXAMINATION due Tuesday, December 10, 9-9:30 a.m. in CU 114

Grading

A=94-100% 188-200 points

AB=93-87% 174-187

B=86-80% 160-173

BC=79-73% 146-158

C=72-66% 132-145

CD=65-59% 118-131

D=58-52% 104-116

F=51%- 103-