

REL 3938: Green Christianity

Course Meeting Time: T - 1:55-2:45, R - 1:55-3:50 (7/7-8)

Instructor: Christopher Fouche

Phone: 352-392-1625

Email: cefouche@ufl.edu

Office: 119 Anderson

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:50-1:40. or you can set up a meeting at a different time with me. Don't hesitate to reach out if you need help!

Course Description

When it comes to the environmental crisis, is Christianity part of the cure, or part of the disease? If it is part of the disease, how can that be changed? If it is part of the cure, what does that cure look like? These are the anchor questions for this course. We will attempt to answer them by studying the relationship between various strands of Christianity, including Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism, and modern environmental problems and controversies, such as climate change, food, and animal rights. We will also look to the Bible and to Christian history for additional perspectives on the created order. In the end, we will have a better understanding of the Christian tradition, and of the pressing environmental questions of the day, and most critically, we will have a better grasp of how those two shape and inform each other.

Course Objectives

The objectives for the students of REL 3938 include the following:

- to gain a heightened understanding of the Christian tradition, including the Bible, various theological perspectives, and the practices of modern-day Christians
- to gain a heightened understanding of the various aspects of the environmental crisis, including climate change, food and agriculture, and animal welfare.
- to gain understanding as to how environmentalism affects Christianity, and how Christianity affects environmentalism.
- to improve as readers, writers, and critical thinkers.
- to better learn how to participate and to learn in a discussion-oriented class setting.

Textbooks (NOTE: Other readings will be posted online on the course's Canvas page as the semester progresses.)

Pope Francis. *Laudato Si - On Care for Our Common Home*. Published by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. July 18, 2015. NOTE: Don't spend money on this unless you want to. It's available for free online at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Wilkinson, Katharine K. *Between God and Green: How Evangelicals are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Wirzba, Norman. *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Linzey, Andrew. *Animal Theology*. Champaign, IL: Illinois University Press, 1995.
NOTE: it's an older book. Look for used copies.

Berry, Wendell. *Jayber Crow*. Berkely, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2001. NOTE: You can find this super-cheap used, or at your public library. Don't buy it new.

Macduff, Mallory. *Natural Saints: How People of Faith are Working to Save God's Earth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Grading

The course will be graded using a 1000 point scale. To gain all 1000 points offered will be to make a 100 in the class. The remaining grades break down as follows:

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000		C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929		C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899		D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869		D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829		D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799		E	0.00	0-59	0-599

Course Assignments

If this course is a body, the readings are its skeletal structure. All of the “stuff” of the course is built upon, and hangs upon, the readings. As such, several assignments will require you to engage with the authors, and the arguments they make. They include:

1. Class Presentations (300 available points, or 30% of your grade): I want you to improve your skills at verbally presenting what you have learned to others. There is no better way to learn material than to prepare yourself for teaching on it. Trust me. To that end, entire class days (see the schedule later in the syllabus) have been devoted to presentations. There will be six altogether, one for each of the texts. EVERY STUDENT WILL PRESENT ON EVERY BOOK. The presentations will be short, 10-20 minutes at the most, and each will focus on one aspect of the book. Some presentations will be individual, others will be in partner or group format. You will get very specific instructions prior to each presentation as to the format,

objectives, etc. At its core, what this assignment will require of you is to read the material well, draw in some outside complimentary sources, and to present that information in a clear, interesting way. Each presentation will be worth 50 points, or 5% of your grade, totaling 300 points for all six.

2. **Reading Reflections (200 available points, or 20% of your grade):** The presentations are about content and analysis. The reflections are about your reaction to and reflection upon (hence the name) of what I ask you to read. They must be at least 400 words, no more than 700, and they will be graded upon the quality of your thought (Did you show that you read the book? Did you show that you actually gave it some thought?) and the clarity of your communication (Can I follow your thought process by reading what you wrote?). Again, this is the space for emotions you felt while reading, questions that the text spawned, and yes, critiques, so long as you tell me why. In other words, "The book sucked" = BAD, "I really wish the author would have done x, y, and z..." = GOOD. Again, you will have 6 to do, the first 5 being worth 30 points a piece and the final one being worth 50. They will need to be turned in by the beginning on class on the day they are due to receive full credit.

Your other assignments are more traditional: A Final Exam, and a Paper.

3. **Final Exam (200 available points, or 20% of your grade):** The final exam will be takehome, open book/notes (no collaborations - your work alone please). I will write four essay questions, and will require you to answer two of the four. Each response must be at least 1000 words.

4. **Paper (300 available points, or 30% of your grade):** This course is all about the intersection of Christianity and the environment, so your paper will be as well. You have two real options to choose from:

- a. Take an element of Christianity and read it through an environmental lens, so to speak. This could take a variety of forms. For example, you could decide to study what the Old Testament has to say about environmental issues, or the New. You could take a famous theologian/thinker in Christian history and try to find an environmental ethic in their writings (Someone like Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, or maybe MLK). You could also study a current Christian group or denomination involved in environmental practice, and write a paper on the ways in which their activism is grounded in Christianity. (This could be a certain denomination's work, such as the United Methodist Church, for instance, or a non-denominational group, such as A Rocha.) The idea is to start with some element of Christianity, and then to interpret it, if you will, in light of current environmental concerns.

- b. Your other option is to go in the opposite direction: to start with a current environmental issue - climate change, factory farming, the morality of zoos & aquariums, etc - and to attempt to fashion a surmise what a response to that issue consistent with Christian beliefs and teachings might look like. Take climate change, for example. Obviously, there is nothing in the Bible which deals directly with the issue, so how does a Christian respond? What guidance can they find? Note also that Christians think very differently on this issue - some are very concerned about climate change, some say it is a hoax fashioned by

power hungry progressives. How does a Christian find their way through all of this to form a response coherent with the tradition? In the previous option, you started with Christianity. Here, start with the environmental issue, and the sort of action it demands, and then discover which expressions of Christianity (if any) would be compatible with those demands.

Papers will be at least 2500 words, and will contain cover page, bibliography, etc. They will be properly formatted, and academically researched. (Do not cite Wikipedia here.) All topics must be approved by me ahead of time - see the dates below. You will be responsible for a draft, and for a brief (5 minutes or less) report on the project to your classmates at the end of the semester.

Course Schedule (subject to change at my discretion)

Beside each date, you will find the readings which are due by that date. Note also the due dates for separate assignments.

Week 1

Jan 5 - Course Intro

Jan 7 - Intro to Laudato Si, Prologue & Chapter 1

Week 2

Jan 12 - Laudato Si, ch 2

Jan 14, Laudato Si, ch 3-4, Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis."

<https://www.uvm.edu/~gflomenh/ENV-NGO-PA395/articles/Lynn-White.pdf>

Week 3

Jan 19 - Laudato Si, ch 5-6

Jan 21 - **Presentations on Laudato Si** (Info on specifics will be given in class prior to this date), **Reading Reflection #1 due**

Week 4

Jan 26 - Between God and Green, Intro, ch 1 & 2

Jan 28 - Between God and Green, ch 3 & 4, **PAPER TOPIC DUE**

Week 5

Feb 2 - Between God and Green, chapters 5, 6, Conclusion, Appendices

Feb 4 - **Presentations on Between God and Green, Reading Reflection #2 due**

Week 6

Feb 9 - Food and Faith, Preface, ch 1

Feb 11 - Food and Faith, ch 2

Week 7

Feb 16 - Food and Faith, ch 3-4

Feb 18 - Food and Faith, ch 5

Week 8

Feb 23 - Food and Faith, ch 6-7

Feb 25 - **Presentations on Food and Faith, Reading Reflection #3 due**

Week 9 - Feb 28-Mar 4 - Spring Break - NO CLASS

Week 10

Mar 8 - Animal Theology, Intro, ch 1-3

Mar 10 - Animal Theology, ch 4-6

Week 11

Mar 15 - Animal Theology, ch 7-9

Mar 17 - **Presentations on Animal Theology, Reading Reflection #4 due**

Week 12

Mar 22 - Jayber Crow, part 1

Mar 24 - Jayber Crow, part 2

Week 13

Mar 29 - Jayber Crow, part 3, **PAPER ROUGH DRAFT DUE**

Mar 31 - **Presentations on Jayber Crow, Reading Reflection #5 due**

Week 14

Apr 5 - Natural Saints, Intro, ch 1-4

Apr 7 - Natural Saints, ch 5-6

Week 15

Apr 12 - NS, 7-8, Conclusion

Apr 14 - **Presentations on Natural Saints, Reading Reflection #6 due**

Apr 19 - Wrap up, **FINAL PAPER DUE, FINAL PAPER PRESENTATIONS**

Apr 28 - **FINAL EXAMS DUE BY NOON!**

Classroom Policies, and Other Stuff

Attendance

In order to do well, you must attend class, and be fully “present” while you are here. It’s that simple. If you compile more than 6 (six) unexcused absences (remember, Thursdays count as 2) you will fail the class. LET ME KNOW AHEAD OF TIME IF YOU HAVE A CONFLICT. It will make all of our lives easier.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

- a.) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- b.) Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student. (University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 15 Aug. 2007 <<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>>)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

Classroom Behavior

The rules of civility and courtesy are of utmost importance to me. Boorishness will result in reprimand, and could negatively affect your grade. If the infraction is serious enough, or repeated enough, it will be passed on to University discipline. Note the University's honor and conduct codes: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/>

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, ethnic, and yes, religious backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. (I know that comes as a shock in a religion class.) Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own.

Turning in Work

Papers and posts are due and exams are to be taken by the assigned deadline. Late papers and exams will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse. The best way to handle your business? Don't wait until the last minute, and if you're not sure that something went through, follow up to be sure!

Canvas

Some elements of our class, including supplemental readings, will be on the REL 3938 page in the Canvas system. If you've never used it familiarize yourself with it, and know where to get help should you need it:

Paper Maintenance Responsibilities

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material. This is good practice for all classes - cover yourself!

Writing Center

The University Writing Center is located in Tigert 302 and is available to all UF students.

General Education Learning Outcomes

Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (i.e. grammar, punctuation, usage) and the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive, require multiple drafts submitted to the instructor for feedback prior to final submission, and fulfill 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement.

You must pass this course with a “C” or better to satisfy the General Education requirement for Composition (C) and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit (E6). You must turn in all papers totaling 6,000 words to receive credit for writing 6,000 words.

PLEASE NOTE: a grade of “C-” will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition (C) requirement.

The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support, style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202. That office will provide documentation to the student whom must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Course Evaluations

“Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <http://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.”