

Humanity, Nature, and Justice in the Modern World

PJ 3000 001 Fall 2011
Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-2:15, Tolentine 316

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This course studies concepts of reciprocity between humanity and the natural world and explores why these concepts may be vital for the current and future well-being of humans and the Earth. The goal is to trace a long human dialogue concerning peaceful, mutually beneficial co-existence between humans and Earth's life systems. The dialogue merits consideration because of its deep history in pre-modern and modern thought and its vivid articulation in the recent writings of numerous religious thinkers such as Pope Benedict and the Dalai Lama, along with scientists such as Wangari Maathai, Brian Swimme, and E.O. Wilson. In a time when this idea is sometimes presented as a discovery of recent science, grounding ourselves in its development over time provides robustness to current scientific evidence. Even more important, this thought tradition in both its pre-modern and recent forms reveals how concepts of peace, when understood with the depth provided by the idea of mutual flourishing, may be central to understanding and practicing ecologically sustainable living.

4 required books, available in the bookstore:

Maathai, Replenishing the Earth

Shiva, Earth Democracy

Moore, Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril

Wilson, Future of Life

Course Requirements

***Reading assignments** are to be completed *before* each course meeting begins.

***Attendance (with course materials in hand) and Participation:** 15% of final grade. More than 3 absences will lead to a reduced grade; 5 or more absences are cause for a failing grade. Plan to contribute thoughts and questions during *every* class meeting. In an effort to be objective and fair, I will evaluate participation using the Villanova Center for Liberal Education Class Participation Rubric: <http://www.villanova.edu/artsci/vcle/resources/rubric.htm>

* **Writing assignments**

1) *Current situation analysis* (20% of grade)

Select a current ecological crisis of interest to you, then assess its causes and optimal solutions using our texts as a framework. Don't forget to consult the Internet resources listed here in the syllabus. Your sources should include at least 3 of our course readings, plus at least two scientific or cultural documents that give you solid information on the details of the crisis you choose to examine. Websites do not count, but scholarly articles or books written after the year 2000 are suitable. **This assignment is optional if you choose to actively participate as a Speaker at the Climate and Morality Colloquium in October or November, specific date TBA.**

2) *Assessing your own reciprocal relationship to the natural world* (15% of grade)

Determine 6 times during the semester when you will devote 20-30 minutes to this assignment. At least 4 of the 6 sessions must occur outdoors, either in a single location or different locations. For each of the 6 sessions, you will write at minimum ½ page of typed reflections.

During each session, consider your surroundings, which include the land you are sitting or standing on, the plants near you, the air you are breathing, other living creatures perceptible to your senses, the state of the weather, etc. Reflect on the interactions that are occurring between you and these multi-faceted surroundings. Are they harmful? Beneficial? Neutral? How do your natural surroundings affect your physical or spiritual existence? Your feelings? Your values? Write your reflections for each of the 6 session. Compile and edit them before submission on November 10.

3) *Anticipating a fuller reciprocity: your estimations of a possible future* (20% of grade)

In this assignment, you will first read Bill McKibben's brief essay "How We Saved the Climate (and Ourselves)" <http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/how-we-saved-the-climate-and-ourselves> and Richard Heinberg's speech, "Peak Oil: A Chance to Change the World."

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/peak-oil-a-chance-to-change-the-world>

You also should consult The Earth Charter online and you will very likely want to consult several pieces in Moore, especially those by Oren Lyons, Scott Russell Sanders, John Paul II and Bartholomew I, et al. In a 4-6 page essay, describe your estimation of the features of a more robust or balanced reciprocity between humanity and the natural world as it might exist in the near or distant future. If or when this develops, what will it look like? You may write a "big picture" essay that scans the outlines of large topics (e.g. widespread well-being on ecological, spiritual, health, and other levels), or you may choose to depict a narrow topic such as

relationships between people and animals, relationships between people and animals in one ecosystem or location, relationships between people and a single body of water, etc. Make this eloquent and visionary! You will submit the essay to Dr. Armon on 12/1 and present your work in class on 12/6 or 12/8.

* **Group presentation assignment:** *film viewing and class presentation* (10% of grade): With your group, watch one of the ecologically themed films below or a film of your choice (make sure the topic is highly relevant to our course). Prepare with your group a 10-minute presentation that explains the film's content and relates it to our course readings and discussions; show a short clip, if possible.

Radically Simple	Big River
Life Running out of Control	The End of the Line
Deep Down	Gasland
Crude Impact	The Last Mountain
The Garden	Revenge of the Electric Car

Websites where you may find a selection of other films include

<http://www.globalonenessproject.org>

<http://www.greenplanetfilms.org/>

<http://www.resourcesforlife.com/docs/item626>

www.forthenext7generations.com/home.php (a Native American elders film)

* **Final exam** (20% of grade): a short take-home essay due electronically on our assigned exam date.

* **Optional: Climate and Morality Colloquium.** Dr. Armon and Mr. Joseph Robertson are organizing an on-campus student Colloquium in which several classes will be invited to participate. If you choose to participate, you will receive mentoring on how to prepare to be a speaker at the student Colloquium in October or November, date TBA. This will not be a large time commitment because our course readings will prepare you for the discussion at the Colloquium. If you choose to be a Colloquium speaker, you may choose to be exempt from writing the "Current situation analysis" assignment.

Grading

In evaluating assignments and determining semester grades, I will follow the Villanova Grading System, available in the handbooks provided by the University. I also will utilize the Rubrics from the Villanova Center for Liberal Education:

<http://www.villanova.edu/artsci/vcle/resources/papers.htm> and

http://www.villanova.edu/artsci/includes/vcle/analytical_scoring_rubric.htm

Essays receiving A's will demonstrate strength in nearly all categories; B's will demonstrate strength in some categories but need development in others; C's will be those that require significant further development; D papers will be those that are unsatisfactory in most categories.

While numerous types of writing style are valid, in this course you will be writing analytical, expository essays that discuss the ideas within texts. In evaluating your essays, I will expect to find a thesis that presents an interesting and significant claim, ample supporting evidence and examples from the text(s) at hand, smooth and comprehensible organization of ideas, insightful introductory paragraphs, and powerful concluding paragraphs that do more than summarize the essay. As you meet those qualifications, a somewhat informal writing style, using the first-person voice, is absolutely acceptable.

Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities should register with the Learning Support Office and discuss their needs with me at the beginning of the semester.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Plagiarism consists of using someone else's words or ideas as your own without crediting the previous writer. Plagiarism is unacceptable both at Villanova University and in the academic community and the working world at large. In college courses including this course, plagiarism leads to lowered grades and often to failure of an assignment or the course. To avoid plagiarism, you must use quotation marks and a footnote or internal note when you quote another author's work. When you paraphrase or otherwise report another author's ideas, even without quoting them, you must acknowledge the prior author with a footnote or internal note. These guidelines pertain to your use of course books, other books, websites, and other sources. When you are confused, ask me, a librarian in Falvey, or tutors in the Writing Center, and see the University guidelines at: <https://library.villanova.edu/Help/AcademicIntegrity>

Format

- *Assignments should be word-processed and printed on a good-quality printer.
- *Please use one-and-a-half or double spacing and a 12-point font size.
- *Always number your pages.
- *Identify each essay with your name and the date and give it a title.
- *Please staple the pages of the essay and do not use covers sheets or folders.

Proofreading

Numerous spelling errors or typos will count against your grade. Use a spell-checking program, then proof-read twice. Read your essay aloud at least once in this process, since doing so enables a writer to find mistakes that can slip by during silent reading. Finally, ask a friend to proofread for you and/or go to the Writing Center. Every piece of writing deserves and requires numerous revisions and careful editing!

Some recommended Internet resources—please explore!

<http://www.emergingearthcommunity.org>

Solutions Journal <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/>

FORE <http://fore.research.yale.edu/>

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/>

May 2011 issue of *The Franciscan* on climate change

http://fore.research.yale.edu/files/The_Franciscan_May2011.pdf

http://www.ifees.org.uk/ecoislam/newsletter_EcoIslam_Issue8.pdf

YES! Magazine <http://www.yesmagazine.org/>

Cry from the Forest: A "Buddhism and Ecology" Community Learning Tool

<http://www.camdev.org/Publications/Cry-English-Revised-for-printing.pdf>

<http://www.davidworr.com/articles.php>

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Thurs. 8/25 Introductions

I. Scriptures

8/30 Readings: In a Bible version of your choice, read the following texts: Genesis 1-3; Psalms 65 and 104; Job 12. In Moral Ground, Borg (p. 250 ff.) and Robinson (p. 260 ff.). Brown, World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse, New York, 2011. Bring syllabus to class for discussion of assignments. Sign up for film presentations in class.

9/1 Artson, Bradley, "Our Covenant with Stones: A Jewish Ecology of the Earth," *Conservative Judaism*, 1991, pp. 25-35. Pope Benedict, "World Day of Peace Message"

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_en.html

Cletus Wessels, "The New Creation Story" in The Holy Web: Church and the New Universe Story, Orbis Books, 2000. Please also bring the Bible readings from our previous class with you today.

9/6 Bhagavad Gita, "The Third Teaching." Narayan, "Water, Wood, and Wisdom,"

<http://www.amacad.org/publications/fall2001/narayanan.aspx#>

Optionally, listen to this recent interview on Hinduism and ecology, "Ecology and the Spirituality of Hinduism,"

http://www.godspeedinstitute.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111

9/8 Metta Sutta, downloadable at www.accesstoinsight.org; In Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology, read the chapters by Kabilsingh, De Silva, Macy, and Deicke. Bruce Byers, "From Ego-self to Eco-self, Toward an Ecocentric Community," in *Turning Wheel*, Spring 1992, 39-40. Also, Dalai Lama (p. 15 ff.) and Thich Nhat Hanh (p. 79 ff.) in Moral Ground.

9/13 Qur'an parts I and II on Blackboard

9/15 The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn. A Tenth-century Ecological Fable of the Pure Brethren of Basra. Trans. Goodman. Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1978, excerpts.

9/20 "Current situation analysis" plan due today: e-mail Dr. Armon a paragraph describing your topic and thesis, and a bibliography of your sources. Readings: Luther Standing Bear, "Nature" and Michael Kioni Dudley "Traditional Native Hawaiian Environmental Philosophy," in This Sacred Earth, ed. Gottlieb.

II. Science

9/22 Wilson, Chapters 1-2, plus Marc Bekoff, Minding Animals: Awareness, Emotion, and Heart. Oxford University Press, 2002, chapters 7 and 9.

9/27 Wilson Chapters 3-4 plus Swimme and Berry, The Universe Story, Harper San Francisco, 1992, “Prologue” and “Living Earth.” In Moral Ground, Derrick Jenson (p. 60 ff).

9/29 Wilson 5-6 plus, in Moral Ground, Speth (p. 3 ff.)

10/4 Wilson 7 plus Rawles in Moral Ground (p. 88 ff.)

10/6 Swimme and Berry, “Eozoic Era” and “Epilogue” plus Wessels, “Church of the Earth”

10/18 in Moral Ground: Krech (p. 108 ff.), Fink (p. 230 ff.) and Tucker + Swimme (p. 410 ff.), plus article on Bolivia’s Law of Mother Earth:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/apr/10/bolivia-enshrines-natural-worlds-rights>

10/20 Matthew Hall, Plants as Persons, SUNY Press, 2011, Chapter 7 and “Recreating a place for flourishing,” plus <http://www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/great-turning-or-great-unravelling-maddy-harland-conversation-joanna-macy>

10/22 **Fieldtrip** to Willow Creek Farm: experiments in mutual flourishing

III. Society

10/25 Shiva, Introduction and Chapter 1, plus Jamieson in Moral Ground (p. 183 ff.)

10/27 Wendell Berry, What Matters? Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth, Counterpoint, 2010, “Major in Homecoming,” Simple Solutions, Package Deals, and a 50-Year Farm Bill,” “A Practical Harmony.” Scott Russell Sanders, A Conservationist Manifesto, Indiana University Press, excerpts.

10/27 “American Outrage” - CPJE Film Series, Bartley 1011, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

This 2008 documentary considers the resistance of Native peoples to U.S. colonialism with the story of two Western Shoshone sisters fighting for land and human rights in a dispute that went to the Supreme Court and eventually the UN. (Recommended)

11/1 Shiva Chapters 2-3. Stephen M. Gardiner, A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 431-442.

11/3 in Moral Ground, hooks (p. 363 ff.) Shiva Chapter 4.

11/8 Terry Tempest Williams in Moral Ground (p. 429 ff.), plus Giovanna Di Chiro, “Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice,” in Uncommon Ground:

Toward Reinventing Nature, ed. Cronon, Norton and Company, 1995. Also, Carter online:
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/happiness/majora-carter-how-to-bring-environmental-justice-to-your-neighborhood>

11/10 in Moral Ground, Crow (p. 301 ff.) and Serageldin (p. 317 ff.) “Assessment of your relationship to the natural world” due in class.

11/15 Maathai, Introduction and Chapters 1-3, plus Patriarch Bartholomew in Moral Ground (p. 133 ff.)

11/17 Maathai, Chapters 4-7. Kimmerer in Moral Ground (p. 141 ff.), plus this article:
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/corporate-control-not-in-these-communities>

11/22 Maathai, Chapters 8-9, plus Ebtekar (p. 178 ff.) in Moral Ground

11/29 Maathai, Chapters 10-11, plus Tinker in Moral Ground (p. 196 ff.)

12/1 Reciprocity essays due. Return to 1st-day definitions; course evals.

12/6 Presentations of Reciprocity essay

12/8 Presentations of Reciprocity essay

Take home final exam will be due electronically on our assigned exam day.

Overview of Assignments Due and Grades Earned

Title	Date Due	Date Submitted	Points Possible	Points Earned
Current Situation Analysis essay	9/20		20	
Assessment of your relationship to the natural world	11/10		15	
Reciprocity Essay	12/1		20	
Film presentation	Variable		10	
Final exam	TBA		20	
Attendance and Participation	Every class meeting		15	