

MORAL PROBLEMS: ECOLOGY CRISIS

THEO 184.001; Fall 2012
MWF 10:25-11:15am; Crown 114
Office Hours: MWF 11:30-12:30pm, Crown 334I

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Course Description

This course offers an investigation into the worldviews and moral values that guide communities and relationships between people and the planet. It introduces students to the interdisciplinary approach necessary to critically describe, assess and respond concretely to the moral aspects of issues like climate change, water and food access, biodiversity, and sustainable development. We'll explore these issues by taking a case studies approach and throughout the term students will work together on collaborative small-group and individual projects that form the basis of an integrative project due at the end of the semester. The readings convey the work and intellectual contributions of leading thinkers working at the nexus of environmental theology and ecological ethics. These thinkers include academicians as well as on-the-ground community organizers, advocates, ministers and practitioners.

Required Texts

Gottlieb, Roger S. ed. *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*. Routledge. 2nd ed. 2004.

Moore, Kathleen Dean and Michael P. Nelson, eds. *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2010.

Recommended Resources

- The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale: <http://fore.research.yale.edu>
- Yale Environment 360: Opinion, Analysis, Reporting & Debate: <http://e360.yale.edu>
- *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*; Religions of the World and Ecology series distributed by Harvard University Press; *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*; *Religion and the Environment* (all four volumes)
- *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture and Ecology*;
- *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*

Course Format

Lectures and mini-lectures, small and large-group discussions, collaborative presentations and brainstorming sessions; films, cumulative essays, and a portfolio submission.

Learning Outcomes

At the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify relationships between scientific aspects to environmental issues as well as their ecological, social, economic, political, religious and ethical aspects
- Integrate information from across scientific disciplines and the humanities and apply these concepts to complex environmental issues
- Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical and social dimensions of environmental issues
- Use a process of structured ethical reflection to navigate the ecological and moral consequences arising from individual and collective in/action on environmental issues

Expectations on Classroom Decorum

Students should remember that the purpose of our classroom dialogue and coursework is to seek greater understanding. It is each person's responsibility to create the intentional, free, open and honest intellectual space necessary in this pursuit. We each deserve to feel comfortable expressing our thoughts and owe it to each other to express them with increasing clarity, greater understanding and respect for new or different perspectives. Every individual shares this responsibility with every other individual, including your instructor. No particular ideological, religious or moral viewpoint on the environment is expected from you—only a willingness to engage each other and this course's content honestly, critically and constructively.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is regarded as a serious violation of honesty and a grade of 0 will be recorded for any assignments found plagiarized. Please review the official University policy on standards and consequences: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me within the first two weeks of the term.

Course Assignments and Requirements

- Participation (**15 points**)
 - 1 Group presentation (**10 points**) and a 2-page collaboratively prepared handout (**5 points**)
 - 4 Essays, each 3 pages double-spaced in size 12 Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins; essays are worth **15 points each** (taken together, they are **60% of your course grade**)*
 - A final portfolio that pulls together your group work and essays, incorporating your responses to peer and instructor feedback on your work (**10 points**)
- * Additional points may be offered throughout the semester for attending select university events germane to the course

Late/Missed Assignments and Incompletes

Late essays and the portfolio assignment will lose 2 points if submitted late. If an essay is late more than a week, it will not be accepted and a grade of 0 will be recorded for that assignment.

Course Evaluation

A (94-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (60-66), F (0-59)

1. Participation (15 points)

- If you are unable to attend class more than twice, please notify the instructor of your absence prior to class to arrange time to meet and discuss your plans to understand missed material. Participation points will be lost for three or more unofficial absences as well as for leaving early often, appearing late, failure to respect others, failing to engage in class discussions, etc.
- Absence due to University business (academic trip, athletic travel, etc.) or for religious observances or severe illness all constitute official absences and will not reduce your points

but please alert me beforehand. Students who miss a class session for any reason are still responsible for the assignments, handouts or material covered during that session.

- Thoughtful and respectful contributions, reflections, and questions to class readings and to peer contributions and presentations are all integral aspects of collaborative learning and will be expected for each class session. Verbal and written contributions are expected.

2. **Group presentation (10 points) & collaborative handout (5 points)**

- Working in a group of five students, your group will take the lead in presenting to the class a case study of a relevant environmental problem with moral implications
- Prepare a 1-page double-spaced handout that briefly offers background, summarizes and describes the issue. This page will include a list of questions you would like explored.
- The 2nd page will be a single-spaced annotated bibliography for further reading.
- Handouts will be evaluated based on the depth of your description, thoughtfulness of your questions and applicability of your resources. Presentations will be evaluated based on your group's ability to share information and engage the class in meaningful discussion.

3. **Essays (15 points each)**

- The 1st essay will be a social analysis on your group's case study and will investigate your issue's geographic, social/demographic, economic, political/legal and religious aspects.
- The 2nd and 3rd essays will investigate a text or thinker whose contribution speaks to one or more of the aspects highlighted by your case study and social analysis.
- The 4th essay will include your vision statement and action-oriented response to the problems emerging from your case study. It may include policy recommendations, etc.
- Your essays will be evaluated based on your ability to present well-researched material in a clear, engaging, and nuanced way, particular the situation. I'll also look for your ability to make connections between practical issues and theoretical resources and vice versa.

4. **Final portfolio (10 points)**

- As your final exam, you'll submit a portfolio of your individual and group work, showing that you've revised your work to incorporate peer and instructor feedback. It will include: 1) the case study description, questions and annotated bibliography 2) social analysis 3/4) engagements with a moral text/thinker 5) vision statement and action steps.
- This portfolio will show you've grappled with feedback from your peers and your instructor, addressed shortcomings and/or oversight, and that you understand how each part fits into a larger process of structured ethical reflection.
- Your portfolio will not only be evaluated based on their ability to articulate your viewpoints and opinions clearly and to carefully connect them, ground them and demonstrate how they emerge from your applied research but also on your ability to show you can respond to constructive feedback on your work, learn from it, and improve it accordingly.

Course Plan/Schedule

Week	Day	Class Activities/Readings Discussed	
1	Monday 27 August	Course introduction	
	Wednesday 29 August	Why ethics? RG: Preface & Intro. Article sharing (A.S.)	
	Friday 31 August	Methods in Ethics. MN: Forward & Introduction "Toward a Global Consensus for Ethical Action." (A.S.)	
2	Monday 3 September	NO CLASS: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY	
	Wednesday 5 September	RG: Lynn White	Meet with instructor to discuss your group project
	Friday 7 September	Blackboard: Elizabeth Johnson	
3	Monday 10 September	RG: Anna Peterson	
	Wednesday 12 September	RG: Pope John Paul II	
	Friday 14 September	RG: United States Catholic Conference; Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew	
4	Monday 17 September	RG: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	
	Wednesday 19 September	RG: American Baptist Churches USA; Evangelical Environmental Network	
	Friday 21 September	MN: John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I; EA 65; EPBI; EA163	Handouts DUE
5	Monday 24 September	RG: United Church of Christ; First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit - 737	
	Wednesday 26 September	MN: Dalai Lama; E.O. Wilson; Barack Obama; EA 38; Carl Pope; Peter Singer; EA 327	
	Friday 28 September	Group 1 Case Study Facilitation; Blackboard article	
6	Monday 1 October	RG: Rosemary Radford Ruether	
	Wednesday 3 October	RG: Ivone Gebara	
	Friday 5 October	Group 2 Case Study Facilitation; Blackboard article	Essay 1 DUE
7	Monday 8 October	NO CLASS: FALL BREAK	
	Wednesday 10 October	RG: John B. Cobb, Jr.	
	Friday 12 October	Group 3 Case Study Facilitation; Blackboard article	
8	Monday 15 October	RG: John F. Haught	
	Wednesday 17 October	Sallie McFague blackboard article	
	Friday 19 October	Group 4 Case Study Facilitation; Blackboard article	Essay 2 DUE
9	Monday 22 October	RG: Sallie McFague	
	Wednesday 24 October	MN: Sallie McFague; EA 267; Wangari Maathai; EA 290; J. Baird Callicott; Bron Taylor; Wendell Berry; EA 394	
	Friday 26 October	Group 5 Case Study Facilitation; Blackboard article	

10	Monday 29 October	RE: Henry David Thoreau; Ralph Waldo Emerson; Muir	
	Wednesday 31 October	<i>John Muir in the New World</i> film	
	Friday 2 November	Group 6 Case Study Facilitation; Blackboard article	Essay 3 DUE
11	Monday 5 November	RE: Aldo Leopold; Blackboard article	
	Wednesday 7 November	<i>A Green Fire</i> film	
	Friday 9 November	Group 7 Case Study Facilitation; Blackboard article	
12	Monday 12 November	RG: Thomas Berry; Blackboard article	
	Wednesday 14 November	MN: Thomas Berry; Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme; Bill McKibben; Thomas L. Friedman	
	Friday 16 November	Group 8 Case Study Facilitation; Blackboard article	Essay 4 DUE
13	Monday 19 November	Blackboard article	
	Wednesday 21 November	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK	
	Friday 23 November	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK	
14	Monday 26 November	Blackboard Article	
	Wednesday 28 November *	Video Presentation: <i>Journey of the Universe</i>	
	Friday 30 November *	Video Presentation: <i>Journey of the Universe</i>	
15	Monday 3 December *	Video Presentation: <i>Journey of the Universe</i>	
	Wednesday 5 December *	Video Presentation: <i>Journey of the Universe</i>	
	Friday 7 December	Class Discussion; Course Wrap-up	
Portfolios Due on Final Exam Day: Monday 10 December 2012 from 9-11am			