

From Disney to Avatar: Nature & Spirituality in Popular Culture

SECTIONS

REL 3938: Tuesday, 1:55-2:45; Thursday, 1:55-3:50; Florida Gym 220

INSTRUCTORS

Professor Bron Taylor (Ph.D.)

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DESCRIPTION

Course Description

Focusing on the period since Walt Disney began making animal-focused documentaries and animated films in the 1930s, up through the blockbuster motion picture *Avatar* (2009), this course examines religious, spiritual, and political dimensions of artistic productions, scientific representations in museums, and other cultural inventions (such as theme parks), in which nature takes center stage. We will explore the cultural tributaries, influences, and controversies such productions engender, for they constitute important ways that environmental ethics, and quests for environmentally sustainable livelihoods and lifeways, are expressed and promoted. The course will enhance students' abilities to interpret these cultural productions and their evocative power and explore their own reactions to these social phenomena.

Purpose and Objectives

- 1) complicate and thus make more critical and sophisticated what students understand by terms like religion, spirituality, nature, and popular culture.
- 2) provide students with an understanding of different ways to study beliefs, perceptions, and practices related to what people variously construe as religion or spirituality.
- 3) illuminate the ways in which religion, spirituality and nature-related values are constructed, expressed, and contested in popular culture.
- 4) facilitate the development of students' own critical and ethical engagements related to their understandings of the world and their place in it.

Course Outline

The course will unfold in three main endeavors: (1) understanding worldviews (2) developing analytic frameworks, and (3) analyzing social phenomena at the intersection of religion, spirituality, nature, and popular culture. Specifically:

Worldviews / Cosmovisions ~ Perceptions about the biosphere & universe, the human place in it, and the meaning of it.

I. 'Religion', 'Spirituality', and the 'family resemblance' school of social analysis

II. Hybridity and Bricolage

III. The Natural Dimension of Religion

- a. Nature and the origins of religion
 - i. Sacrifice, insecurity, and the experience of prey
 - ii. Awe, wonder, mystery, and meaning
- b. Ecological adaptation and religious belief
- c. Maladaptive religious/cultural systems

IV. Main types of religious belief and perception

- a. Animistic, Pagan & Indigenous
- b. Axial Age Religions
 - i. Asian / Vedic, Buddhist, Confucian, Polytheistic
 - ii. Western / Abrahamic

V. New, Emerging, and Contemporary Religion/Spirituality

- a. Globalization, pluralism and new forms of religious hybridity
 - i. New Religious Movements
 - ii. The Cultic/countercultural Milieu
 - iii. The Environmental Milieu

VI. Nature Religion (understandings and examples of)

- a. Catherine Albanese's *Nature Religion in America*
- b. 'Nature as Sacred' nature religions:
 - i. Paganism
 - ii. New Age
 - iii. Secular and Scientific Nature Spiritualities (often versus other ones)
 - iv. Green Religion (and the Greening of Religion Hypothesis)
 - v. Dark Green Religion

Lenses for Analysis: Strategies and explanatory frameworks

I. Theories of Myth and Popular Culture

- a. Cultural productions, including film, as mythmaking
- b. Cultural productions, including film, as religion
- c. Cultural productions, including film, as ethics
- d. Popular culture as religious battleground

- II. Lived Religions
- III. Sacred Space
- IV. Eschatology, Apocalypticism & Millenarianism
- V. Structuralism
- VI. Critical schools
 - a. Feminist and race/ethnic analysis
 - b. Post-modern and post-colonial analysis
- VII. Environmental Ethics (diagnoses and prescriptions about our environmental predicaments)
 - a. The elements of ethics (the ethics analysis chart)
 - b. Types of environmental ethics

Examples of Nature & Spirituality Popular Culture

Examples will begin week two and continue throughout the course (see the weekly schedule).

READINGS

The required books can be found inexpensively from online and other used booksellers, as well as at the University of Florida bookstore. Additional articles will be available via online links.

Required Texts

Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010). In addition to this book, at your leisure during this course, view and listen to some of the 'dark green' [nature-venerating video](#) and [nature-venerating music](#), and other [supplementary materials](#), at the book's website.

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B* (Bantam, 1997)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993)

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (Heyday/Banyan Tree 2004) (or any other edition)

Bron Taylor, ed., *Avatar and Nature Spirituality* (WLU Press, 2013) (selections to be made available by instructor via Sakai).

Bron Taylor, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (2005/2008), selections to be made available by instructor.

Recommended supplemental books

Adrian Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature* (WLU Press 2013)

John C. Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (New York University Press, 2003)

REQUIREMENTS

Movies and Documentaries

Students will view motion pictures both in class and outside of class. Some of those that are to be viewed outside of class may be viewed on special 'movie nights'; some may be available also via Sakai. Students may opt to see these films using Netflix or other services but must see required film no later than they are shown on movie nights or assigned to be viewed online or via Sakai.

Discussion and Participation

Nearly every week students will respond to questions on the Discussion Board on Sakai. Answers will be brief (not more than 100 words) and will address the week's readings and/or films. Cumulatively, this is worth 10% of the course grade. Each week's entry must be made before class on Thursday. No exceptions. The points for this part of the class will be awarded at the end of the class.

Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam, worth 30 and 40% respectively, which will be taken in-class, with diverse questions to respond to, including essays sections. The exams will be comprehensive, with questions drawing on any classroom experience or assignment that occurred previously.

Research Paper and optional Slideshow Presentation

Students will prepare a 2,000-2,500-word research paper that adheres to the University of Florida's Level-Two Writing Requirement (formerly known as the Gordon Rule). The essay will comprise 20% of the course grade. In addition to this essay, students may submit a related slideshow illuminating the social phenomena analyzed in the written paper. Excellent slideshows will receive bonus points and outstanding ones (with student permission) may be added to the course syllabus as examples and resources for future classes. Slideshows will be prepared with [sliderocket](#) or other online presentation sites by approval of instructors. Further details will be provided in class.

University Writing Requirement

The University Writing Requirement is designed to promote student fluency in writing. To receive writing credit students must receive a grade of C or higher and satisfactorily complete the writing component of the course.

Instructors will assess student’s written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, usage of standard written English, clarity, coherence, and organization, according to the specifications of this [writing assessment rubric](#). Students will receive a coaching on improving their writing, corrections when needed, and a grade for their work. Students are encouraged to review Professor Taylor’s [writing well guide](#), [Josh Sowin’s Guide to Writing Well](#), and the [writing tools](#) at the University’s Reading and Writing Center.

Extra credit

Students are encouraged to submit additional resources that illuminate course themes, books, motion pictures, comic books, photographs, music, youtube and other online films, with short descriptions of their relevance. Those making contributions to this course or future syllabi for it will receive extra credit points, according to their significance.

EVALUATION

Points Possible for Required Assignments

Assignment	Points per Assignment	Points
Discussion/Participation	Cumulative	100
Research Paper	200	200
Midterm	300	600
Final	400	
	Total Possible Points	1000

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:

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

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

A	≥95
A-	90
B+	87

B	83
B-	80
C+	77
C	73
C-	70
D+	67
D	63
D-	60
F	≤59.99

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 make discussion posts on time will not receive credit for them. Students who cannot take an exam on time for medical reasons, or deaths in their families, must inform the course instructors before the exam of the reason for their impending absence and provide evidence verifying the reason. No accommodation will be made after the fact apart from a contemporaneous accident immediately prior to the exam.

Academic Dishonesty. Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the Student Discipline Code, will be subject to other disciplinary measures. Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism and to understand and avoid inadvertent forms of it that can occur by cutting and pasting quotations from various texts on the world wide web and elsewhere.

Common Courtesies and Laptops: Cells of all sorts must be turned off during class. With the permission of the instructor laptop computers may be used during lectures but not when motion pictures are being presented, so be prepared to take written notes during such times. Students may not check email or surf the web during the class and if this is noticed, will be asked for their names and may be penalized for doing so. Students are not to engage in disruptive behavior such as whispering during the class.

Accommodation for Disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Reviewing exams. Academic dishonesty is so pronounced that faculty need to take precautions to ensure the integrity of exam processes. For this reason, in some classes, exams or parts of them will not be returned, but students may review them during office hours. At the end of the semester, work that was available for student pickup will be available in the Religion Department office in Anderson 107 for 30 days after the official date that grades are posted by the registrar. After this time, they will be recycled.

SCHEDULE

Note: All readings are to be completed before the class date/week under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change so rather than printing it, I recommend bookmarking and using only this online syllabus and consulting it regularly.

(Week 1) January 8 & 10 ~ Cosmogony and Ethical Order

Assignments/Readings

Selections from [Genesis 1-12](#) (which includes commentary from Professor Taylor).

Andrew Fiala's and Matt Wiebe's articles about '[Creation Myths in the Ancient World](#)' and the '[Creation Story in the Hebrew Bible](#).'

Daniel Quinn, [Animism: Humanities Original Worldview](#)

[Popular Culture](#) itself is defined in different ways so we begin by looking at a discussion of the term in Wikipedia, an online source that some would and others would not consider to be an expression of popular culture

Assignments/Personal Viewing

Documentary: [Zeitgeist the Movie](#) (view Part I, 13:21-40:10; you may also watch more of the film if you wish.)

Presentations

Lecture: Worldviews & Cosmovisions; Cosmogonies and Ethical Order (part I).

(Week 2) January 15 & 17 ~ Competing Cosmogonies (Paganism focus)

Assignments/Readings

Lynn White Jr., [The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crises](#)

Graham Harvey, [Paganism](#) and [Contemporary Paganism](#)

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B*, Bantam, 1997 (begin reading)

Further / recommended reading:

Recommended: [Lynn White biography](#) and article about the [Lynn White Thesis](#)

Robert Heinland, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1981)

Starhawk, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) (compare with Ecotopia; a motion picture is in the works).

Presentations

Lecture: Worldviews & Cosmovisions (part II).

Movie: Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1972), excerpts

Movie Night or Sakai: Bambi (1942); recommended (and possibly on Sakai) The Color Purple (1985), 2 hours, 34 minutes.

(Week 3) January 22 & 24 ~ Battle of the Cosmogonies (Animism focus)

Assignments/Readings

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B*, Bantam, 1997 (complete)

Graham Harvey, [Animism Today](#)

Bron Taylor, [Disney Worlds at War](#)

Dana Lyons, [Tree Music](#), and the related song, [The Tree mp3](#)

Presentations

Lecture: Worldviews & Cosmovisions (part III) & *Ishmael* and the Revival of Animism.

Movies: Instinct (1999), excerpts

Movies: Disney True Life Adventures (1950s), The Vanishing Prairie (1954) excerpts;

Movie Night or Sakai: Pocahontas (1995)

Recommended documentary: Gates of Heaven (1978, Dir. Errol Morris)

(Week 4) January 29 & 31 ~ Dark Green Nature Religions

Assignments/Readings

Dark Green Religion, Preface, Readers Guide and Introductory Chapter (ix-12), Chapter 2, Dark Green Religion (pp. 13-41)

Jo Pearson and Sarah Pike, [Wicca](#)

Presentations

Lecture: Lenses for Analysis (part I)

Movie: The Lion King (1994)

Movie Night or Sakai: The Mists of Avalon (2001)

Recommended Movie: The Wicker Man (1993); if you like it, see also The Wicker Tree (2011).

(Week 5) February 5 & 7 ~ Religion and Nature in North America; and New Age Spirituality

Assignments/Readings

Dark Green Religion in North America (Ch 3., 42-70)

Michael York, [New Age](#)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993) (begin reading)

Note: the movie adaptation of the best selling book was a critical and commercial failure, but you many find and watch it if you wish: *The Celestine Prophecy* (2006)

Recommended readings:

[Rachel Carson's nature religion](#), selected readings

John Muir, [Cedar Keys](#) (written from the Florida Gulf town by this name)

Presentations

Lecture: Lenses for Analysis (part II)

Documentary: Battle for Wilderness

Movie Night or Sakai: I Am (III) (2010), Directed by Tom Shadyac

Recommended documentaries: RamDass | Fierce Grace (2001); Afterlife (2011) (promotes reincarnation based on supposedly scientific approach to near-death experiences).

(Week 7) February 19 & 21 ~ New Age Nature Spirituality

Assignments/Readings

Bron Taylor, [Celestine Prophecy](#)

Jose Arguelles, [Harmonic Convergence](#)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993) (conclude reading)

Bron Taylor, [The Hundredth Monkey](#)

Presentations

Lecture: Lenses for Analysis (part III)

Documentary: In the Light of Reverence (2001) (Wintu Mt. Shasta segment; perhaps Hopi/Four Corners segment)

Movie Night or Sakai: *Documentaries related to the Mayan Calendar and New Age interest in it:*

- 2012: Science or Superstition (2009) [New Age genre; see especially the first 41 and last 15 minutes, which is a good reflection of new age visions for an enlightened partnership society.
- [Cracking the Maya Code](#) (Nova/PBS, 2008), 78 minutes [A far more scientific examination of the Mayan calendar and supposed prophecies.]

- [The Mayan Word](#) (2012) online documentary, 64 minutes) [Provides contemporary Mayan perspectives about the end of the world, especially, that we are destroying our planet and need to work together to create a new beginning. Critically engages New Age views.]

Recommended movies: Mindwalk (1990) and The Butterfly Effect (2004)

Mid-term exam (in class): Thursday 21 February

(Week 8) February 26 & 28 ~ Radical Environmental Nature Spirituality

Assignments/Readings

Dark Green Religion, Ch 4. Radical Environmentalism (71-102).

John Seed, [Re-Earthing](#)

Listen to [radical environmental music](#) at the DGR website.

Presentations

Lecture: the Art, Music, and Radical Environmental Nature Spirituality

Movie: Butterfly (2000), 79 minutes (or excerpts) or If a Tree Falls.

Movie Night or Sakai: [Pickaxe](#) (1999); view online

Recommended Films about resisting deforestation and species extinctions: FernGully; The Last Rainforest (1992), 76 minutes; Hoot (2006); The Big Trees (1952).

Further reading (optional)

Bron Taylor, [Resacralizing Earth: Environmental Paganism and the Restoration of Turtle Island](#), in *American Sacred Space* (1995), 97-151.

Bron Taylor, [Earthen Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?: Radical Environmentalism's Appropriation of Native American Spirituality](#), *Religion* 27(2):183-215, April 1997.

Recommended documentaries:

If a Tree Falls (2011): documentary about the Earth Liberation Front activist Daniel McGowen, who worked with Bill Rogers (Avalon), who is discussed in *DGR chapter 4*.

SPRING BREAK 2-10 MARCH

Read Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*

(Week 9) March 12 & 14 ~ Surfing Spirituality and other Outdoor Nature Spiritualities

Assignments/Readings

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (conclude, if necessary)

Dark Green Religion, Ch 5. Surfing Spirituality (103-126); optional [supplemental materials](#).

Samuel Snyder, [Fly Fishing as Nature Religion](#)
Greg Johnson, [Rock Climbing](#)
Kocku von Stuckrad, [Mountaineering](#)

Presentations

Surfing Spirituality slide show and motion picture excerpts.

Documentary: In the Light of Reverence (2001) (Lakota/Blackfeet/Rock Climber-‘Devil’s Tower segment).

Movie Night or Sakai: Golf in the Kingdom (2010)

Recommended movies: Point Break (1991), Five Summer Stories (1972), Step into Liquid (2003); Whale Rider (2002).

Additional Resources

Recommendations (from Sam Snyder on fishy spirituality):

You tube videos about Bristol Bay, which UF Religion and Nature graduate Dr. Samuel Snyder is trying to defend (4-5 minutes each).

- [Casting for Conservation in Bristol Bay](#) (and) [The Live Cast](#) (see also) [Red Gold](#)

Blogs:

- Erin Block’s [Mysteries Internal](#)
- [MoldyChum/reelpure thoughts](#)
- Chris Hunt’s [Eat More Brook Trout](#) (who recommended the following film):

Motion Pictures:

- Motion picture [A Deliberate Life](#) (film’s website); [download the movie here](#).

Books:

- Books: David James Duncan, *River Why* (Snyder does not recommend the movie based on it); and Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It* (1976).

(Week 10) March 19 & 21 ~ Pantheism and Gaian Naturalism

Assignments/Readings & Viewings

Ch 6. Globalization with Predators and Moving Pictures (127-154)

Bernard Zaleha, [Pantheism in American Popular Culture](#) (esp. p. 82f)

Jack Leoffler, [Edward Abbey](#), “Either everything is divine, or nothing is” (p.2)

[Pantheism Net](#) of the World Pantheist Movement (see especially the [WPM Statement of Principles](#))

Presentations

David Attenborough Segment

- [Sir David Attenborough - the story behind Life on Earth - BBC](#): Here, Naturalistic Animism is exemplified in Attenborough's famous encounter with Mountain Gorillas, during which

he said, “There is more meaning and mutual understanding in exchanging a glance with a Gorilla than any animal I know. We’re that similar. Their sight, their hearing, their sense of smell, are so similar to ours that we see the world as they do.”

- Yet, ecstatic experiences like this do not prevent him from seeing the violent side of nature and facing head on those who wish he would attribute it to a divine being: [Sir David Attenborough on nature, worms, predation, and those who believe in a beneficent God](#) (2.23)
- David Attenborough [on Darwin and the Tree of Life](#) blames Genesis as the root cause of the despoliation of the earth.
- [David Attenborough’s favorite moments](#) (*recommended*, worth perusing)
- [Symphony of Science music videos](#) (at least view, ‘We’re all connected’ and ‘The Unbroken Thread’ and ‘Holy Now’).

Movie: Stigmata (1999), 98 minutes, excerpts

Movie Night or Sakai: Contact (1997), 2 hours, 21 minutes

Recommended documentary:

[Cosmos: A Personal Voyage](#), episode 1 of 13 (1980, TV); series remastered and updated in 2009 and is available by DVD.

Recommended movies:

- American Beauty (1999);
- Julie Sweeney’s (standup comedy video), Letting Go of God (2006).

(Week 11) March 26 & 28 ~ Museums, Theme Parks, Photographic & Comic Books

Assignments/Readings & Viewings

Ch 7. Globalization in Arts, Sciences, and Letters (155-179)

Get started on the Avatar readings (listed under week 12).

Presentations

Nature Spirituality at the Nation’s Theme Parks, Tourist Attractions, and Museums

Movies: Captain Planet (1990) (excerpts)

(Week 12) April 2 & 4 ~ Cultural Battle over religion (and Nature) in Contact and Avatar

Assignments/Readings (and viewings)

Research paper due by Thursday, as a word document, submitted by Sakai.

Documentaries and commentary:

Amazon Watch, [Defending the Rivers of the Amazon](#) with Sigourney Weaver (2010), 10:39).

[Avatar: A Message from Pandora](#) (James Cameron on protecting the Amazon) (optional, 20.00)

Indigenous rights websites: [Indigenous Environmental Network](#); [Amazon Watch](#) (optional)

Selected readings from *Avatar and Nature Spirituality*:

Required readings:

- B. Taylor, Prologue: *Avatar* as Rorschach; and Introduction: The Religion and Politics of *Avatar*
- Britt Istoft, *Avatar* Fandom, Environmentalism, and Nature Religion
- Chris Klassen, Becoming the ‘Noble Savage’: Nature Religion and the ‘Other’ in *Avatar*
- David Landis Barnhill, Spirituality and Resistance: Ursula Le Guin’s *The Word for World is Forest* and the Film *Avatar*
- Lisa H. Sideris, I See You: Interspecies Empathy and *Avatar*
- B Taylor, Truth and Fiction in *Avatar*’s Cosmogony and Nature Religion

Recommended/optional:

- Matthew Holtmeier, Post-Pandoran Depression or Na’vi Sympathy: *Avatar*, Affect, and Audience Reception
- Rachelle K. Gould, Nicole M. Ardoin, and Jennifer Kamakanipakolonahe’okekai Hashimoto Transposing the Conversation into Popular Idiom: The reaction to *Avatar* in Hawai’i
- Joy H. Greenberg, *Avatar* and Artemis: Indigenous Narratives as Neo-Romantic Environmental Ethics

Daniel Heath Justice, Afterword.

[Avatar and Nature Religion](#) from the DGR website

Presentations

The Young Turks, “[Why Are Some Christians Mad Over Avatar?](#) (scared of the competition?) (4.5 minutes).

Movie Night: (Wednesday): *Avatar*

Recommended Movie: *Dances with Wolves* (1990), 2 hours, 18 minutes.

(Week 13) April 9 & 11 ~ Religion, Nature and the environmental future

Assignments/Readings and Research

Ch 8. Terrapolitan Earth Religion (180-199)

Ch 9. Conclusion: Dark Green Religion and the Planetary Future (200-222)

Presentations

Lecture on Civil and Terrapolitan Earth Religion

Documentary:

- *The National Parks* (2009), excerpts.

(Week 14) April 16 & 18 ~ Religion, Science and the Future of Religion and Nature

Research paper returned, graded, with comments, no later than Thursday, 18 April.

Assignments:

TBA

Assignments/Viewings

Documentary: DMT: The Spirit Molecule

Presentations

Movie (in class): The Fountain, Darren Aronofsky (2006), 96 minutes

Recommended film: Tree of Life (2011)

(Week 15) April 23 (last day of class) ~ Nature's Call

Assignments:

TBA

Presentation

Documentary: Call of Life (excerpts, 50 minutes, of 118)

Research paper revision (optional) must be turned in by midnight, April 26.

FINAL EXAM TO TAKE PLACE DURING EXAM WEEK ~ 27 APRIL – 2 MAY

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources, such as links to podcasts, music, slideshows, video, music, and websites, will be made available here during the course. Students are encouraged to send their own ideas for resources to the course instructors.

Writing

Writing Well

Joshua Sowin's 'A guide to writing well'

Bron Taylor's Writing Well Guide

Scholarly Books and Articles

Verlyn Flieger, "Taking the Part of Trees: Eco-Conflict in Middle-Earth," in *J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-Earth*, (Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press, 2000. 147-58).

David Ingram, *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).

Robert K Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000)

John May, ed, *New Image of Religious Film* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997).

Joel Martin & Conrad Ostwalt, eds, *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

Turner, Graeme. *Film as Social Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

Novels

Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood: A Novel* (Bloomsbury, 2009. London: Virago Press, 2010).

Robert A. Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (New York: Putnam, 1961).

Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (New York: Harper, 2012).

Michael Murphy, *Golf in the Kingdom* (New York: Viking, 1972).

Starhawk. *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple: A Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

Documentaries (nature-venerating)

- Journey of the Universe
- I Am (III) (2010), Tom Shadyac.

Theatrical Motion Pictures

Apocalyptic and Dystopian (cf. Ecotopian/Utopian, and also Apocalyptic and Dystopian, and Natural Disasters / Phenomena)

Alive (1993)

Planet of the Apes (2001)

12 Monkeys (1995)

Fight Club (1999)

Hunger Games (2012)

The Perfect Storm (2000).

Twister (1996)

Volcano (1997)

Surfing

Way of the Ocean (2011), 62 minutes, ‘explores the connection between man and sea through a visual feast of poetic motion’

Science Fiction

2001, A Space Odyssey (1968)

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

Paranormal phenomena

Signs (2002).

Nature Religion & Dark Green Religion

Epic (2013)

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002). Peter Jackson (Director).

Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings. (2001) Peter Jackson (Director).

Asian Nature Spiritualities

The Matrix (1999)

Star Wars (1977)

Websites

Professor Leslie Sponsel's [spiritual ecology](#) website has many resources pertinent to this class and its projects, including a recent course, [available here](#).