

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
SPRING SEMESTER, 2008
RELS. 367.01 L20
WESTERN RELIGIONS AND ECOLOGY

INSTRUCTOR: Anne White, Ph.D.
COURSE TIME AND DAYS: TR 14:00-16:45
OFFICE: SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS: By appointment.
TELEPHONE: 220-3285 or 220-5886 (main office)
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

June 2	- Written response 750 words.	20
June 16	- Written response 750 words	20
June 30	- Written response 750 words	20
June 24	- Essay based on documentary Ten pages, double spaced, one inch margins. CHICAGO STYLE FOR PAPER (MANDATORY) Cover page (name, student ID, course number and title	40

** There will be no Registrar scheduled final exam in this course.*

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 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**JUDAISM****15 - 20**

Splendor of Creation
Webnotes

Introduction to the Abrahamics
Creation, soul, air, water, earth,
planets and time, nature, the human
place in nature.

22 - 27

Harvard material
Webnotes

The doctrine of creation and the idea
of nature.
Reverence and responsibility.

**View documentary DEAD AHEAD: EXXON
VALDEZ DISASTER - XMV5583101**

Written response due June 2 (digital mailbox drop off)

CHRISTIANITY

29 - JUNE 3

God is Green
Webnotes

God's concern for all creation; the dance of creation; the fall of nature; the Cosmic Christ; the role of human beings.

5

READING DAY

10 - 12

Harvard material
Webnotes.

Losing and finding creation in Christian tradition. Lynn White's critique.
A Christian Chinese version of ecotheology.

Written response due June 16 (digital mailbox drop off)

ISLAM

17 - 19

Animals in Islamic
Tradition
Webnotes

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

JUNE 24

Essay to be handed in.

24 - 26

Harvard material
Webnotes

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

Written response due June 30 (digital mailbox drop off)