

REL 352 – Environmental Ethics
California Lutheran University / Fall 2014
Hum 107 / TTh 12:25-2:05pm

Dr. Sam Thomas
Office Hours: MW 9-10am / T-Th 3-4pm / by appointment
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“When you find your place where you are, practice occurs.”
-Dōgen

Course Description

Being serious about the environment demands that we address complex issues such as patterns of consumption and production, population growth, environmental racism, conflict and war, the rights of animals, plants and land as well as the rights and responsibilities of persons, businesses and nations. It also demands that we think carefully about how our conceptions of “nature,” “environment,” “wilderness,” etc. shape our attitudes and practices. Students will examine these issues; explore proposed solutions; and develop an environmental ethic consistent with their own values. Historical, political, social, economic, legal, philosophical, and of course moral and religious perspectives will be considered as students wrestle with these issues.

Course Objectives

- 1) To examine environmental issues from religious, values, and ethical perspectives;
- 2) To explore various positions on environmental issues;
- 3) To develop one’s own environmental ethic.

Goals and Outcomes

This course aims to meet the following student outcomes:

- Critical thinking
- Integration of knowledge with ethical reflection
- Ability to comprehend issues from disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives

Required Readings

- *Bauman, Bohannon, and O’Brien, *Grounding Religion: A Field Guide to the Study of Religion and Ecology* (**GR**)
- *Gudorf and Huchingson, *Boundaries: A Casebook in Environmental Ethics* (2nd edition) (**BCCE**)
- *Rasmussen, *Earth Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key* (**EHF**)

*** This is an electronics-free classroom. Cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc. are not allowed without prior consent or unless explicitly approved for particular classroom learning purposes.

Course Requirements (see below for elaboration on each of these items)

1) Short Writing Assignments	20%
2) Case Study Presentation	10%
3) Quizzes	15%
4) Poster Project	20%
5) Final Essay	20%
6) Attendance and Participation	15%

Short Writing Assignments

Each student will produce a variety of writing assignments during the course of the semester. These will include, not in this particular order: (1) weekly journal / freewriting (15%); (3) a letter to a public official (5%). Each of these assignments has its own separate instructions (below).

Case Study Presentation

Groups of four students will lead the class in discussion of selected case studies. Each student will rank their preferred cases from BCEE 3, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, and the instructor will assign the lead teams. The discussion should:

- Outline the case, describing the players, their interests, and “what is at stake” in the case
- Relate the (fictionalized) case to real world situations
- Help the class to clarify the ethical principles in play, and to use the vocabulary of ethics to begin to sort through the problem
- Engage students in activities that relate to the case in meaningful ways

Quizzes

There will be 3 quizzes consisting of objective and short essay questions. There will be a study guide issued one week prior to each quiz.

Campus Ecology Project

Each student will take up a campus ecology project in partnership with a team of 4-5 other students. Students teams will consult with the instructor to formulate a project plan that will include: (1) scope and methodology; (2) timeline for completion; (3) format and presentation of final product.

Final Essay

This essay is intended to integrate various aspects of the course, and should include your own personal environmental ethic, your vision of an ideal earth community, and strategies for realizing that vision. These three parts may be done separately or may be integrated into a single paper of 6-8 pages. It would be good also to consider whether your ethic, vision, and strategies are appropriate to your religious or philosophical convictions and whether they adequately take human experience into account. As much as possible, please refer to specific content from the course.

	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 1 9/4		Introduction to Environmental Ethics
Wk. 2 9/9	Religion: Theory GR 1-26	Religion: Dialogue and Case Study GR 27-47
Wk. 3 9/16	Ecology: Theory GR 49-62 Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (BB) SEEd Project	Ecology: Dialogue and Case Study GR 64-77 <i>Campus Ecology Project Groups</i>
Wk. 4 9/23	Theory in Environmental Ethics BCEE 3-28 Quiz	Theory & Sustainability GR 81-110 SEEd Project
Wk. 5 9/30	The Commons Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" "Rebel Ranchers"	Gender GR 130-46 Ruether, "Ecofeminism" (BB)
Wk. 6 10/7	Economics and Consumerism GR 147-62 EHF 239-54 Quiz	Environmental Justice & Eco-Justice GR 163-80 Sharma, "On Sustainability" (BB) SEEd Project
Wk. 7 10/14	Globalization GR 181-202 BCCE 29-46 (2) <i>Garcia, Garrett, Kniseley, T. Odell</i>	Case Studies: Energy and Climate Change BCEE 163-80 (9) <i>Johannessen, Rios, Vernon and</i>
Wk. 8 10/21	Water Peppard, <i>Just Water</i> (BB) and Monsma, <i>The Sespe Wild</i> (BB) <i>Film: Damnation</i>	Case Study: Water BCEE 121-41 (7) <i>Arzate, P. Johnson, Malinowski, Mo'okini-Oliveira</i>
Wk. 9 10/28	Climate Change BCEE 211-24 (12) <i>Dakar, Deardorff, Isobe, Standke</i>	Animals and Religion GR 113-29 <i>Film: TBD</i>
Wk. 10 11/4	Case Studies: Animals BCEE 242-58 (14) <i>Aaland, Carranza, Choate-Ciletti, Kunz and</i> BCEE 259-84 (15) <i>Goodman, McGee, Nguyen, A. Odell</i>	Case Study: GMOs BCEE 227-41 (13) <i>Dubsky, Eckerman, Jelstrom, H. Johnson, Henderson</i> Quiz

Wk. 11 11/11	Poster Projects	Religious Ethics in a New Key EHF 11-42
Wk. 12 11/18	Religious Ethics in a New Key EHF 43-110	Religious Ethics in a New Key EHF 239-54 Patagonia Field Trip
Wk. 13 11/25	THANKSGIVING BREAK Assigned Reading: GR 203-21, "Place"	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Wk. 14 12/2	Religious Ethics in a New Key EHF 255-84, 357-68 Skype with Rasmussen	Buddhism & Environment "The Greening of Buddhism" (BB) Letter to Public Official Due Design Workshop
Wk. 15 12/9	Islam & Environment "Islam" (BB)	Indigenous Traditions "Indigenous Traditions" (BB)

Posters will be presented at 1:30pm on Tuesday, December 16 (our final exam period).

Final Essays due Thursday, December 18 by 5pm.

Freewriting/Journal:

*How have this week's readings engaged your own thinking on the relevant issues? What questions do you think are most important? Do you have clear resolutions in mind, or do you remain ambivalent? How has the material shifted your thought and/or action? Compose a single, substantive paragraph making specific reference to the readings; do not simply summarize, but demonstrate how your own thinking has been engaged.

Letter to Public Official

*Write a letter to a public official—a mayor, congressperson, governor, city councilperson, county supervisor, national park official, etc.—concerning an issue that is important to you. What is the issue? How do you understand its ecological or social impact? What action would you like to persuade the official to take? You may elect to send (or not to send) the letter.