

# REL 2620 WAY OF THE EARTH

Fall 2017 Intensive Term 1

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Saturdays 10:00-2:00 (9/2/17-10/14/17)

Location-TBA

Three credit hours. This course explores the profound links between ecology and spirituality, between “Mother Nature” (Gaia concept) and conceptions of human/divine nature(s). The course aims to integrate perspectives on such topics as science and religion, the spirituality of indigenous peoples, ecofeminism, Creation Spirituality, and reverence for nature in the teachings of world religions. We will discuss issues of justice and ethics in different religious traditions concerning ecology and raise religious awareness. This course emphasizes critical thinking and written communication.

**Learning Objectives:** Student will be able to demonstrate

1. An ability to recognize and correct the tendency of Western dualistic thought to divide the world into static polarities such as mind and body, religion and science, culture and nature, care and justice. (PLO 4)
2. A broad understanding of how traditional and major world religions enrich our responsible world-care. (PLO 2)
3. The ability to communicate (both in writing and through oral presentation) an in-depth understanding of one particular danger to Earth and/or non-human creatures, the response offered by a particular religious community, and the specifically religious reasons for that response. (ILO 1,2, 4)

**Required Texts:** *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective* by David Kinsley; *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* by Elizabeth A. Johnson. **A copy of each text is on reserve at Gellert.**

**Attendance:** Intensive classes require a stringent absence policy since even one absence may significantly affect achievement of course learning objectives. With only 28 class contact hours as opposed to the traditional 45 contact hours, all class time is critical. A student who misses more than one class period or the equivalent (for accumulated hours) must withdraw from the class and will be assigned a failing grade for the class unless officially dropping the class. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate the drop or withdrawal. There are no exceptions.

**Average Student Workload Expectations:** Class time consists of 28 hours and students are expected to attend. Students are expected to engage in approximately 84 hours of out-of-class homework over the seven-week term, or approximately 12 hours per week. Course assignments are made in accordance with this expectation.

<b>Workload Distribution:</b> Hours in Class:	28 (Includes a 20-min lunch break. Yes, you may eat in class.)
Reading and Reflecting:	34 (16 hours reading, 18 hours writing six reflections)
Preparation for Quizzes	4
Written Assignments	32 (refers to your final research paper)
<u>Oral Presentation Prep.</u>	<u>14</u>
28 + 84 =	112

**Plagiarism Policy:** Plagiarism is a violation of NDNU’s code of student ethics and will not be tolerated by instructors. It is a form of intellectual dishonesty that involves the theft of another person’s ideas, language and/or written thought processes. One violation of the policy will result in a failing grade for the assignment; repeated or flagrant plagiarism may result in failure for the course or even dismissal from NDNU.

**Note: In addition to the above penalty, students who engage in plagiarism will lose eligibility for extra credit points.**

**Learning and Other Disabilities:** NDNU complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Students who have a disability that might affect academic performance are encouraged to confer with the instructor at the beginning of the semester and to contact Dr. Peggy Koshland Crane in the Program for Academic Support and Services (PASS) (650-508-3670; [mcrane@ndnu.edu](mailto:mcrane@ndnu.edu)). In order to receive accommodations, students must register with the PASS office.

**Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices:** As a courtesy to your instructor and class mates, please turn off phones during class. Use of computers/tablets in class must be focused on enriching your participation in this course.

**Course Requirements:**

- Prepare for each class by **reading and highlighting** the assigned texts. Note that the Johnson chapters are very short. Highlighting the main points, and taking 45 minutes to review these before class, should help you answer quiz questions.
- All writing assignments assume 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman type (double-spaced). By noon on the Friday prior to Class Sessions 1-6, students will email a 2-2.5 page **reflection paper** on the assigned readings to the instructor (which you are encouraged to also post to the portal). Exception: I will accept without penalty all first reflections turned in by noon on the following Friday (9/9/17), which is of course when your second reflection is also due. Please plan to write at least 2 pages, as it's not possible to produce an essay of sufficient depth in less than 2 double-spaced pages. See end of syllabus for one simple approach.
- The PowerPoint from each lecture will be posted to the portal. Just before each lecture, I will distribute the text of the PowerPoint in hardcopy. Please highlight these notes for review and reference. There will be **5 short (3-question) quizzes (open book/notes)** on the main points in reading assignments (for "today") and lectures (from "last Saturday") at the beginning of Sessions 2 through 6. I do cue quiz topics in class, so listen for those cues.
- A **final research project, which will include both a team presentation and a written paper** (6 to 8 pages), is due on the last day of class (10/14/17). Note: All research papers must go through **turnitin**. See other details below.

**Research Project:** Given the course's "intensive" nature, all research topics must be decided upon by the fourth week of class (9/23/17). The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, in Gellert's reference section, is a great resource for ideas. The Academic Success Center and Writing Center can also offer you support with your research project.

- 15-30 minute research presentations will be done in teams of 2-5, and will describe the nexus between some threat to Earth (or non-human creatures) and a particular religious community's response to that threat. While a well-organized PowerPoint presentation will meet this requirement, other approaches are welcome.
- Research papers (6-8 double-spaced pages) are to be done individually, and can be written on any such "nexus." Note: Students who choose to write on their team's topic must develop some aspect of that topic in more detail and not simply summarize their team's presentation. Papers must include a brief description of the problem, a strong thesis statement ("I will argue that . . .") and related argument, parenthesized citations as needed, and a bibliography with a minimum of 5 academic sources.<sup>1</sup> I am definitely willing to help you shape your thesis statement. Even if you don't desire assistance, you must run your proposed thesis statement by me by Week 5 (9/30/17) either at the end of class or via email the day before. Please use APA style (I'll pass out a summary).

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<sup>1</sup> A good definition of an academic source can be found at [owl.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/identifying-academic-sources.php](http://owl.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/identifying-academic-sources.php). If you are wondering whether an Internet source is sufficiently "academic," ask me before you rely on that source. Although your paper may reference the Bible in other ways, the Bible is not an "academic source" for the purposes of this course.

**On Grading, including Late Assignments and Extra Credit:**

- Your grade for class participation (see breakdown below) is based on your active engagement with in-class lectures, discussions and activities. This includes demonstration of your grasp of the main points in the assigned reading and lectures. Please remember to turn in your completed worksheets from small group discussions.
- Please note that your team members will be asked to help grade your contribution to the team.
- Please check that your writing: (1) includes both a subject and a verb in each sentence; (2) shows “agreement” between subject and verb, e.g., the cloud *moves*, but the clouds *move*; (3) uses a complete set of quote marks (“---”) for each direct quote, and (4) offers a parenthesized citation whenever you cite a fact from a particular source.
- **Regarding late work:** I teach most effectively when I have had a chance to read your reflection papers before the class session on a given topic. Therefore (with the exception of the first class period – see above):
  - If you miss the email deadline and bring a hard copy of your reflection to class, I will deduct 1 point from your total grade for the class.
  - Reflections turned in later than class time will result in the loss of 2 points from your total grade for the class.
  - It is acceptable to send your research paper to me by the (firm) deadline of 9am Monday 10/16/17.
- **Up to 11 points of extra credit are possible.** Three points can be earned for perfect attendance. Two points can be earned for consistently posting your reflections to the portal before class and for writing one or more (quality) extra reflection(s) on a reading assignment and/or one of the additional films on reserve or online. In regard to online films, I suggest: To rent for about \$3-\$4--“Avatar” (2009) and “Plastic China” (2016); and for free--“Blackfish” (2013). Yes you can propose other possibilities.

**Point Breakdown****Grade/Point Conversion**

Participation	25 points			
Six Reflections	25 points	A+ 100-97	A 96-94	A- 93-90
Five Quizzes	15 points	B+ 89-87	B 86-84	B- 83-80
Team Presentation	15 points	C+ 79-77	C 76-74	C- 73-70
Individual Research Paper	20 points	D+ 69-67	D 66-64	D- 63-60
Total	100 points	F 59 or below		

**A Simple Way to Write a Reflection Paper:** These reflection papers should help you deepen your understanding of the course material, and develop your clarity of thought and expression. Therefore, I’ll read each one carefully and probably make numerous comments. I can accept a wide variety of approaches. One simple way you could proceed: **(A)** In general, keep in mind that a reflection essay isn’t just a summary of the author(s) views. Please include your own response to the readings, which will come from your own personal experiences. In other words, see if you can “connect” some of “the dots” in the reading assignments so as to describe one aspect of ecology-and-religion that holds some personal meaning for you. You can ask yourself: What was the one most surprising/challenging/useful thing I learned from this week’s reading assignment? Of course you can disagree with the assigned author(s). And you can go beyond the assigned readings and bring in other sources. **(B)** You might want to begin with a brief description of the issue you’re going to focus on. But put a clear statement of your main point about that issue (your “thesis statement”) into the first several sentences. This can look like: “I argue/think/hold that \_\_\_\_\_”. **(C)** Write 2-4 paragraphs that use evidence from the reading to support your main point/thesis. Add in a (succinct) quote or two that supports your evidence. Cite the relevant page numbers from the text(s) in parentheses whenever you use the text to make a point, for example: *Lynn White, Jr. asserts that religions based on the Bible adopted a view of nature as both passive and profane (Kinsley, 103-04).* Don’t quite have 2 pages? Summarize your argument.

**CLASS SESSION:****STUDENTS WILL HAVE READ:****1. Sept. 2. KINSHIPPING**

Lecture: Moral, Believing Animals.

Film: “Beasts of the Southern Wild” (2012).

Group Time: Discuss the readings and film.

*I will provide a list of potential research topics—although you may of course go outside this list.***Kinsley** Intro and

Ch. 1 (The Mistassini Cree),

Ch. 2 (Australian Aboriginal Religion).

**Johnson** Preface and Ch. 1 (The Crisis).**2. Sept. 9. THE WORLD AS WEB****Open-Book/Notes Quiz.**

Lecture: Framing Earth as “System.”

Group Time: “Bodhisattva Check-in,” and “Evolutionary Gifts of the Animals.”<sup>2</sup>**Kinsley** Ch. 6 (Chinese Religions),

Ch. 7 (Buddhism), Ch. 14 (Deep Ecology).

**3. Sept. 16. EM-BODY-MENT****Open-Book/Notes Quiz.**

Lecture: Re-Integrating Body and Mind.

Film: “Eco-Dharma” (2006).

Group Time: Hang Out with a Tree.

*Please bring your research topic ideas as we will take time to allow teams and topics to find each other.***Kinsley** Ch. 5 (Hinduism)**Johnson** Ch. 2 (A Taproot of the Crisis),

Ch. 3 (Harkening to . . .) and

Ch. 4 (Discerning Kinship . . .).

**Handout:** Alice Gregory, “Running Free in Germany’s Outdoor Preschools,” *New York Times* 5/18/17.**4. Sept. 23. GOD’S GARDEN FOR ALL***Note: By this class session, you must have a team research topic and an individual research topic.***Open-Book/Notes Quiz.**

Lecture: In the Beginning . . . a Cross-Species Equality.

Film: “The Student, the Nun, and the Amazon” (~2006).

Group Time: Genesis Exercise.

**Kinsley** Ch. 8 (Christianity as . . . Harmful),

Ch. 9 (Christianity as . . . Responsible).

**Johnson** Ch. 5 (Remembering . . . Spirit),

Ch. 6 (Conversion to the Circle of Earth).

**Handout:** Frederick Denny’s short essay on “Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust . . .,” from *Earth Ethics* 10, no. 1, Fall 1998.**5. Sept. 30. INDUSTRIALISM & INDIVIDUALISM****Open-Book/Notes Quiz.**

Lecture: The Enlightenment and Its Aftermath.

Film: “An Inconvenient Truth” (2006).

Group Time: Lamentation Exercise. *Please show me your research paper thesis statement before you leave class today.***Kinsley** Ch. 10 (Nature Disenchanted),

Ch. 11 (Thoreau, Muir, Leopold).

**6. Oct. 7. WEAVING TOGETHER HEAVEN AND EARTH****Open-Book/Notes Quiz.**

Lecture: The Cross-Species Solidarity of St. Martín de Porres.

Films: “Eating Mercifully” (2008), excerpts from “Microcosmos:

The Grass People” (1996).

Group Time: Gastropod Encounter.

**Handouts:** Alejandro García-Rivera,Ch.1 “A Mystery in Lima,” *St. Martín de Porres: The “Little Stories” and the Semiotics of Culture* (1995):1-8; andCh. 5 “The Human Aspect of Atonement,” *A Wounded Innocence: Sketches for a Theology of Art* (2003), 75-98. (You can omit bracketed text.)<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown, *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (2009), 130-134, 146-148, 152-154.

**7. Oct. 14. A CONVERSATION WITH THE FUTURE**

*Research presentations and papers due.*

Group time: “Double Circle.”<sup>3</sup> If weather permits, we’ll spend the first part of class outside.

Please bring whatever you need (old towel and/or pillow, casual clothing, yoga block, beach or other folding chair, etc.) to feel comfortable sitting on/near the ground for about an hour.

We will also share key learnings and evaluate the class.

*In every case, I will want to mail your paper back to you so that you have my comments.*

*(This actually takes less time than scanning and emailing it to you.)*

*Please bring \$1.25 to cover the cost of envelope and postage.*



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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 146-148.