

# **REL 2071/LAS 3930: RELIGION AND SUSTAINABILITY FALL 2019**

Instructor: Christopher Lomelín

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Class Schedule: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 5 (11:45-12:45)

Meeting Locations: Turlington 2342

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:45-11:45 and by appointment

## **Course Description**

This course examines the relationship between religion and sustainability and explores how the world's different religious traditions address the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Topics include social and environmental justice, sustainable consumption and sustainable agriculture. Case studies highlight multiple religious perspectives, especially in Latin America and South Asia.

## **Objectives**

1. Students will understand and learn to effectively communicate the concept of sustainability, the practical issues it involves, and the interdisciplinary nature of its concerns, with particular attention to humanistic dimensions;
2. Students will learn how religion relates to core aspects of sustainability, including its ecological, social, and economic dimensions;
3. Students will learn how diverse cultures, religious traditions, and local communities address problems of sustainability;
4. Students will be able to evaluate the role and effectiveness of a broad range of methods, theories, perspectives, and frameworks relating to humanistic and religious approaches to sustainability;
5. Students will work collaboratively and in multidisciplinary teams on class projects;
6. Students will learn to approach concrete problems, including the case studies addressed in course readings and discussions, in a holistic manner that benefits from interdisciplinary knowledge, systems thinking, and broad stakeholder engagement.

## **General Education Objectives**

1. This course fulfills the Humanities (H) General Education Objective by providing instruction in the key themes, principles and terminology of Religious Studies.
2. General Education Student Learning Outcomes for Humanities courses:
  - a. The course will teach students about the history, underlying theory, and methodologies used in Religious Studies. Both in a separate introductory section on Religious Studies and throughout discussions of other issues and cases, course readings, lectures, and

discussions will emphasize the history, theory and methodologies of Religious Studies and their relevance for Sustainability Studies.

- b. The course will provide students with background on the history, theory and methodologies used in Religious Studies, using case studies focused on sustainability to illustrate approaches and issues. Readings, class discussions, and writing assignments will focus on developing the skills by which students can identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape the ways people think about both religion and sustainability.
- c. The class emphasizes clear and effective analysis, expressed both in class discussions and in written assignments. In reading, discussion, and writing, students will be taught and encouraged to approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives, including diverse cultural and religious traditions as well as different theoretical frameworks within religious studies.

### **Course Requirements**

**Reading Quizzes – (20%)** Four in-class, closed book reading quizzes will be administered throughout the semester to encourage students to keep up with reading assignments. All quizzes will be based on course readings and will not be cumulative. Quizzes will be given on September 4, September 16, October 7, and October 28.

**Group Project—(20%)** Students will examine how a particular religious tradition has defined sustainability and its problems and what resources that tradition has for addressing these issues (group project), culminating in a conference at which students present posters and/or videos.

**Short Essays—(40%)\*** (4-5 double-spaced pages, 1000 words each) that will contribute to this group assignment. Each essay will be worth 20% of your final grade.

- a. Attend a sustainability-related event. Analyze themes and categories raised in Gardner article—**Due September 18**, feedback in the form of grade, peer review, and corrections will be provided within 2 weeks of receipt of assignment.
- b. Interview a religious leader or layperson or visit a religious event or service and write a description and analysis of the interview or event in relation to sustainability—**Due October 16**, feedback in the form of grade, peer review, and corrections will be provided within 2 weeks of receipt of assignment.

**Weekly Nature Journal—(10%)\*** Students will maintain a weekly journal concerning their thoughts about religion, nature, and sustainability. Journal entries will be somewhat informal and students are encouraged to explore topics relevant to their experiences and interests.

**Attendance and Participation (10%)** Attendance for this class is mandatory, and students are expected to arrive on time to class having read the assigned material. Students are also expected to participate in class discussion. Attendance will be taken during each class meeting.

**Grading Scale:** A: 100-94; A-: 93-90; B+: 89-87; B: 86-84; B-: 83-80; C+: 79-77; C: 76-74; C-: 73-70; D+: 69-67; D: 66-64; D-: 63-60; E: <60.

**\*Consistent with university writing requirement standards**, the instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, usage of standard written English, clarity, coherence, and organization. (See below for grading rubric)

\*\*\*Please note that a C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, General Education, university writing requirement or College Basic distribution credit. To achieve such credit you must achieve a C or better in this class. <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>\*\*\*

## **University Writing Requirement**

This course counts for university writing requirement 2 credit.

The Writing Requirement ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

Course grades now have two components. To receive writing credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, usage of standard written English, clarity, coherence, and organization. Students will receive a grade and corrections on their work. Students will be graded according to the following rubric:

Students will complete two short essays (4-5 double-spaced, 1000 words each). Essay #1 will be due On September 27, and feedback returned on October 7. Essay #2 will be due on November 8, and feedback returned on November 15.

Assessment:

1. What type of feedback will be provided to the student (in reference to writing skill)?  
☒X\_\_\_ Grade ☒X\_\_\_ Corrections \_\_\_\_\_ Drafts \_\_\_\_\_ Other
2. Will a published rubric be used? Yes (see below)

## **Policies and Rules**

**Attendance and Reading:** Absence for reasons of illness, religious holiday, or official university business is excused. Please inform me as early as possible and provide appropriate documentation. All students are expected to arrive on time and be prepared to discuss the readings at every class meeting. You are allowed three unexcused absences. After the third unexcused absence your final grade will be reduced a full letter grade (A to B, A- to B-). Students with six or more unexcused absences will automatically fail the course.

**Submitting Assignments:** The short essays and nature journals will be submitted electronically via Canvas and screened for plagiarism through Turnitin.

**Disruptions:** Students should make every effort to avoid disruptive behavior, such as chronic tardiness or early departures. The use of cell phones and other electronic devices is prohibited. You may not have a computer turned on in class unless you receive specific permission from the instructor. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. Repeat violations of these rules will result in dismissal from the class.

**Grade Appeals:** Grades will not be discussed via email. If you have a question or complaint about your grade, please contact me within 48 hours of posting to schedule a meeting.

**Communication Guidelines:** Students are encouraged to contact the instructor via Canvas and email for questions, clarifications, requests and assistance, academic or otherwise. Please remember that your correspondences represent you and the way you regard your academic progress; all correspondences are to be written in a respectful, professional manner. Thus, written correspondences to the instructor or fellow classmates are official correspondences and should be approached with a degree of formality, not composed as you might structure text messages or chats. All emails must include a subject, polite greeting, direct and clear body, and a polite salutation; the instructor will request revision of correspondences that do not adhere to this format. Additionally, students will be advised to “SEE SYLLABUS” for questions that students can answer easily by looking in the syllabus (quiz dates, for example). During the week the instructor requests 24 hours to reply to student emails (48 hours on weekends). \*\*\*In emergency situations that require immediate attention, please add ‘URGENT’ to the subject line of your message.\*\*\*

**Academic Honesty:** All work submitted must be completed without unauthorized assistance, collaboration, or deliberate misrepresentations. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her/them proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. **I operate under a zero tolerance policy and any instance of cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course**; in such cases an incident form will also be sent to the Office of the Dean. All UF students are expected to abide by the Student Conduct Code, which can be found at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php>. If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please consult the UF Honor Code as well as the UF Policies on Academic Honesty, Student Rights and Responsibilities. These can be found at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

**Accommodations for Disabilities:** Students who need classroom accommodations or other reasonable modifications to satisfy course criteria must register with the Disability Resource Center of the Dean of Students Office, who will work with you and the instructor to make appropriate arrangements. You can contact the Disability Resource Center at 352-392-8565 or <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>.

**Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at the end of the semester. Evaluations can be found

at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Summary results of these evaluations can be found at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

## **Campus Resources**

**Writing Studio:** If you want to improve your writing, the Writing Studio is a free service for current UF graduate and undergraduate students providing you with the opportunity to work one-on-one with a consultant to help you become a more effective writer. Appointments may be scheduled online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/for-students/schedule-an-appointment/>.

**Health and Counseling:** Health and counseling services are available for students in the event personal problems threaten to hinder academic performance. You can contact UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>; 352-392-1575, 301 Peabody Hall; Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 352-392-1171; Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 352-392-1161; and the University Police Department: 352-392-1111. For assistance with professional development and resume writing, you can consult the Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 352-392-1601.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Unit One: Introducing Sustainability**

This section defines sustainability as a cultural, environmental, and social objective, and introduces the approach of Sustainability Studies.

August 21: Introduction to course, no readings

August 23: Willis Jenkins, “Sustainability Theory”

Hayes Brown, “The end times are here, and I’m at Target”  
<https://theoutline.com/post/7754/climate-change-doomsday-cults-prophecy?zd=1&zi=7kfmf4kl>

August 26: Go to Ecological Footprint Network to determine your personal footprint  
<http://www.footprintcalculator.org>

Stephanie Kaza, “Why Environmental Humanities?”  
<http://www.uvm.edu/~skaza/publications/assets/envhumanities.PDF>

### **Unit Two: Introducing Religious Studies**

This section will begin to define Religious Studies as a humanistic discipline, its unique theoretical and methodological perspectives, and its distinctive contributions to Sustainability Studies.

August 28: Horgan, “Why Study Humanities?”  
<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/cross-check/why-study-humanities-what-i-tell-engineering-freshmen/>

August 30: Bauman, “Introduction,” and “Religion: What is it, who gets to define it, and why does it matter?”

September 4: Gardner, “Invoking the Spirit: Engaging Religion and Spirituality in the Quest for a Sustainable World” <http://iefworld.org/dgard03.htm>  
**Reading Quiz #1**

September 6: **Guest Lecturer, Vickie Machado** “Religion and Environmental Activism in Florida”

“Indigenous and Pagan leaders heal the water,”  
<https://wildhunt.org/2019/01/indigenous-and-pagan-leaders-heal-the-water.html>

“Environmental groups to walk around Lake Okeechobee to raise awareness about Florida's waters,” <https://www.news-press.com/story/news/2019/01/23/lake-okeechobee-prayer-walk-everglades-calooahatchee-river-red-tide-blue-green-algae-chad-gillis/2655669002/>

September 9: **Guest Lecturer, Ben Lowe** “Religion and Fisheries Management”

“The Neglected Role of Religion in Fisheries Management”

September 11: Wrisley, “Spatial Humanities” See: <https://ejatlas.org/featured/envconflictsvale>

September 13: **Visit to Map and Imagery Library**

### **Unit Three: The Social and Economic Dimensions**

Reading and discussions in this section focus on religion’s roles in the social and economic aspects of sustainability. It emphasizes the role of religious perspectives and values in definitions of economic justice, a central value of sustainability, and in ecological economics. Theoretical emphasis will be on the ways religion, as a humanistic and cultural phenomenon, interacts and influences these other aspects.

September 16: Starhawk, “Social Permaculture—What is it?”  
<https://www.ic.org/social-permaculture-what-is-it/>  
**Reading Quiz #2**

September 18: Caraway, “Religion, Sustainability Movements, and Ecumenism: A Case Study in Santiago de Cuba”

September 20: Kothari et al., “Conservation as if People Also Mattered: Policy and Practice of Community-based Conservation”

September 23: Kothari, “Eco-Swaraj vs. Global Eco-Catastrophe”

--“Radical Ecological Democracy: Some More Reflections from the South on Degrowth <https://www.degrowth.info/en/2016/12/radical-ecological-democracy-some-more-reflections-from-the-south-on-degrowth/>

September 25: Sanders, “Wilderness as Sabbath for the Land”  
Newton, “Sustainability: A Dissent”

September 27: Devon G. Peña, “A Gold Mine, an Orchard, and an Eleventh Commandment”  
**First Short Essay Due**

September 30: Film, *Aluna*

October 2: Film, *Aluna*

### **Unit Three: Economic Dimensions and Degrowth**

This section emphasizes the role of religious perspectives and values in definitions of economic justice, a central value of sustainability, and in ecological economics

October 7: Rose Zuzworsky, “From the Marketplace to the Dinner Plate”  
**Reading Quiz #3**

October 9: Zeller, “Quasi-religious American Foodways”

October 11: Pembayo, “Renewal of Non-Western Methods for Sustainable Living”

October 14: Salonen, “Living and Dealing with Food in an Affluent Society—A Case for the Study of Lived (Non)Religion”

October 16: Lang, Integrating Southern Perspectives

October 18: Veciana, Synergies between Degrowth and the Global Ecovillage Network

October 21: Picavea, Collaboration and changing beliefs are two keys for a degrowth economy

### **Unit Four: Ecological Dimensions**

Readings and discussions in this section focus on religion’s interactions with the environmental aspects of sustainability, including both the practical contribution of religious activists and the theoretical perspectives of religious studies scholars.

October 23: “The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good”  
<https://wacatholics.org/ui/img/files/crplp.pdf> (*also available as pdf under files*)

October 25: James M. Gustafson, “A Comparative Interlude: Some Religious and Theological Reflections”

October 28: **Reading Quiz #4, no assigned readings**

### **Unit Five: Case Study: Religion and Sustainable Consumption**

In this section, consumption is examined as a second concrete illustration of religion's role in shaping sustainable values and practices. Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian religious frameworks are used as examples.

October 30: Mattson, "The Islamic View on Consumption and Material Development in Light of Environmental Pollution" (pp. 1-17)  
<https://rissc.jo/books/en/009-Islam-Christianity-Environment.pdf>

November 1: Guha, "How Much Should a Person Consume?"

November 4: Nash, "On the Subversive Virtue: Frugality"

November 6: Kaza, "Penetrating the Big Pattern"

Phillip Glass, "Meat to Eat it or Not"  
<https://tricycle.org/magazine/meat-eat-it-or-not-philip-glass/>

### **Unit Six: Case Study: Religion and Sustainable Agriculture**

November 8: Taylor, "The Tractor is my Pulpit: Sacred Agriculture as Priestly Practice"  
**Second Short Essay Due**

November 13: Caraway, "The Spiritual Dimensions of the Permaculture Movement in Cuba"

November 15: Berry, "The Ecological Crisis as a Crisis of Agriculture"

November 18: Berry, "The Agricultural Crisis as a Crisis of Culture"

### **Unit Seven: Final Project**

November 20: Group Conferences

November 22: Group Conferences

November 25: **AAR, No Class**

December 2: Group Presentations

December 4: Group Presentations  
**Nature Journal 5 Due December 5 at 11:59pm**

Qualities and Criteria	Satisfactory (A to B+ range)	Satisfactory (B to C range)	Unsatisfactory (C-or below)
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<p>Content/Information All elements of the topics are addressed</p> <p>Critical evaluation and synthesizing of sources</p> <p>Information based on careful research</p> <p>Coherence of information (Weight 60%)</p>	<p>The essay is objective and addresses with an in depth analysis all the issues referred in the proposed topic. The provided information is necessary and sufficient to discuss these issues. Critical thinking and synthesis of sources is fully evident</p>	<p>The essay is objective and for the most part addresses with an in depth analysis most of the issues referred in the proposed topic. The provided information is, for the most part, necessary and sufficient to discuss these issues.</p>	<p>The essay is not objective and addresses poorly the issues referred in the proposed topic. The provided information is not necessary or not sufficient to discuss these issues.</p>
<p>Quality of Writing Clarity of sentences and paragraphs</p> <p>No errors and spelling, grammar and use of English</p> <p>Organization and coherence of ideas (Weight 25%)</p>	<p>The essay is well written from start to finish, without spelling, grammar or use of English errors. The essay is well organized, clear and presents ideas in a coherent way.</p>	<p>The essay is well written for the most part, without spelling, grammar or use of English errors. The essay is for the most part well organized, clear and presents ideas in a coherent way.</p>	<p>The essay is not well written, and contains many spelling errors, and/or grammar errors and/or use of English errors. The essay is badly organized, lacks clarity and/or does not present ideas in a coherent way</p>
<p>References and use of references Scholarly level of references</p> <p>How effective the references are used in the essay</p> <p>Soundness of references</p> <p>MLA style in reference list and for citations</p>	<p>All the references used are important, and are of good/scholarly quality. There is a minimum of 4 scholarly resources that are used effectively in the essay. All the references are effectively used, correctly cited and correctly listed in the reference list according to MLA style.</p>	<p>Most of the references used are important, and are of good/scholarly quality. There is a minimum of 4 scholarly resources that are for the most part used effectively in the essay. Most of the references are effectively used, correctly cited and correctly listed in the reference list according to APA style.</p>	<p>Most of the references used are not important, and/or are not of good/scholarly quality. There is not a minimum of 4 scholarly resources, and/or they are not used effectively in the essay. References are not effectively used, and/or correctly cited and/or correctly listed in the reference list according to APA style.</p>

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\*Rubric originally developed by Dr. Stella Porto of UMUC