

Ecotheology in Text and Context [STHS-4640]
CDSP/GTU, Fall 2006

Time: Thursdays 9:40-12:30 a.m. Location: CDSP/Shires 223 [NB: Changed location!]
Instructor: Dr. Marion Grau - mgrau@cdsp.edu

Office: Shires 213; 510-204-0724
Office Hours: e-mail for an appointment; Study Retreat Day: Monday

Course Description (from the catalogue):

This class will help students to understand and address the complex connections between ecological destruction and economic structures. Ecological degradation and environmental racism and classism are quickly becoming huge global justice issues. Human life as embedded in current stakeholder capitalist economic systems is changing the ecology of the entire planet. How can these urgent concerns inform theological construction? What are resources we can cull from multiple religio-cultural contexts that allow local and regional communities to reconsider ecotheological theology, worship, action and transformation toward less destructive ways of life? How can this occur in multicultural and multireligious contexts? Course readings will focus on reconstructing and reconceptualizing creation, the place of humanity within creation, divine action in creation, pneumatology, as well as divine and human redemptive agency. Students will produce a 30-page final paper or project.

Course Objectives:

What is it we as religious people, as Christians, can do in particular to help change thoughts and actions in our communities when it comes to living sensibly and responsibly with each other and with the earth?

Students will consider three particular case studies of cultural/theological encounter intended to demonstrate possible issues that complicate and influence such theological constructions.

In the final part of the course students will produce and carry out a teaching unit from beginning to end: they will assign readings, choose topics and issues to be dealt with, and lead the discussion of the teaching unit.

Throughout the course, students will map the components of local ecotheologies, historically, geographically, economically, socially, and religiously. They will think through how these formations may or may not allow resistance against current problematic practices of living and trading in land, air, and water. Students will develop, out of these critical encounters their own theological engagement with the material.

For the purpose of better focusing on their goals, students will draft, discuss with the instructor and sign a learning contract wherein they will specify the particular project they will work on during the semester, as well as name what their commitment to their class peer group will look like. Students are encouraged to use their own denominational, social, cultural, ministry, research

and political context in the production of such a project, and draft a final paper/project of no less than 30 and no more than 35 pages length.

Course Learning Outcomes:

A successful completion of the course will mean that students will be familiar with some of the basic methodological, theological and ideological issues at hand when constructing local ecotheologies: the natural and cultural setting at hand, missionary presence and theology, colonial, economic and other pressures, cultural hybridity, ecological landscape, and sacred place. They will explore how communities are located in ecological contexts, what the challenges and changes at hand are and produce liberating and hopeful local ecotheologies in conversation with other discourses such as economics, science, pastoral formation, preaching and liturgy.

Requirements:

- 1) Regular attendance and lively participation. (More than two absences will affect your grade.) Read the assigned texts with care and come prepared with 2 questions or comments each class session. (20% of grade)
- 2) Draft a learning contract that spells out the specific learning goals of the student in this class, how they will be accountable to the instructor, class peers, and their communities of accountability outside of the classroom. Students need to include how they will reach these goals, and how an evaluation of these goals can be obtained (e.g. through the completion of the teaching unit and the project [give specific details]). 1 page, to be submitted by the beginning of reading week.
- 3) Design and carry out a 1 hour teaching unit: E.g.: Find, assign, and distribute readings [NB: readings need to be distributed at least one week prior to the class session!!!]; prepare a 15 minute introductory piece (along with 2 page summary handout); facilitate the teaching unit (discussion, small group, etc). [there can be variations on how this is organized] (20 % of grade)
- 4) Deliver a 10-minute presentation of the student's final project or paper for the final class session.
- 5) A 30 page final essay/project on a topic of the student's own choosing. (60% of grade)

More on Essays and Other Written Documents:

Most of you will do research on very specific projects where resources may be difficult to come by. The class will meet (at a time yet to be determined) a session with the GTU research librarian that will aim to help specifically with finding resources for the topics of this class. Please do not begin writing a draft UNTIL you have discussed the paper topic, method, context, approach with the instructor. NB! A draft of the paper/project is due to the instructor by the Thanksgiving Break, in order to allow for enough time for the instructor to give feedback, and for that feedback to go into the final revision of the paper. This way you will get most benefit out of the instructor's feedback.

For written research papers and essays, please use the Turabian style sheet, the academic format required by the GTU.

Books: [These have been ordered by the GTU bookstore]

Korten, David. *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*. Berrett-Koehler, 2006.
Ruether, Rosemary. *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
Grau, Marion. *Of Divine Economy: Refinancing Redemption*. T & T Clark/Continuum, 2004.

Please acquire on your own:

Bill McKibben, *The Comforting Whirlwind*. Cowley 2005.

Most shorter readings will either be handouts or put on blackboard. In addition, most of the shorter pieces we will consider can be found in a Reader, which will be made available on Blackboard. Students using the online readings will need to sign on to blackboard to access them. Go to <http://blackboard.gtu.edu/> and use your webadvisor login to sign in.

Bibliography for Further Research:

Bakan, Joel. *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (Free Press, 2004)
Batstone, David. *Saving the Corporate Soul & (Who Knows?) Maybe Your Own* (Jossey-Bass, 2003)
Cavanagh, John and Jerry Mander, eds. *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World is Possible*. 2nd ed. (Berrett-Koehler, 2004)
Cobb/Daly. *For the Common Good*.
Harrison, Milmon. *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion*. (Oxford, 2005)
LaDuke, Winona. *Rediscovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming*. (South End Press, 2005)
McFague, Sallie. *Life Abundant*.
Meeks, Douglas. *God the Economist*.
Peters, Rebecca. *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization*. (Continuum, 2004)
Standlee, David M. *Oil, Globalization, and the War for the Arctic Refuge* (SUNY, 2006)
The Regeneration Project: <http://www.theregenerationproject.org/> (Global warming, energy efficiency for faith communities)

Class Sessions:

9/7 All Over the Map: Contextualizing Our Environments – Ourselves
Read ahead:
Ruether, *Integrating*, Chapter 1.
Grau, *Divine Economy*, Introduction.
Korten, *Great Turning*, Prologue.

On Our Ways: Context/Method/Theology/Research

9/14 The Land and the People of the Land (I) in Bible And Narrative Collection of Creation narrative, biblical and other

9/21 Empire and Economy: The Challenge
Ruether, Chapter 2.
Korten, Part II and III.

9/28 Economy and Ecology: Twins tragically separated?
(Potential guest: Richard Norgaard, UCB, Energy and Resources Group)
Grau, Chapter 1 and 2.
Norgaard,
Korten, Part I.

10/3 An Inconvenient Truth – Showing at CDSF

Read this report online: <http://www.gwichinsteeingcommittee.org/GSChumanrightsreport.pdf>

How can we Be in this? Trickster Selves
Ruether, Chapter 4.
Grau, Chapter 4 and 5.
Korten, Part IV and V.
[sth. on coalitional consciousness...]

Elemental Case Studies: Local, Regional, Global

10/19 The Land and the People of the Land (II):
LaDuke, Winona. “Imperial Anthropology” and “Recovering Power to Slow Climate Change”
from Rediscovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming.
Sachs, Aaron. Eco-Justice: Linking Human Rights and the Environment (Worldwatch Paper 127)
[PDF on Cal env. practices from Sac Bee]

10/26 READING WEEK [paper/project outline/method/topic due to instructor AFTER reading week]

11/2 Water: (Potential guest: Marian Ronan, ABSW)

11/9

11/16 Air:

11/23 AAR/SBL Meetings/ THANKSGIVING [paper/project drafts are due to the instructor BEFORE the break]

Student Contexts and Projects

11/30 3 Project Presentations [remember to distribute handouts a week ahead of time]
Each person will have 45 minutes of allotted time. Please stick to it so your colleagues can have the same time and space that you have.

12/7 3 Project Presentations [remember to distribute handouts a week ahead of time]

12/14 1 Presentation (if needed), Final Round of Brief Presentations and Celebration