

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
 FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
 DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

06/01/06

WINTER SEMESTER, 2006  
 RELIGIOUS STUDIES 397 L95 - RELIGION AND SCIENCE  
 Jan. 14, 21, 28, Feb. 4, 11, Mar. 4, 11, 25  
 Registrar scheduled final exam April 8

INSTRUCTOR: Anne White, Ph.D.  
 COURSE TIME AND DAYS: 12 noon – 4 p.m. Saturday  
 OFFICE: SS 1322  
 OFFICE HOURS: By appointment  
 TELEPHONE: 220-3285 or 220-5886 (dept. office)  
 E-MAIL ADDRESSES: 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://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 within 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 an integral component 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.

#### CORE COMPETENCIES:

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:

Jan. 21	Blackboard question One page, single spaced. Based on materials and topics discussed.	5%
Feb. 11	Video documentary review Five or six pages, double spaced.	15%
Mar. 4	Blackboard question One page, single spaced. Based on materials and topics discussed.	5%
Mar. 25	Paper - Eight pages, plus one page bibliography Topics to be discussed in class CHICAGO STYLE FOR PAPER Eight pages, double spaced, one inch margins. Bibliography – six text sources, course websites. Cover page (name, student ID, course number, title).	35%
Registrar's Exam April 8		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.

**Withdrawing from courses:**

Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the Academic Schedule of the current University Calendar.

**Recording of lectures:**

Recording any part of any lectures in any form must be first approved by the instructor in writing and is for individual private study only. See current Calendar, Tape recording of Lectures.

**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.

JANUARY

14

.Introduction – review of the issues. Who does nature 'belong' to?  
 Global issues, right to life, poverty, exploitation.  
 Handout – Bruntland Commission.  
 Introduction to "Invoking the Spirit" and World Watch website.  
 In class review of related environmental topics:  
<http://www.worldwatch.org/topics/energy/climate/>  
 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:  
<http://daphne.palomar.edu/calenvironment/ethics>.

BLACKBOARD FORUM QUESTION:

"Does nature exist for and by itself or merely for our use?"

21

Invoking the Spirit  
 pp 5-20

Introduction to religious cosmologies.  
 The four typologies. Overview of basic religious perspectives on nature.  
 Strengths and weaknesses within each religious system.  
 BLACKBOARD FORUM RESPONSE TO BE SUBMITTED

28

Video "God's Earth: A Call for Environmental Stewardship."  
 IS pp 21-28                      Video guidelines.  
 Discussion  
 Class handouts – group discussion  
 What constitutes 'humankind's' right/might?  
<http://www.worldwatch.org/press/news/2003/03/10/>

FEBRUARY

4

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.

11

VIDEO REVIEW TO BE HANDED IN.  
 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.

MARCH

4

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 for March 25  
BLACKBOARD FORUM QUESTION:  
“What are some of the differences in approach between the secular/scientific and the holistic perspectives?”

11

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?  
Suzuki video

25

RESEARCH PAPER TO BE HANDED IN.  
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.  
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.  
Video

APRIL

8

REGISTRAR FINAL EXAM