

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES 397 L20  
RELIGION AND SCIENCE  
Spring 2006**

May 9, 2006

INSTRUCTOR: Anne White, Ph.D.  
COURSE TIME AND DAYS: TR – 10:00 -12:45  
OFFICE: SS 1322  
OFFICE HOURS: By appointment  
TELEPHONE: 220-3285  
E-MAIL ADDRESSES: [awhite@ucalgary.ca](mailto:awhite@ucalgary.ca)  
WEBNOTES: [Blackboard](#)

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Gary Gardner, *Invoking the Spirit: Religion and Sustainability in the Quest for a Sustainable World* (Worldwatch Paper 164, December 2002). Worldwatch Institute, 2002 (ISBN 1-878071-67-X).

<http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/religion/index.html>

<http://www.worldwatch.org/> (Environmental issues)

<http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Environ/Enviroethics.htm> (Environmental Ethics)

<http://daphne.palomar.edu/calenvironment/ethics.htm> (Environmental Ethics)

<http://daphne.palomar.edu/calenvironment/religion.htm>. (Religious perspectives on same)

<http://www.ecouncil.ac.cr/rio/> (United Nations World Commission)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The objective of this course is to expose students to some of the current concerns and developments in the areas of environment degradation and global warming, and of enduring environmental and religious ethics. Against this backdrop a selective sample of relevant religious perspectives and contexts will be examined selected from a wide variety of comparative Religious Studies and environmental literature. As a foundation for the religious matrix, a framework of typologies will be presented. These typologies classify world religions into four groups, known as the Abrahamic, Indian, South East Asian, and Traditional/Tribal religions. Utilizing both religious and scientific texts, a corpus of writings will be presented in order to assist students in an evaluation of humankind's perceived place within the context of nature and the environment. In addition to published texts, these ideas will be contextualized by reference to various accredited environmental websites.

**COURSE PEDAGOGY:**

Utilizing an inquiry and blended learning approach which incorporates in-class and Blackboard forum, and web-based resources, students will engage in a process of learning in interaction with the professor, various experts, and student peers. The essential elements of self-directed study and research will also be integral components within this course.

The course is designed along the following guidelines:

- 1) Traditional instruction to provide an academic foundation for research;

- 2) Group discussions;
- 3) Self-directed research through web-based and traditional library facilities;
- 4) Presentations by two experts involved in environmental and related business issues;
- 5) Pertinent video documentaries;
- 6) Blackboard discussion site;
- 7) Possible publication of student work to off-campus (U of A) website.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will develop a number of the skills identified in the University of Calgary statement of learning outcomes. These include communication, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, computer literacy, writing competency, information retrieval, and group interaction.

N.B. It is important to note that the attainment of any learning endeavour requires that students regularly attend classes, read the required material, and complete all course work.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

<b>June 1</b>	Blackboard question  500 words.  Based on materials and topics discussed.	10%
<b>June 15</b>	Video documentary review Five or six pages, double spaced.	15%
<b>June 29</b>	Paper - Eight pages(approximately 2500 words), plus one page bibliography Topics to be discussed in class CHICAGO STYLE FOR PAPER MANDATORY. One inch margins. Bibliography - six text sources or scholarly journals, course websites. Cover page (name, student ID, course number, title)	35%
<b>Registrar's Office Scheduled Exam (TBA)</b>		40%

### GRADING:

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. Following the final examination, a letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

A+	100 – 96	A	95 – 90	A-	89 – 85
B+	84 – 80	B	79 – 75	B-	74 – 70
C+	69 – 65	C	64 – 60	C-	59 – 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

### Academic Honesty:

*Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as*

***plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar. If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor.***

Academic Accommodation:

If you are a student with a disability who requires academic accommodation and you have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. Once registered, please discuss any upcoming tests/examinations with the instructor **two weeks** before the scheduled date.

Gnosis:

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: [gnosis@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gnosis@ucalgary.ca) or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

**PROPOSED COURSE SCHEDULE:**

NOTE: Although all material and projects identified will definitely be covered during the course, students should note that this schedule provides only a basic outline and reading plan. Some of its contents may be subject to slight variance due to learning requirements and time constraints.

MAY 16-18	<p>Introduction – review of the issues. Who does nature ‘belong’ to?  Global issues, right to life, poverty, exploitation.  Handout – Bruntland Commission.  The human centred argument versus the life centred argument.  Introduction to “Invoking the Spirit” and World Watch website.  In class review of related environmental topics:  <a href="http://www.worldwatch.org/topics/energy/climate/">http://www.worldwatch.org/topics/energy/climate/</a></p>
23-25	<p>Deep Ecology versus anthropocentric view.  Exploitation, manipulation, usage.  Origins and principles of mechanical/Cartesian thought.  “Material at Man’s Disposal.”  Extracts from “Animal Underworld,” by Alan Green.  Perspectives on use/misuse based on individual /group approach.  Discussion on John Muir’s work accessed through:  <a href="http://daphne.palomar.edu/calenvironment/ethics">http://daphne.palomar.edu/calenvironment/ethics</a>.</p>
MAY 30 - JUNE 1	<p><b>BLACKBOARD FORUM QUESTION:</b>  <b>“Does nature exist for and by itself or merely for our use?”</b></p>
<i>Invoking the Spirit</i> pp 5-28	<p>Introduction to religious cosmologies.  The four typologies. Overview of basic religious perspectives on nature.  Strengths and weaknesses within each religious system.</p>

**BLACKBOARD FORUM RESPONSE TO BE SUBMITTED**

Video “God’s Earth: A Call for Environmental Stewardship.”

Video guidelines.

Discussion

Class handouts – group discussion.

What constitutes ‘humankind’s’ right/might?

<http://www.worldwatch.org/press/news/2003/03/10/>

JUNE 6-8

IS 28-51

Debunking romantic myths. Debunking perceptions of ‘sacralized’ dominance.

Reality of the ‘sacred web’ – reality of the biotic web.

Ideas, concepts raised by *Invoking the Spirit*.

Examples of religious principles and theologies.

The modern manipulation of nature.

Ethical issues based on dominance.

The secular/scientific vision of nature and the future.

Examples from genetic engineering and GMO research.

13-15

**VIDEO REVIEW TO BE SUBMITTED**

Ecological spirituality - nature for its own sake.

The holistic perspective. Ideas from Muir, Leopold, Dubois, McFague, Radford Ruether.

Ecotheology - religious perspectives: The world as organic, Gaia, reciprocity between humans and animals, the interdependence of life.

The Body of God.

Class handouts

20-22

Continuation of ecotheology.

Working with nature – concepts of stewardship, the ‘holy place.’ rapport with animals, and harmonious change

The concept of inherent worth.

What does it mean to be human?

Scientific perspectives.

Religious perspectives

Can we survive ‘merely’ as human organisms?

Video (Suzuki)

Continuation of the concept of inherent worth.

Biology and genes.

Religion and ethics.

Interior self-awareness.

Religious perspectives on humans as moral agents and moral subjects.

27-29

Anthropocentric selfishness versus the inherent worth of non-human life forms.

A biocentric outlook based on respect and reverence.

The basic standards of virtue – from a religious perspective. Class handout.

The control of nature as a 'commodity' – the role and responsibility of homo sapiens in business, science and life process.

Ethical approaches?

Video (Thirst)

**RESEARCH PAPER TO BE HANDED IN.**