

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
FALL SEMESTER, 2008
RELS 367.01 L01
WESTERN RELIGIONS AND ECOLOGY

INSTRUCTOR: Anne White, Ph.D.
COURSE TIME AND DAYS: R 18:00- 20:50
OFFICE: SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS: TR 14:00 – 15:00
TELEPHONE: (403) 220-3285 or (403) 220-5886
E-MAIL ADDRESS: awhite@ucalgary.ca
WEBSITE ADDRESS: Blackboard

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Ellen Bernstein, *The Splendor of Creation: A Biblical Ecology*, The Pilgrim Press, 2005.
Ian Bradley, *God is Green: Ecology for Christians*, Doubleday, 1990.
Richard C. Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*, One World, 2006.
Class handouts.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will address issues of environmental ethics and place them within the context of the three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Through the reading of specific modern texts (short required textbooks), three website journals from the Harvard Forum of Religion and Ecology, and the relevant three sources of scripture, the student will be able to understand how each religion approaches the natural world. There will be opportunity to critique and research various teachings and approaches found within each religious tradition.

As all three of the Abrahamic religions have been severely criticized for their lack of affinity with nature, this area of study will prove invaluable in dispelling some of the basic misconceptions about these traditions. The corpus of material analyzed will present both positive and negative aspects of the three traditions in their understanding of what it means to be a human entity within the biotic web.

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

To enable students to organize, evaluate, and understand various Abrahamic approaches to humankind's place within ecology.

SELF DIRECTED STUDY:

Students are encouraged to read web notes and the assigned pages of text before each lecture, and come prepared to ask questions.

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

October 30 th	Documentary review Five pages, double spaced, one inch margins, Plus cover page	20%
December 4 th	Research essay. Students are required to identify (i) three commonalities between the three faith traditions pertaining to any of the topics covered in the course material and (ii) discuss how the religions individually explain these concepts. Ten pages, double spaced, one inch margins. CHICAGO STYLE FOR PAPER (MANDATORY) Cover page (name, student ID, course number and title of paper.	40%
Registrar's scheduled exam		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 (403) 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 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.

SEPTEMBER**INTRODUCTION**

11

Introduction to the Abrahamic Commonalities.
Creation.
Restoration, stewardship, protection, justice, compassion, respect.
Prohibition against theft.

JUDAISM

18 - 25

Chaps. 1-3
Webnotes

Splendor of Creation

Creation, soul, air, water, earth, planets and time, nature, the human placement in nature.

OCTOBER

2 – 9

Chaps. 4-7

Creatures and their environment; time and its usages.
The divine imperative
The glory of the wild – the fear of the wild.
The gift of humility and reverence.
Nurture and balance.

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**View documentary for video review:
DEAD AHEAD: EXXON
VALDEZ DISASTER - XMV5583101
Review guidelines will be posted.**

CHRISTIANITY**23 - 30**

Chaps. 1-3

God is Green

God's concern for all creation.
The pain of alienation – the Fall of the human race.
Hope – now and in the future.

30**Video review to be handed in.****NOVEMBER****6-13**

Chaps. 4-5

The Cosmic Christ – Creator, Redeemer
and sustainer.
Human participation in the here and now.
Stewardship and the Last Judgment.
Losing and finding creation in Christian
tradition. Lynn White's critique.

Webnotes

ISLAM**20 – 27**

Chaps 1-4, 7

Animals in Islamic Tradition

Animals in Islamic law; the basis for
wildlife conservation.
The Parrot Book; the Conference of
the Birds; Jalal al-din Rumi.
The issue of dogs – unclean animals.

DECEMBER**4**Harvard material
Webnotes

Environment and Social Justice; the
Environmental Crisis of our Time: a Muslim
Response; the Garden as Metaphor for
Paradise.

Research paper to be handed in.