**RS 370: Religion and Ecology**

**Dr. Amanda Baugh**

**California State University, Northridge**

**Spring 2017**

Class meetings: M/W 11:00-12:15

Sierra Hall 314

Office Hours: M/W 12:30-2:00

Santa Susana 237

[Amand.Baugh@csun.edu](mailto:Amand.Baugh@csun.edu)

818-677-4733



The June 2015 release of *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*, was a groundbreaking moment in the history of religion and the environment. In this encyclical letter (a church teaching document), Pope Francis called on “every person living on this planet” to reflect on the troubling state of the earth, “our common home.”

Some observers from environmental organizations, religious groups, and media outlets celebrated *Laudato Si* as an important voice advancing a religious imperative to protect God’s Creation, while others protested that the encyclical espoused troubling political outlooks and Pope Francis was overstepping the boundary between Church and State. But largely missing from these conversations was the recognition that when Pope Francis advanced a religious and moral imperative to protect the earth, he was building on a long history of teachings in which others have called on the faithful to protect the earth. To what extent have any of these teachings mattered?

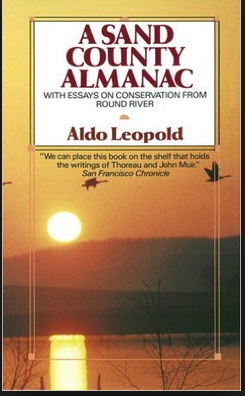
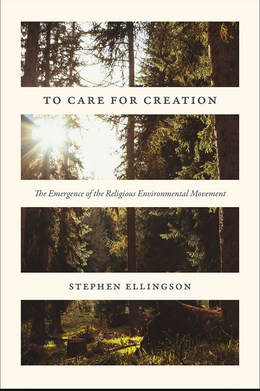
This course is organized around a central research question that seeks to find that out. Throughout the semester we will ask: **How has religion influenced human relationships with nature and the environment, both positively and negatively, among American religious communities?** In what ways do considerations of gender, race, ethnicity, class, history, and cultural context factor into those relationships in particular communities, in particular places and times? Throughout the semester, you will develop knowledge and skills necessary to answer those questions based on a series of historical and contemporary case studies. As you consider the ways in which some religious communities have thought about environmental issues in their own particular contexts, you will also have the opportunity to reflect on the role of sustainability in your own life.

***This course is included in the GE Principles of Sustainability Path.***

Required Texts

All course texts are available for purchase through the Matador Bookstore, and you are encouraged to find cheaper copies online. Required material also is available for 2-hour checkout at the Reserve Desk of the Oviatt Library. Please note that you must be able to access course material during class.

* Stephen Ellingson, *To Care for Creation*
* Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*
* Evan Berry, *Devoted to Nature*
* Additional articles available on Moodle – [M]



**Classmate contact information**: Please get the name and email address of some classmates so you can call on these classmates for help if you miss a class or have a simple question.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance

You are expected to attend every class and arrive on time, a professional courtesy to both fellow students and the professor. Your first two absences are automatically “excused.” Each additional absence will result in a loss of one percentage point from your final grade. Excessive absences will also negatively impact your participation grade.

Email Etiquette



I am happy to communicate with you via email and will do my best to respond within 24 hours during the week. Messages sent over the weekend will be read on Mondays.

In the subject line please indicate the content of the email (NOT “urgent”) and begin your message in the following manner:

Dear Dr. Baugh,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am in your RS 370 class.

*GRADES*

Your final grade will be calculated based on the following assignments

1. **Class preparation and participation (10%) –** This includes regular attendance and participating in class discussions. Strong class participation means speaking in an informed way about the readings, synthesizing the comments of others and listening with respect and attention to the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of your peers.
2. **“Yes I Did the Reading” (YIDTR) Assignments (10%)** Careful examination of assigned readings is essential for this discussion-based course, so you will be held accountable for completion of reading assignments each week. YIDTR assignments will generally consist of reading questions to be completed in advance and posted to Moodle. Late assignments cannot be accepted, but the lowest two YIDTR grades will be dropped.
3. **Ecological Footprint Journal (15%) –** Throughout the semester you will complete a series of six exercises and writing assignments designed to help you think about the role of sustainability in your own life. Instructions will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle. There will be intermediate deadlines for each journal entry, and you will submit the complete journal toward the end of the semester. Late assignments (for individual entries) cannot be accepted, but you are required to complete only five of the six journal entries.
4. **Research Project Contribution (10%)** – During the semester you will serve as a research assistant for Dr. Baugh’s research project dealing with Catholic attitudes toward nature. TWICE during the semester you must complete one of the two following tasks: help administer a focus group, or transcribe 10 minutes of a primary source recording (such as focus group or public talk). Specific details and deadlines will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle. You must complete at least one task before the first exam, and a second one before the second exam.
5. **Group Project and Presentation (15%) –** In the second half of the semester you will analyze primary source documents dealing with the class research project and create a formal presentation to share your results. Details will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle.
6. **Exams (40%) ­–** There will be a two seated exams during the semester. They will consist of short answer and essay questions. Details will be discussed in class.

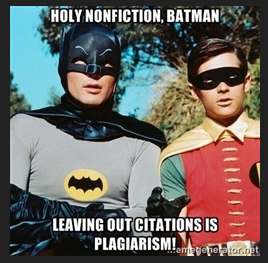
Grade Range

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 95-100% = A | 74-76% = C |
| 90-94% = A- | 70-73% = C- |
| 87-89% = B+ | 67-69% = D+ |
| 84-86% = B | 64-66% = D |
| 80-83% = B- | 60-63 % = D- |
| 77-79% = C+ | 59% and below = F |

Plagiarism/Cheating

The CSUN Religious Studies Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence, honesty, and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating or helping someone else cheat will receive an F on the assignment and will be subject to disciplinary action such as suspension or expulsion.

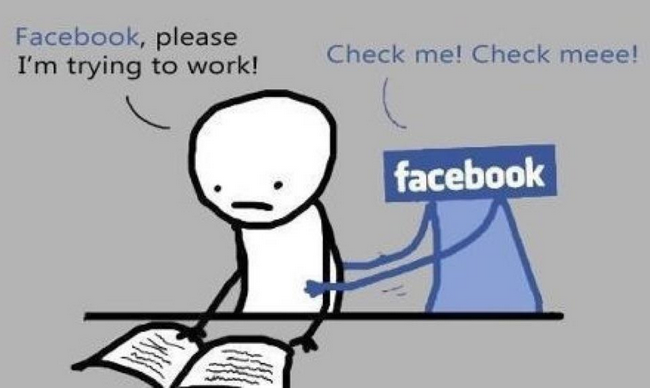
For more information of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 614-615 of the 2010-2012 CSUN catalog. **Remember, too, that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws**. Passing off this information as your own is plagiarism and carries the penalties outlined above.



Accommodation for disabilities

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611. If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations with me, please contact me to set up an appointment.

Policy on electronics in the classroom

If you wish to use an electronic device for note taking or to access reading assignments **you must sit in the first three rows of the classroom.** Texting, playing games, checking email, shopping, preparing for other classes, or any other distractions during class time are strictly prohibited. Engaging in these activities will negatively impact your grade and result in a revocation of your computer privileges for the rest of the semester.

**Policy on Late Submissions**

I encourage you to plan ahead and submit all assignments on time. However, *one time* during the semester you may take advantage of a two-day grace period, and submit any assignment up to two days late without penalty. If you are still having trouble completing the assignment after two days, you are required to meet with me to discuss your work so far and develop a plan for completing it.

Please note that this policy does not apply to YIDTR assignments. YIDTR assignments are designed to ensure that students complete the reading *before* class, so I cannot accept late submissions. However, your lowest two YIDTR grades will be dropped.

**RS 370 Class Schedule\***

\*Reading and written assignments are subject to revision as needed, and Moodle will contain the most detailed, accurate, and up-to-date schedule. I will announce all revisions in class and do my best to make sure that everyone knows about revisions. If you miss class, you must nevertheless submit assignments according to any revisions that we make to the schedule.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Date** | **Reading** | **Assignment** |
|  |  | Introductions and Key Concepts |  |
| 1 | Jan 23, 25 | Hawken, “The Power of Environmental Activism”  “Sustainability” Video |  |
| 2 | Jan 30,  Feb 1 | Taylor, “Green Ceiling”  “Sustainability” | EFJ #1 |
| 3 | Feb 6, 8 | Nye, “Religion: The Basics”  Hall, “Lived Religion”  “Religion and Ecology” overview |  |
|  |  | Option #1: Religion Detract from Environmental Sustainability |  |
| 4 | Feb 13, 15 | White, “Historic Roots”  *Hebrew Bible* (excerpts) |  |
| 5 | Feb 20, 22 | “Faithful Skeptics” | EFJ #2 |
|  |  | Option #2: Religion Supports Environmental Sustainability |  |
| 6 | Feb 27, Mar 1 | *Laudato Si* (excerpts)  *To Care for Creation* |  |
| 7 | Mar 6, 8 | *To Care for Creation* | EFJ #3 |
| 8 | Mar 13, 15 | MIDTERM WEEK | EXAM #1  Research Assistant #1 Due |
| 9 | Mar 20, 22 | HAPPY SPRING BREAK!! |  |
|  |  | Option #3: Environmental Sustainability *is* Religion |  |
| 10 | Mar 27, 29 | *Sand County Almanac* |  |
| 11 | Apr 3, 5 | Naess, “Deep Ecology”  Taylor, “Earth First!” | EFJ #4 |
|  |  | Option #4: Religion *Informs* Environmentalism |  |
| 12 | Apr 10, 12 | *Devoted to Nature* |  |
| 13 | Apr 17, 19 | *Devoted to Nature* | EFJ #5 |
|  |  | Religion, Environment, and Justice |  |
| 14 | Apr 24, 26 | Bullard, D. Taylor, Riley | Research Assistant #2 Due |
| 15 | May 1, 3 | Work with transcripts |  |
| 16 | May 8, 10 | Wrapping Up | Exam #2 |
|  | May 17 | Final Presentations will take place during our scheduled final exam time: Wed May 17, 10:15 AM -12:15 PM |  |

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Student Learning Objectives for RS 370

Students who complete this course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the major foundational writings of the field of religion and ecology.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of sustainability and understand how concepts of sustainability are connected to issues of social justice, the environment, and the economy at local, regional, and global levels.
3. Describe and analyze the teachings of at least two major religious traditions as they pertain to sustainability and environmental ethics, such as the ethics of reproduction, land usage, animal rights, and waste disposal. These will be examined with particular attention to how sacred texts and central myths are interpreted.
4. Describe and analyze the teachings of at least one religious outlook outside the mainstream – such as new “green” theologies, nature mysticism, and radical environmentalism – as they pertain to sustainability issues and the natural environment.
5. Explain how issues of gender, race, and class contribute to religious outlooks and practices in general and specifically how in regard to matters connected to environmental sustainability.
6. Critically analyze how their own religion/worldview addresses ecological issues at the local, regional, and global levels.

GE Student Learning Outcomes

Goal: Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.

Students will:

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and  expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures;
2. Analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and  expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;
3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a  demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;
4. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative  development within the arts and humanities;
5. Use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression,  literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within  which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;
6. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work  was created or a tradition emerged.

Principles of Sustainability Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to define sustainability and understand how concepts of sustainability are connected to issues of social justice, the environment, and the economy at local, regional, and global levels.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of key concepts related to the study of sustainability, including planetary carrying capacity, climate change, and ecological footprint.
3. Students will be able to explain how sustainability relates to their lives and their values, and how their actions impact issues of sustainability at the individual, and at local, regional, and global levels.

Writing Intensive (GE Designation WI)

Goal: Students will develop their abilities to express themselves and the knowledge they have obtained through practicing various forms of writing within different disciplinary contexts. Writing intensive courses will build upon the skills gained in the Analytical Reading and Expository Writing section of Basic Skills. In each WI course students will be required to complete writing assignments totaling a minimum of 2500 words.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop and clearly define their ideas through writing;
2. Ethically integrate sources of various kinds into their writing;
3. Compose texts through drafting, revising, and completing a finished product;
4. Express themselves through their writing by posing questions, making original claims, and coherently structuring complex ideas;
5. Revise their writing for greater cogency and clarity;
6. Utilize adopted communication modes and documentation styles of specific disciplines (MLA, APA, Chicago, CBE, etc) where appropriate.