Syllabus

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to aspects and dimensions of the ecological crisis; to help them reflect theologically and ethically on ecological problems; to develop or enhance their particular faith tradition’s theoretical and practical engagement with ecological issues; and to formulate public policy possibilities and practical projects to address and seek to solve ecological problems.

Course Objectives

The course will provide the setting for students to consider:

• multiple forms of ecological problems and ethical issues in each;
• implications of the central affirmations of the Christian faith for the formation of ecological ethics;
• the nature of Christian love and justice in ecological contexts;
• current national and international policy debates on ecological concerns;
• potential directions for public policy that are theologically, ethically, socially, ecologically, and strategically coherent;

and
• the present and possible role of the churches in responding to ecological concerns.

The class format will include opening lectures by the instructor on the reading(s) of the day and related topics; and student written and oral presentation of responses to the readings.

Course Policies

A. Students with Disabilities
   Any students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should meet with the instructor as soon as possible: to initiate disability verification, and to discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure your full participation in the successful completion of course requirements.

B. Doctoral-level Participation
   Any students taking this course for doctoral credit are required to do all work at a doctoral level. Supplemental responsibilities for doctoral students are indicated in the syllabus descriptions of the requirements for course papers and presentations.

C. STH Academic Code of Conduct
   The STH Academic Code of Conduct may be found on the STH website at www.bu.edu/sth/academic/academic-conduct. All students are required to familiarize
themselves with this Code, its definitions of misconduct, and its sanctions, and to abide by it. Students should especially familiarize themselves with the section on plagiarism.

Course Expectations

- Consistent attendance.
- Careful and critical reading of assigned texts in preparation for discussion in class.
- Full and fair participation in discussions.
- Papers on class and course topics should be submitted at the times designated in the schedule. The papers should demonstrate the student’s understanding of issues, and the student’s critical/creative capabilities.
- The papers should be no less than the indicated number of pages, plus source references.
- The papers should be typed, double-spaced, with standard margins and fonts. Documentation or attribution should be full and accurate.
- The papers should demonstrate familiarity with and attentiveness to relevant matters in assigned readings and seminar discussions, and be supplemented by additional research.
- The main criteria for evaluation will be: understanding of the issue (reflective of careful and critical reading of texts and absorption of seminar discussions); faithful and fair presentation of an ethicist’s or a faith tradition’s perspective; soundness and depth of analysis of the issue and of others’ responses to it; consistency and coherence; and appropriate attribution and documentation.
- Plagiarism—intentionally using another person’s or party’s words, ideas, or other intellectual property as one’s own without proper acknowledgment—is, in essence, intellectual theft. It will be treated in accord with university rules.
- Deadlines: each reaction paper must be submitted at the class session to which it is related, and the reflection and research papers must be submitted on the date stipulated. All papers are subject to a loss of two points for each day they are late.

a) Reaction Papers (TS 829: 2 pages each; TS 929: 3 pages each):
Prior written preparation of points for discussion—questions, or critiques or affirmations of the readings—for class sessions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

b) Reflection Paper (TS 829: 7 pages; TS 929: 11 pages):
Construction of a conversation with three participants: two of the authors studied, and the student writer. The conversation will focus on one theme present in the writings studied. It should reveal the participants’ positions on the issue, their critiques of the others’ positions, and suggested resolution of points of disagreement and integration of points of agreement.
Due Date: October 29 - STH Box 356

A constructive/creative statement and analysis of ecological teachings from a student’s faith tradition: an examination of the tradition’s biblical, theological and/or ethical basis for ecological responsibility, an exploration of its potential for catalyzing ecological responsibility among its members and for impacting public policy, and student suggestions for needed supplementary material in the faith tradition’s teachings, with supporting justification. The paper should engage at least four of the authors of the required texts as “conversation partners” with their faith
tradition’s ecological teachings.

Format:
Due Date: December 17 (in-class presentation and discussion)

Grading

The grade for the course will be determined as follows: 10% on the quality of seminar participation and evidence of serious preparation, including reflections on the texts and responses to other students’ perspectives; 40% for Reaction Papers (5 pts./paper); 20% for the Reflection Paper; and 30% for the Research Paper. Each paper will lose 2 points for each day it is late.
Grading scale: A = 95-100%; A- = 90-94%; B+ = 85-89%; B = 80-84%; B- = 75-79%; C+ = 70-74%; C = 65-69%; C- = 60-64%; D = 55-59%; F = 0-54%.

Course Structure Overview

The course is divided into three basic parts: first, consideration of the perspectives of three ethicists (Hart, Rasmussen, Nash) from different Christian denominations, and of a visionary business leader; second, relation of those perspectives to ecological, political, economic and pastoral issues in diverse social settings, via stimulating case studies; and third, development of student perspectives on ecological ethics that represent both their individual reflections and commitments, and their engagement with a particular faith tradition. Students should be developing the third part of the course as they interact with the texts, the instructor and each other in the first and second parts.

Course Texts

The following texts are required reading:


Course Instructor

Office: BUSTH, Room 341; mailbox: 356; telephone: 617-353-3032; Email
\texttt{drijhart@bu.edu}

Office Hours: Tues, Thurs: 11:00-12:00; Wed: 3:30-5:00

Course Schedule


Sept. 10  2. The development of environmental and ecological thought in the Catholic Christian tradition, 1: International and regional “official” perspectives. Reading: Hart, Intro., Chapters 1-3
Reaction Paper 1 is due.
Discussion: Why Church Earth documents? What might be developed further?

Sept. 17  3. The development of environmental and ecological thought in the Catholic Christian tradition, 2: Individual insights; additional considerations for theology and ethics; community projects.
Reading: Hart, Chapters 4-7
Reaction Paper 2 is due.
Discussion: Which insights were particularly helpful, and why? Projects?

Sept. 24  4. Earth issues in context. Analysis of pressing problems and initial proposals for resolving them.
Reading: Rasmussen, Part I
Reaction Paper 3 is due.
Discussion: Which problems were particularly striking, and why? How overwhelming do the problems appear? How might you and your faith tradition respond to them?

Oct. 1  5. Respect for Earth as creation and context of biotic existence; hope for Earth’s future.
Reading: Rasmussen, Part II
Reaction Paper 4 is due.
Discussion: Which of Rasmussen’s themes seem most appropriate to your faith tradition, based on your experience and study to this point? Why?
Oct. 8 6. Recognizing Earth community; renewing Earth ethics; realizing Earth visions.
Reading: Rasmussen, Part III
Reaction Paper 5 is due.
Discussion: Which projects/practices described by Rasmussen seem applicable for Christians in the social contexts with which you are familiar?

Readings: (1) Nash, pp.11-39; Hawken, pp. xi-xvi, 37-55; (2) Nash, 40-54; Hawken, 1-17; (3) Nash, 54-67; Hawken, 19-35
Reaction Paper 6 is due.
Discussion: How do the presentations of Rasmussen, Nash and Hawken interact on these issues? How do the Christian insights presented in Hart relate to these issues? How do other Christian churches address these issues?


Readings: Nash, 68-161.
Reaction Paper 7 is due.

**** Oct. 29: Reflection Paper is due: STH Box 356 ****

Nov. 5 10. Christian ecological ethics and public policy.
Readings: Nash, 162-217; Hawken, 57-219
Reaction Paper 8 is due.

Nov. 12 11. Environmental ethics case studies, 1: (1) Setting the theological ethical foundation; (2) Issues: water, forests, habitat.
Readings: (1) Gudorf & Huchingson, chapter 1, Appendix; Martin-Schramm & Stivers, Intro., chapters 1-3; (2) G&H, chapters 2, 8, 5; M-S &S, chapters 7,8, 5, 6

Nov. 19 12A. Environmental ethics case studies, 2: Issues: stewardship, energy
Readings: G&H, chapters 4, 7, 10, 12, 6; M-S & S, chapters 4, 9, 10

Readings: G&H, chapters 3, 11, 13, 9; M-S & S, chapters 11, 12

Nov. 26 Thanksgiving Recess
Course Professor Summary Bio

John Hart, Ph.D. is Professor of Christian Ethics at Boston University School of Theology, and founder of its doctoral program in ecological ethics. He has authored four books: Sacramental Commons: Christian Ecological Ethics (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); What Are They Saying About...Environmental Theology? (Paulist Press, 2004); Ethics and Technology: Innovation and Transformation in Community Contexts (Pilgrim Press, 1997); and The Spirit of the Earth -- A Theology of the Land (Paulist Press, 1984). He has written chapters for five edited books, and has more than forty published articles and essays. His Ph.D. (1978) and S.T.M. (1972) are from the Union Theological Seminary (New York), where he was Tutor in Christian Ethics (1974-76), and Tutor in Liberation Theology for Gustavo Gutiérrez (1976). His B.A. is from Marist College, New York (1966), and he studied Latin American literature at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Mexico City, 1966). He worked with the United Farmworkers Union in Texas, and was a candidate, in the Raza Unida Party, for the Texas legislature (1972). He was Director of the Midwestern Catholic bishops’ 12-state Heartland Project, and editor and principal writer of their land statement, Strangers and Guests: Toward Community in the Heartland (1980). He wrote the draft of Pope John Paul II’s homily on land stewardship presented at Living History Farms near Des Moines, Iowa (1979). He has worked with native peoples’ spiritual leaders and human rights activists, been a Member of the Delegation of the International Indian Treaty Council (a Non-Governmental Organization accredited to the United Nations) to the U.N. International Human Rights Commission, Geneva, Switzerland (1987, 1990), and was an invited Observer at the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil while participating in the United Nations Earth Summit (1992). He was selected for three National Endowment for the Humanities programs: a Summer Stipend to research Native American spirituality (1985), a Summer Seminar grant for postdoctoral study at the Harvard Divinity School (1986), and a Summer Seminar grant to participate in “St. Francis in the Thirteenth Century” in Siena, Rome, and Assisi, Italy (2003). He received an international “Science-Religion Course Award” (1995) from the John Templeton foundation for his course “Spirit, Science and Nature.” He was Professor of Theology and founding Director of Environmental Studies at Carroll College, Helena, Montana (1985-2004); the Carroll College faculty recognized him as the “Outstanding Faculty Member” (1995) and as a “Distinguished Scholar” (2002). He co-authored the “Declaration on Distortions of the Gospel” issued by the Montana Association of Churches (1996) to affirm God’s love for all peoples, and wrote the draft for the MAC document “Caring in Creation” (1998) on Christianity and ecology. He was selected as a Lilly Teaching Scholar in Religion (1997-8); for the Templeton Oxford Seminars in Science and Christianity (University of Oxford, England, summers, 1999-2001); and for the STARS conference “Evolution, ET, and the Significance of Life in the Universe” (2007). He was the Project Writer and a member of the Steering Committee for the Western U.S. and Canada Catholic bishops’ bioregional pastoral letter, The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good (2001), on the ethics, economics and ecology of the region; on behalf of this
project he received a “Sacred Gift for a Living Planet Award” (2000) in Bhaktapur, Nepal from the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), presented by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. He worked with the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems (Texas); served as Vice President of the Board of the Wild Divide Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association, and on the Board of the Montana Association of Churches; and as President of the Board of Directors of the Montana Environmental Information Center (2007-2009). He is a member of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Christian Ethics; is listed in Who’s Who in the World and in other biographical publications; served as Local Secretary of Montana Mensa; and is part of the Catholic-Methodist Dialogue (2008- ). His involvement with the Earth Charter includes as a participant in the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Center meeting on Benchmark II (Geneva, Switzerland, 1999); the “Earth Charter Ethics Seminar,” as one of 25 invited scholars from four continents (Pocantico Conference Center, New York, 2002); the delegation to Urbino, Italy for planning meetings (2002); and the Earth Charter +5 conference in Amsterdam (2005). Internationally known for his work in social ethics and environmental ethics, he has given more than two hundred presentations on four continents: in thirty-four U.S. states, and in Canada, Brazil, Switzerland, Italy, Nepal and England (December, 2009: fifth continent, eighth nation: Australia). Family: Jane, wife; daughter: archaeologist; son: psychologist. Recreation: hiking, snowshoeing; singing, guitar, Native American Indian flute.

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS 1: Church Documents
Students will research Church ecology-related documents from within their particular faith tradition and/or geographic area. A bibliography-in-progress will be developed from these documents as a faith-based ecological foundation for students in the current and future classes.

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS 2: Works in the Field


_____, What Are They Saying About...Environmental Theology? Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004


Wilson, Edward O. The Diversity of Life. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992

______, The Creation: A Plea to Save Life on Earth. W.W. Norton, 2006