

REL/PHIL 3540 A
ECOLOGY AND WORLD RELIGIONS
Valdosta State University
Spring 2010
TR 2:00-3:15 pm, West Hall 147

INSTRUCTOR: Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán y Fuentes, Ph.D.

OFFICE: Ashley Hall 111

OFFICE HOURS: MTWRF 10-10:50 am, or by appointment

PHONE: (229) 333-5975

E-mail: cserranpagan@valdosta.edu

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to add historical and cross-cultural depth to the current discussion of ecology, philosophy, spirituality and religion. During the first half of the semester we explore how Eastern (Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shinto) and Western (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) religious traditions address the question of the environment. Additionally we study how indigenous cultures (especially Native Americans, Aborigines, and shamanistic ones) can help us better understand our relationship with other sentient and non-sentient beings, and how to live in harmony with Mother Nature. Moreover, we discuss modern and contemporary ecological philosophies (H. Thoreau, J. Muir, A. Leopold, M. Fox, T. Berry, H. Salt, W. Berry, G. Snyder and B. Lopez) and green movements (Deep Ecology, Greenpeace, Earth First! and Eco-Feminism).

The second half of the semester is dedicated to an in-depth study of two seminal eco-feminist thinkers, Rosemary Ruether and Sallie McFague.

II. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Demonstrate first-hand knowledge of Eastern and Western philosophical and religious thinking on the environment, their classic texts, and their cultural impact in our societies. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 6, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Philosophy Track 1, 3; Religious Studies Track 1--See pp. 155-156 in the Catalog)**
2. Explain and discuss major Eastern and Western philosophical and religious themes and motifs on the environment. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 6); Department Educational Outcomes (Philosophy Track 1, 3; Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3)**
3. Collect data and cite good examples of similarities and differences between Eastern and Western worldviews on the interface between ecology and spirituality. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 3, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Philosophy Track 1, 3, 4; Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3, 4)**
4. Critically address the major philosophical problems encountered in the academic study of

religion, especially by taking greater responsibility for one's own learning through the demonstration of curiosity, motivation, and risk-taking characteristics. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Philosophy Track 2, 3; Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3)**

5. Utilize information technology to do research, specifically the Internet, and express themselves clearly, logically, and precisely in writing and in speaking. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (3, 4, 7; Department Educational Outcomes (Philosophy Track 2, 4; Religious Studies Track 2, 4)**

6. Analyze and synthesize a broad range of material (including ability to make meaningful connections between various academic disciplines). **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Philosophy Track 1, 4; Religious Studies Track 2, 3)**

7. Produce an original work based on their ability to formulate a problem, develop a plan of action, and prove or disprove a hypothesis. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Philosophy Track 1, 2, 3, 4; Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3, 4)**

III. REQUIRED TEXTS

Kinsley, David. *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective*.

Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995. Print.

McFague, Sallie. *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming*.

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008. Print.

Ruether, Rosemary R. *Gaia & God: An EcoFeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. New York:

HarperCollins, 1994. Print.

IV. RECOMMENDED READINGS

Foltz, Richard C., ed. *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment: A Global Anthology*.

Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 2003. Print.

Gardner, Gary T. *Inspiring Progress: Religions' Contributions to Sustainable Development*. New

York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006. Print.

Hessel, Dieter T. "Christianity and Ecology: Wholeness, Respect, Justice and Sustainability."

Forum on Religion and Ecology. Web. 9 Jan. 2009.

<http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/christianity/index.html>.

McFague, Sallie. *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*.

Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1991. Print.

---. *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Print.

Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*. New York: A

New York Review Book, 1975. Print.

Tobias, Michael, ed. *Deep Ecology*. San Marcos, California: Avant Books, 1988. Print.

Tucker, Mary Evelyn. *Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter their Ecological Phase*. Chicago: Open

Court, 2002. Print.

White, Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." *This Sacred Earth: Religion,*

Nature, Environment. Ed. Roger S. Gottlieb. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Active class participation and attendance are mandatory (1)	20%
One oral presentation (20% individual presentation) (2)	20%
Final reflection paper (20%) (3)*See <u>Proposal Guidelines at the end</u> (20%)	40%
Journals (20%) (4)	20%

(1) **Total attendance** grade will automatically drop **twenty** points if you miss more than one week of classes. Afterwards the grade will drop **ten** points for each additional absence. VSU policy of attendance states, "**A student who misses more than 20% of the scheduled classes of a course will be subject to receiving a failing grade in the course**" (See in the Undergraduate Catalog pp. 84-85). I will admit excused absences only when athletes bring ahead of time a written notice from their coach; when a student is ill he or she will have to provide doctor's name, phone number, and a signed receipt from the doctor; or when a student brings a justification note from a supervisor explaining why he or she was absent from my class. **You will lose 1 point for each tardiness**. You are responsible for all the material covered in class during your absence. **You will get an "F" grade (0) on any course material not submitted in time.** I highly recommend you complete and turn any academic task before the deadline if you are planning to miss a class. **I will not accept late papers under any circumstances.** You will submit your paper at the beginning of class.

(2) **Individual (20%) oral presentation** will be graded according to the following:

creativity (use visuals like posters and/or power-point presentations, and play different character roles);

accuracy (“be clear and concise”--state the facts and comment on them);

oral skills (keep eye contact with the whole class, avoid reading off notes, do not use verbal expressions like “um”);

well-cited sources (before you start your presentation make sure you bring to the professor a hard copy of your Works Cited--one copy per person--use MLA style and include **three** scholarly books [the Bible like other sacred texts are excluded from this list] and **one** internet source; late copies will not be accepted and the student may lose up to 20 pts.);

and **time limit** (max. 10 minutes for each individual oral presentation; loss of 1 point for each extra minute)

Once you are done with your presentations, invite the audience to ask you questions and to share their thoughts or comments with the whole class. Each student will evaluate the performance of his or her classmates. You will give presenters an overall grade and will provide a short list of comments explaining why you like or dislike their presentations and will assign a final grade (from F to A) based on the criteria listed above.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS: It is mandatory that each student meets with the professor in Ashley Hall 111 for getting the topic approved (write your topic in a paper and get a signature from me). The meeting should take place at least one week prior to their oral presentations. Be prepared. Do your research before coming to my office. Send me an electronic copy of your presentation to BlazeView and I will check it in my computer. I will not correct it but will give you suggestions on how to improve it. Make sure you rehearse before coming to class. Gather ideas together and put them into practice before the date of your presentation. Manage time wisely. Be well prepared and dress appropriately (you can use costumes). Avoid chewing gum. Bring objects (paintings, books, articles from journals) or anything that aids you to create the right atmosphere for your overall presentation. Check the equipment in class before your presentations. Make sure your power-point presentations are compatible with the computer’s program. **Remember the purpose of this oral presentation is not to give a chapter summary from the book but rather to focus on one specific topic that you are interested in doing research and go deeper into it. Be creative, informative, and entertaining. Share your passion with us. Be enthusiastic! Check with me if you need further help in finding out an interesting topic.**

(3) (*)**Reflection Paper Proposal:** 20% of the overall grade (papers due at the beginning of class--late papers will not be accepted).

Write in one (or 2) page/s [use both sides preferably rather than submitting two pages--for ecological reasons] a suggested **title**, a **thesis statement**, an **example** for each Eastern-Western comparison [one example for your similarity and one example for your difference], and **two** selected **quotations** to back up your examples [one for the similarity and one for the difference] using the proper citation in parenthesis. For instance, “. . . “ (Kinsley 111). Or if you have more

than one book by the same author then change the format to: “. . .” (Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion* 33). You should cite **four** sources (three from scholarly books--including our textbook--and one from a website) in the Works Cited. Follow the format below!

1) **Title**-For example, A Buddhist-Christian Look at Climate Change: The XIV Dalai Lama and Sallie McFague on Global Warming. Be creative and original!

2) **Thesis Statement**-Write in one or more paragraphs the purpose of your reflection paper. What are you trying to prove in your paper? Which Western and Eastern religions did you choose? Which is the topic that you are planning to write on? Why? Narrow down the topic. Be specific!

3) **Examples**-Give an example for each similarity and each difference on how an Eastern and a Western religious tradition deal with your researched topic in question.

3) **Sources**-AVOID PLAGIARISM!!! Make sure that you give proper credit to all your sources if you are quoting directly or paraphrasing from any text. Open parenthesis, name the author's last name (if there is no author's name cite the website, www.hinduism.com), and write the page number. Ex. “. . .” (Ruether 130). If you are quoting more than one page, use the following format: “. . .” (Ruether 130-131). Then include all your sources in the last page of your reflection paper as Works Cited. Use alphabetical order. Check the samples using the new MLA Handbook Manual Style in **Section IV**!

Final Reflection Paper: 20% of the overall grade (hard copy of papers due at the beginning of class--late papers will not be accepted). Also send an electronic copy of your paper to BlazeView before our last class meeting.

- A) Write a creative title and a thesis statement **at the beginning** of your paper explaining why you chose this topic and what you found interesting about it. One good paragraph will do it. Have a good conclusion **at the end** explaining what you have learned after doing research on your topic.
- B) Students will select **one** major environmental problem in the academic study of religion (for instance, the problem of global warming, animal rights, natural resources, AIDS, poverty, overpopulation, etc.--Be specific!) Find out **one** major similarity and **one** major difference between one Eastern (ex. Hinduism) and one Western (ex. Judaism) religious philosophical tradition based on your researched topic. Cite good examples and rational arguments to back up your opinions with scholarly sources throughout your paper. Avoid plagiarism. Document all your sources. Plagiarized assignments will receive a failing grade and will be reported to the Dean of Students. Check the link below this text for further information on academic dishonesty. (Please also see pp. 93-94 in the Undergraduate Catalog.)

<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>

All answers must be in print. Use MLA style. The maximum of pages allowed is **six**. Use pagination numbers (ex. Serrán-Pagán 1). Use double spaced. You are required to use the pronoun ‘I’ (such as “I think,” “I agree,” “I disagree”) in all your papers. Combine facts, personal input and scholarly sources throughout your reflection paper. Select at least **four** quotes and cite the sources in parentheses throughout your paper. For instance, “. . . .” (Ruether 112). Then cite at

least **four** complete sources (one from our textbook, two from scholarly books, and one from the internet) in the Works Cited page (on the back of each reflection paper).

You will lose **one** point for each mechanical error (grammar, spelling, and format).

FAQ's

How can I get an A in my final reflection paper?

An "A" reflection paper must 1) demonstrate mastery of the topic in question, 2) show ability to apply the insights and theoretical models discussed in class, 3) balance good critical-thinking skills ("write your thoughts on paper") with facts, 4) have few spelling and/or grammatical errors, and 5) cite all sources properly throughout paper using parentheses and having them at the end in your Works Cited page.

What is the minimum and the maximum number of pages in my reflection paper?

4 pages minimum and 6 pages maximum. The first page should include the introduction of your topic (thesis statement) and the history of the problem you are trying to tackle. The second and third pages should address the similarity (give an example with a quote and a source, and your personal input). The fourth and fifth pages should focus on the difference (give an example with a quote and a source, and your personal input). The sixth page should be the conclusion. Have a paragraph at the end indicating what was it the most interesting thing you have learned about your researched topic. Explain it in your own words.

Can I use "I" throughout the paper?

Yes, it is required to use the personal pronoun "I" because this is a reflection paper. I highly recommend to use expressions such as "I agree," "I disagree," "I think," "I believe," "It is my understanding," etc. In doing so, I can recognize quickly your own ideas. Do not wait until the end of your paper to state your own ideas. You may lose more than 10 pts.

Any other expectations?

An "A" paper must include 1) a good introduction and conclusion, 2) at least one good comparison (that is to say, find out a major similarity and a major difference between how Eastern and Western religious philosophies address a specific ecological problem in their respective traditions), and 3) page numbering (Ex. Serrán-Pagán 1). Also **DO NOT USE bold letters or underlining** in your title and in the Works Cited. Type your proposal and reflection papers. I will not accept handwriting papers!!! Use double spaced. Do not forget to check spelling!!! Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

(4) **Journals** (20%): Write one page journal for each assigned chapter/s. I will pick them up at the end of each week (use handwriting only for journals—check Course Calendar). Answer the following questions:

- A) Which part of the readings did you find the most problematic? Explain it in your own words. Use one quote and one source in parenthesis. For instance, "...” (Kinsley 111).
- B) Which part of the readings did you find the most enlightened and/or inspiring? Explain it in your own words. Use one quote and one source in parenthesis. For instance, "...” (Kinsley 99).

GRADING SCALE: A (100 to 90); B (89 to 80); C (79 to 70); D (69 to 60); and F (59 to 0)

SUGGESTED SYLLABUS INFORMATION FOR DEPARTMENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE PILOT PROJECT:

This course is part of a pilot project this semester, testing a new online Student Opinion of Instruction (SOI) form. Student evaluations are extremely important in helping faculty members plan and revise their courses. Rather than completing these evaluations during class time, students will need to access evaluation forms via BANNER and complete them in a period prior to the last day of classes. You will only complete evaluations online for the classes that are part of this pilot project; other classes may still require you to complete a Scranton form in class. Please take the time to complete this important evaluation (or opt out of providing an evaluation) during the designated period. If you do not do so, you will not be able to access the grade for this class.

SPECIAL NEEDS STATEMENT

Valdosta State University is an equal opportunity educational institution. It is not the intent of the institution to discriminate against any applicant for admission or any student or employee of the institution based on the sex, race, religion, color, national origin or handicap of the individual. It is the intent of the institution to comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent executive orders as well as Title XI in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in Room 1115 Nevins Hall. The phone numbers are (229) 245-2498 (voice) and (229) 219-1348 (tty).

VI. COURSE CALENDAR

Jan. 12--Introduction

Jan. 14--Watch *The 11th Hour*

Jan. 19--Read Kinsley's *Ecology and Religion* (ER)--Intro., Chapter 1 and 4--Native American Religion (pp. xiii-21 and pp. 42-50)

Jan. 21--Read ER--Chapter 2 and 3--Australian Religion and the Ainu (pp. 22-59)

Jan. 26--**First Presentation**--Choose from Ch. 1, 2, 3, and 4 (Traditional/Indigenous Cultures)

Jan. 28--Read ER--Chapter 5--Hinduism (pp. 53-67)

Feb. 2--Read ER--Chapter 6--Chinese Religions (pp. 68-83)

Feb. 4--Read ER--Chapter 7--Buddhism (pp. 84-98)

Feb. 9--**Second Presentation**--Choose from Ch. 5, 6 and 7 (Asian Traditions)

Feb. 11--Read ER--Chapter 8--Christianity as Ecologically Harmful (pp. 101-114)

Feb. 16--Read ER--Chapter 9--Christianity as Ecologically Responsible (pp. 115-124)

Feb. 18--**Third Presentation**--Choose from Ch. 8 and 9 (Christian Traditions)--

Feb. 23--Read ER--Chapter 10--Nature Disenchanted--The Modern View of Nature (pp. 125-140)

Feb. 25--Read ER--Chapter 11--Ecological Spirituality in Thoreau, Muir and Leopold (pp. 141-158)--**Reflection Paper Proposal DUE at the beginning of class**

Mar. 2--**Fourth Presentation**--Choose from Ch. 10 and 11 (Darwin, Thoreau, Muir, Leopold)

Mar. 4--Read ER--Chapter 12--Contemporary Ecotheology (pp. 161-177)

Mar. 9--**Fifth Presentation**--Choose from Ch. 12 (Granberg-Michaelson, Fox, Hall, Berry and McFague)

Mar. 11--Read ER--Chapter 13--Animal Rights and Ecological Ethics (pp. 178-183)

Mar. 23--Read ER--Chapter 14--Deep Ecology (pp. 184-192)

Mar. 25--**Sixth Presentation**--Choose from Ch. 13 and 14 (Salt, Singer, Naess, and Lovelock)

Mar. 30--Read ER--Chapter 15--Ecoactivism (pp. 193-202) and Chapter 17--Four Ecovisionaries (pp. 210-226)

Apr. 1--**Seventh Presentation**--Choose from Ch. 15 (Greenpeace and Earth First!) and Ch. 17 (Bookchin, Berry, Snyder, and Lopez)

Apr. 6--Read ER--Chapter 16--Ecofeminism (pp. 203-209) and read Ruether's Gaia & God (pp. 1-58)--Creation

Apr. 8--Read Ruether's G&G (pp. 61-111)--Destruction

Apr. 13--Read Ruether's G&G (pp. 115-201)--Domination

Apr. 15--Read Ruether's G&G (pp. 205-274)--Healing

Apr. 20--Read McFague's *A New Climate for Theology* (pp. 1-40)--Intro., Chapter 1 and 2—Climate Change and Global Warming

Apr. 22--Read NCT (pp. 43-80)--Chapter 3 and 4--Who are We? Who is God?

Apr. 27--Read NCT (pp. 143-176)--Chapter 8 and 9--Despair and Hope within Climate Change

Apr. 29--**Final Reflection Paper DUE at the beginning of class**