

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
WINTER 2009

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES 417.05 L01  
*ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN ECO-THEOLOGY*

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<b>INSTRUCTOR:</b>	Anne White, Ph.D.
<b>COURSE TIME AND DAYS:</b>	W 9:00 – 11:50 am
<b>OFFICE:</b>	SS 1322
<b>OFFICE HOURS:</b>	M 11:30 am – 12:30 pm
<b>TELEPHONE:</b>	(403) 220-3285 or 220-5886 (main office)
<b>E-MAIL ADDRESS:</b>	<a href="mailto:awhite@ucalgary.ca">awhite@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>WEBSITE ADDRESS:</b>	Blackboard

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**Required Texts:**

R. Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God*, Harper Collins, 1989.  
Roger S. Gottlieb, *This Sacred Earth*, Routledge, 2004.

**Suggested Reading (not mandatory):**

Arne Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, Counterpoint, Berkley, 2008.  
Laurel Kearns, Catherine Keller, eds., *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2007.  
Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *A Greener Faith*, Oxford University Press, 2006.  
Michael Boylan, *Environmental Ethics*, Prentice Hall, 2001

**Course Description:**

Spiritual sensitivity towards the environment has a long tradition within the world's religions. This continuous link with the past through the spiritual perception of nature and its life forms has endured throughout religious and artistic perspectives. It has often been a tenacious and volatile testimony in the face of many centuries of neglect and dismissal by an increasingly secular, myopic society. This rejection of ancient insight has led to an unbalanced and sterile view of physical reality and meaning expressed in and through the environment. Initially, eco-theology, which highlights the whole "household" of God's creation, began as a late twentieth-century Christian feminist movement. However, its ideas concerning liberation of the oppressed environment quickly developed into a broader ecumenical movement with representation made by many religions. This cosmology (way of perceiving the world) identifies the decimation of the biotic web within the context of the human propensity to destroy through exploitation and domination, but seeks to offer a positive, life-affirming spiritual alternative.

Through lectures, readings, discussions, research, documentary, and group presentations, this course will trace the historical antecedents of eco-theology and its development into the twenty-first century. In addition to this, the material will function to identify developing ideas and issues concerning our planet. By providing scholarly analysis of pertinent texts, this course will seek to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the potential for empowerment that many various religious/spiritual perspectives can offer in re-establishing a balanced approach to the sacred within the environment.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Students will develop a number of the skills identified in the University of Calgary statement of learning outcomes. These include: communication, thinking, ethical reasoning, computer literacy, information retrieval, and group effectiveness.
- The assigned readings, lecture material and methodology within the course should develop a student's ability to think critically (i.e. judge, reflect, and analyze); web notes will further provide dissemination of information and enhance computer skills; preparation for examinations should foster the development of information retrieval and writing competency.
- It is important to remember that the attainment of any learning endeavour requires that students **regularly attend lectures**, read the required material, and complete all course work.

### **Course Requirements:**

<b>Feb. 25</b>	<b>Analysis of documentary, together with identification of specific issues, themes and challenges. Guidelines posted on Blackboard.</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Mar. 25</b>	<b>- Essay – 10 pages (3000 words), plus 1 page bibliography, minimum six sources – four textbook and two from academic journals. Double spaced CHICAGO STYLE FORMAT ONLY</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Apr. 1 and 15</b>	<b>Individual class presentations – Power Point – 15 minutes duration.</b>	<b>20%</b>

**\*There will be no Registrar-scheduled Final Exam for this course.\***

**NOTE:** Missed assignments must be accompanied by a medical certificate, or in the case of domestic affliction, a note from a counsellor. The instructor must receive notification within 24 hours of the missed assignment by telephone or e-mail.

**Grading:**

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. 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.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**NOTE:** All subjects will be covered but scheduling may vary slightly due to class discussions.

**Abbreviations:** *Gaia and God (GG)*  
*This Sacred Earth (TSE)*

**JANUARY**

**14**  
**GG**  
**Intro and Chap. 1-2**  
**Webnotes**

Roots of ecotheology aka ecofeminism.  
Ecotheology and antecedents.  
Creation – new ways of ‘seeing’.  
Discussion of research projects:  
Discussion of themes selected from TSE

**21**  
**GG Chaps. 3-4**

Destruction – new and improved power.  
What is power? Domination = misuse.  
Rejecting boundaries and control.

**28**

**VIEW DOCUMENTARY – Vandana Shiva**  
**BULLSHIT Generic ID: XDV-482**  
**Instructions will be posted on Blackboard.**  
Identifying themes within ecofeminist perspectives

**FEBRUARY**

**4**  
**GG Chaps. 5, 6, 7**

Domination and deceit.

	Sin, alienation, evil. Patriarchy as the only system. Systems of domination.
<b>11</b> <b>GG Chaps. 8, 9, 10</b>	Healing the world. Covental and sacramental traditions. Creating a healed world – spirituality and politics
<b>25</b> <b>TSE – pp 21-46</b>	<b>REVIEW TO BE HANDED IN.</b> The Moment of Seeing Early environmentalist concepts
<b>MARCH</b>	
<b>4</b> <b>TSE – pp 51 – 110</b>	Traditional Views
<b>11</b> <b>TSE – pp 113- 186</b>	Traditional Views
<b>18</b> <b>TSE - pp 383-428</b>	Ecofeminist Spirituality
<b>25</b> <b>TSE – pp 428-466</b>	<b>RESEARCH PAPER TO BE HANDED IN</b>  Ecofeminist Spirituality
<b>APRIL</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Presentations – 15 minutes each – overview of Individual research paper. Discussion and questions</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Presentations – 15 minutes each – overview of Individual research paper. Discussion and questions.</b>
<b>15</b> <b>TSE –</b> <b>Pp 568, 688,</b> <b>721/</b>	Ecology, Religion, and Society Social Justice