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COURSE STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES

Ethicist Larry Rasmussen has written that the biggest story of the twentieth century is the fundamental change in the relationship of the human world to the rest of the earth: never before have human technology and human numbers been powerful enough to alter and destroy planetary life systems. Rasmussen then quotes Daniel Maguire to pose a challenge: "If current trends continue, we will not. And that is qualitatively and epochally true. If religion does not speak to [this], it is an obsolete distraction."

This course reflects a world-wide movement -- variously called the “greening of religion”, ecotheology, ecospirituality, or simply religion and ecology – whose practitioners seek to respond to Rasmussen’s observation and Maguire’s challenge. Together we will explore a diversity of sources and traditions, keeping in mind the powerful role religion can play in shaping everyday habits and in addressing moral issues regarding the earth and our environments.

Goals of the course include:
1. To explore traditional world religions as resources for ecological beliefs and practices;
2. To understand the important role of religion and spiritual values in everyday ecological choices;
3. To gain exposure to new interpretations of religious traditions and ecospiritual alternatives;
4. To investigate specific eco-religious concepts and practices as they might apply to one’s personal life.

REQUIRED TEXTS

ERES Readings (from: http://eres.lib.umt.edu/)
    Recommended: Earth Prayers.  E Roberts and E Amidon, eds. (HarperCollins)

Useful Websites:
Forum on Religion and Ecology www.environment.harvard.edu/religion
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life www.coejil.org
National Religious Partnership for the Environment www.nrpe.org
Evangelical Environmental Network www.esa-online.org/een
**REQUIREMENTS**

- Regular class attendance and participation that demonstrates a grasp of the reading assignments
- Self-Assessment essay
- Two short critical response papers to the readings
- Facilitation of a class discussion with 2-3 other students
- Ecospiritual activism essay
- Religious practices paper
- Religious tradition reflection/analysis paper (graduate students only)
- Essay midterm and final exams

**ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Recommended Reading in brackets]</td>
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**Introduction: Laying the Groundwork**

*Student-led Discussions*

1/24 Tu 1  Introduction: Laying out themes and structure of the course  
WRE preface, intro

Class member introductions

1/26 Th 2  Starting Question: Why Examine Religion and Ecology?  
Gardner (ERES #1); God’s Earth is Sacred (ERES #2)

Continue Class member introductions  
Start reading *Ishmael*

Go over Self-Assessment Essay guidelines

1/31 Tu 3  Setting the Context I: Environmentalism and Religion  
Tucker (ERES #24)

Discussion of Tucker’s “Worldly Wonder” (3-26; 36-54)  
and Rasmussen’s “The Massive Mysticism of Stone”  
Rasmussen (ERES #4)  
[Rec: Tucker: 27-35, 57-77, 131-142 (ERES #25); Rasmussen (ERES #3)]

2/2 Th 4  Setting the Context II: Seeds of a Green Theology  
WRE ch. 1: Intro, Lowdermilk, Sittler, White [rec: Nasr]

2/7 Tu 5  Setting the Context IIIA: Humans, Nature, and Modernity  
WRE ch. 2: Intro, Merchant, Loy

Self-Assessment Essay due in class

Go over Ecospiritual Activism assignment and guidelines  
Sign up for Class Facilitation Groups

WRE ch. 2: Easterbrook, Mander

Go over Graduate Student Project assignment and guidelines
Faiths Scan: Religious Traditions and Ecology

Indigenous / Animist Traditions and Ecology

2/14 Tu 7 Myth and Storytelling: A Discussion of *Ishmael*  
Evening: Linda Hogan, “Native Americans and Conservation”

2/16 Th 8 Indigenous and Animist Views  
WRE ch. 3: Intro, Deloria, Graham [rec. Omari, Nabhan]  
Black Elk (ERES #5)

Go over Religious Practices assignment and guidelines

2/21 Tu 9 Indigenous Traditions and White Cultural Responses  
Grim (ERES #6)  
Smith, Allen (ERES #7)  
WRE Ch. 14: Potiguara

Hand out questions on *The Bacchae*

2/23 Th 10 North American Native American perspectives  
No reading

Speaker or Film

*Ishmael Response Essay (or Camas alternative) due in class*

Western Religious Traditions and Ecology

2/28 Tu 11 Civilization vs. Nature in Greek Tragedy  
(ERES #8)

Read: *The Bacchae* (whole play)

3/2 Th 12 Judaism and Ecology  
WRE ch. 8: Intro, Hüttermann, Frymer-Kensky  
[rec. Schwartzschild, Waskow]  
(Genesis 1-4. 6-9, Psalm 8, Isaiah 11:1-9 and 40:12-31; ERES #9)

3/7 Tu 13 Perspectives on Creation in the *Book of Job*  
*Job* selections (ERES #10)  
McKibben (ERES #11)  
Jacobson (ERES #12)

*Graduate Student Project Proposals Due*

3/9 Th 14 Christianity: Positive and Negative Views  
Kinsley (ERES #13)  
Cobb (ERES #14)

*3/14 Tu 15 Christianity: A Range of Perspectives  
WRE ch. 9: Intro, Peterson, DeWitt  
[rec. McFague, Chryssavgis]

*Response Essay on *The Bacchae* and *Job* due in class*

3/16 Th 16 Introduction to Islam  
WRE ch. 10: Intro, Foltz, Afrasiabi
March 27 – 31  Spring Break – No Class

Eastern Religious Traditions and Ecology

*4/4  Tu 19  Hinduism and Jainism  WRE ch. 4: Alley  
       WRE ch. 11: Sullivan  
       Dwivedi (ERES #18)

*4/6  Th 20  Buddhism and Ecology  Nhat Hanh(ERES#19),  
       de Silva (ERES #20), Sivaraksa (ERES #21)

4/11  Tu 21  Buddhism, Ecology and Compassion  WRE ch. 5: Gross, Kaza;  
       Sponberg (ERES #22); [WRE ch. 5: Harris, Swearer]  
       Speaker: Chris Eyer, Rocky Mountain Buddhist Center

4/13  Th 22  Chinese Traditions and Ecology  WRE ch. 6: Weiming, Tucker  
       [WRE ch. 6: Cheng, Bruun]

4/18  Tu 23  Discussion of Religious Practices

  Religious Practices Paper due in class

4/20  Th 24  Japanese Traditions and Ecology  WRE ch. 7: Bocking, Saito  
       [WRE ch. 7: Kalland, Hendry]

*4/25  Tu 25  Spiritual Deep Ecology  WRE ch. 12: Devall & Sessions, Macy  
       [WRE ch. 12: Leopold, Taylor]

*4/27  Th 26  Ecofeminist Spiritualities  WRE ch. 13: King, Ruether, Adams (ERES #23)  
       [WRE ch. 13: Riley, Mellor]

5/2  Tu 27  New Eco-Cosmologies  WRE ch 15: Berry, Eisler  
       [WRE ch 15: Lovelock, Gottlieb]

5/4  Th 28  Final Class / Wrap-up

  Graduate Student Projects due in class

Final Exam Period: Tuesday, May 9th, 1:10-3:10 pm. Final Exam essays due.
GRADING POLICY

Note Re Papers: Papers are due in class on or before the date listed in the syllabus. Unless you have made a prior agreement with me, I will take off one grade level (A becomes A-) for each class day an assignment is late. Papers with an undue number of errors of punctuation, spelling, or grammar will be marked down and may be returned ungraded for correction. Written work will be evaluated in terms of your depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, clarity of writing, and ability to address issues raised in the text and in class on the topic at hand. Grades given reflect the following criteria of judgment:

F: Failure to meet minimum requirements
D: Unsatisfactory, but some effort to meet minimum requirements
C: Satisfactory; meet minimum requirements of assignment but not much more
B: Good to Very Good: thoughtful reflection, good analysis, clear writing style
A: Excellent depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, and writing style; demonstrate creativity and mature analytical skills in going beyond the primary requirements of the assignment

Attendance: Regular attendance and participation in the class is expected. More than three (3) absences will result in losing any benefit of the doubt on your final grade. More than five (5) absences will result in one grade reduction. More than seven (7) absences will result in a failing course grade. Late arrivals in class will count as an absence. (Note: If you have a valid reason for missing several classes, such as illness or other conflicting commitments, you still must speak with the instructor).

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: All work submitted is expected to be the student's own. Any acts of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course, and may result in further academic punishment. If you have any doubts about definitions of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please review the relevant sections of the University Catalog (p. 22).

WEIGHT AND TIMELINE OF ASSIGNMENTS

The total number of points available for class assignments is 500 points. In order of due dates, the assignments are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-Assessment essay</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>February 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Ishmael</em> response essay</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>February 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Bacchae/Job</em> response essay</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>March 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Religious practices essay</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>April 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Class facilitation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>In syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ecospiritual Activism essay</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(One week after facilitating class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Religious Traditions Analysis</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td>May 4</td>
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</table>
DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

1. Self-Assessment essay. Instructions will be handed out in class.

2. *Ishmael* response essay: Write a 4-5 page critical response to Daniel Quinn’s novel, *Ishmael*. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of Quinn’s arguments, and why? What do you see as some of the central insights you have gained from the book, and how do they help you to think about religious and cultural responses to the environment? Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not? (Note: Your essay must contain specific references to and relevant quotes from the text to support your exposition and argument).

*Camas Essay Alternative:* The Spring 2006 issue of Camas will be devoted to ideas and issues regarding “Connections.” If you are interested in writing an essay that deals with some aspect of connections, spirituality and/or religion, you may – with instructor’s prior approval – write and submit such an essay to Camas, and substitute it for the *Ishmael* response essay. The Camas deadline is March 1, 2005, so you should submit your essay to me no later than February 21, so that I can read and evaluate it and give you feedback by March 1. Please let me know by February 15 if you are interested in this option, and how you would like to shape your essay. (For information on the *Camas* essay parameters, go to www.umt.edu/camas).

3. *Bacchae/Job* response essay: Write a 4-5 page critical comparison and response to Euripides’ *The Bacchae* and *The Book of Job* from the Hebrew Bible. How would you compare their respective views of nature, and nature’s relationship to both the sacred (God/gods) and to humanity? What are the central insights you gain from each text about humanity’s relationship to nature / the earth? What insights, if any, do you think these texts have for understanding our human relationship to nature / the environment today? (Note: Your essay must contain specific references to and relevant quotes from the texts to support your exposition and argument).

4. Religious practices essay: Instructions will be handed out in class.

5. Class facilitation. Instructions will be handed out in class.

6. Ecospiritual Activism essay. Instructions will be handed out in class.

7. Religious Traditions Analysis: (graduate students only) Instructions will be handed out in class.
   Proposals are due in class March 7. The project itself is due May 4.

8. Take-Home Final Essay Exam. Instructions will be handed out in class. Students will bring their completed essay to the final exam period on Tuesday, May 9 (1:10-3:10 pm) and will have the opportunity to discuss their findings and insights from the assignment.

Note: final grades will use pluses and minuses.
9. **Opening Prayer, Reading or Meditation:** We will begin each class period with a short opening prayer, reading, or meditation (2-5 min.) that is related to the topic or religious tradition that day. Each student will have the opportunity to sign up and facilitate this opening exercise for one class. This is a *nongraded* assignment that I hope each of us will engage in and enjoy!

**Important University Policies, Dates and Deadlines**

2/10: Last day to drop and add courses by Cyberbear. Last day to receive a full refund for classes dropped. Last day to pay fees or finalize registration otherwise registration is cancelled.

3/7: Class may be added or dropped; or grade options changed only by petition.

4/28: Last day to withdraw from courses for Spring 2006.

5/13: Commencement.

**Credit/No Credit Grade option:** A minimum grade average of D- (60) is required for a CR grade in the CR/NC Grade option.

**Incomplete Grade:** Please see the criteria that must be met for an Incomplete on p. 21 of the University Catalog. No exceptions will be made for these criteria.

**ERES:** To access the ERES readings:

a. Go into http://eres.lib.umt.edu/

b. Click on Electronic Reserves and Course Materials

c. Under Instructor, find and select SPENCER, Daniel

d. Click on the course name (EVST 494).

e. Enter the password, "green"

f. The first entry, "Reading List," is a Table of Contents. The rest of the readings are entered in the order of the Table of Contents and are numbered on the first page of the reading. The readings are in PDF format.

If you don't like using ERES, there are also hard copies of all the readings on Reserve in the Library where you can read them or make copies.
# Table of Contents for Electronic Reserve Readings (ERES)

1. Engaging Religion in the Quest for a Sustainable World ............................. Gary Gardner

2. God’s Earth is Sacred ..............................................................................

3. Earth and Its Distress ................................................................. Larry Rasmussen

4. The Massive Mysticism of Stone: Religion’s Ecological Phase ............ Larry Rasmussen

5. Selections from *Black Elk Speaks* ......................................................

6. Indigenous Traditions and Ecology ..................................................... John A. Grim

7. For All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life ............................... Andy Smith

   The Woman I Love is a Planet; The Planet I love is a Tree ............... Paul Gunn Allen

8. *The Bacchae* ..................................................................................... Euripides

9. Selections from the Hebrew Bible. ......................................................

10. Selections from the *Book of Job* .......................................................

11. The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job, and the Scale of Creation ........ Bill McKibben


13. Christianity as Ecologically Harmful/Responsible ........................... David Kinsley

14. Protestant Theology and Deep Ecology ........................................... John Cobb

15. Selections from the *Qu’ran* ..............................................................


17. Selected Hindu myths. .................................................................


19. The Sun My Heart ................................................................. Thich Nhat Hanh

20. Early Buddhist Attitudes toward Nature .......................................... Lily de Silva

21. Buddhism with a Small “b” .............................................................. Sulak Sivaraksa

22. Green Buddhism and the Hierarchy of Compassion .......................... Alan Sponberg
23. Feeding on Grace  ................................................................. Carol Adams

24. Selections from *Worldly Wonder*  ........................................ Mary Evelyn Tucker

25. Selections from *Worldly Wonder* (Recommended)  ............... Mary Evelyn Tucker