

TH 3233: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Spring 2013

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Course Description

This course is designed to examine several core questions about nature and our place in it. These questions include: (1) How should we value nature; (2) How should we interact with nature; (3) How should we interact with other humans who both depend on natural objects and modify their environment; and (4) What personal choices should we make to practice environmentalism and to live with ecological integrity?

The course is divided into three sections. The first section tries to help us gain perspective by getting us up to speed on what is happening to the environment and why it matters in an ethical life. We will approach the environment as an ethical question and examine why we have an obligation to protect it. The second section gets us to rethink core issues that arise when we acknowledge that people are a part of nature, and that nature has its own operational rules. We will consider questions of value about the environment by focusing on the first three core questions identified above. Are natural objects only a means to human-centered ends? Do trees, for example, have moral rights? What are the sources and content of a moral duty to protect the environment? What are the implications of this moral obligation for human flourishing and the good life? What does mainstream religion have to say about the health of the earth? The third section focuses on the fourth core question above and seeks to generate normative guidance by asking what really works. This is the applied section of the course.

Course Objectives

- To better understand the environment as an ethical question
- To raise awareness and understanding of some pressing environmental issues
- To consider views of nature and how they function.
- To gain familiarity with philosophical arguments about the value of the nonhuman world and our moral obligation to care for the earth
- To explore what mainstream religion has to say about the health of the earth
- To discuss the environmental choices we can make in our personal lives and what really works

Course Requirements

1. Preparation and participation. You are expected to read the assigned material, attend class regularly and participate in class discussion. Your participation should reflect your engagement of the materials under review (10%)
2. Midterm Examination. You will complete an essay examination that will evaluate your understanding of the environment as an ethical question, and perspectives on value in nature (40%)
3. A Final Project on a Contemporary Ecological Issue. You will be asked to submit both a project and explanatory final paper on an ecological issue, and suggest strategies for addressing the issue. The purpose of the project is to demonstrate an approach to public leadership on the selected issue. The essay is intended to be a theological and ethical defense of the project. Projects will be presented during the last two class sessions, and final papers will be distributed to class members at the presentation. (50%)

Required Texts

1. Dale Jamieson, *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).
2. Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy For a Planet in Peril* (Fortress Press 2001)
3. Karel Rogers, *Thinking Green: Ethics for a Small Planet* (2010)

Policy Statements

1. Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance, http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

2. Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

3. Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to

arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

4. Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

5. Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course. According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of 4 their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.”

Schedule of Topics

Th	2/7	Introduction to the course
Section 1		Ethical Theory and Ecological Theology
Tu	2/12	The Environment as an Ethical Question Reading: Jamieson , chapter 1 <i>Living Planet Report</i>
Th	2/14	Human Morality and A Brief Credo Reading: Jamieson , chapter 2 McFague , chapter 1
Tu	2/19	Meta-Ethics Reading: Jamieson , chapter 3
Th	2/21	Normative Ethics and Ecological Theology Reading: Jamieson , chapter 4 McFague , chapter 2
Tu	2/26	Humans and Other Animals Reading: Jamieson , chapter 5 McFague , chapter 3

Section 2 Value in Nature and Core Issues

Th	2/28	The Value of Nature Reading: Jamieson , chapter 6
Tu	3/5	Nature's Future Reading: Jamieson , chapter 7
Th	3/7	Gaining Perspective on Environmental Problems Reading: Rogers , chapter 1
Tu	3/12	Consumer Society Reading: Rogers , chapter 2 McFague , chapter 4
Th	3/14	Rethinking core Issues Reading: Rogers , chapter 3
Tu	3/19	Ecological Economic Model *Take-home midterm questions distributed* Reading: McFague , chapter 5 Rogers , chapter 4
Th	3/21	God and the World Reading: McFague , chapter 6 Rogers , chapter 5
Tu	4/2	Christ and Salvation *Take-home midterm exams due* Reading: McFague , chapter 7
Tu	4/9	Life in the Spirit Reading: McFague , chapter 8, Epilogue, Appendix
Th	4/11	The Commons Concept Reading: Rogers , chapter 6
Tu	4/16	Food and Water Reading: Rogers , chapter 7
Th	4/18	Land Use Traditions Reading: Rogers , chapter 8

Section 3 Making Choices and Determining What Works

Tu 4/23

War

Reading: **Rogers, chapter 9**

Th 4/25

Making Choices in Our Personal Lives

Reading: **Rogers, chapter 10**

Tu 4/30

There Is No Hope—How Wrong Can You Be?

Reading: **Rogers, chapter 11**

Th 5/2

The Great Unfolding Story

Reading: **Rogers, chapter 12**

Section 4 Preparing for Public Leadership

Tu 5/7

Project Laboratory

Th 5/9

Project Laboratory

Tu 5/14

Student Presentations

Th 5/16

Student Presentations