

**REL 2071 (029E): RELIGION AND SUSTAINABILITY
FALL 2014**

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T 7; R 7-8 (Pugh 120)

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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 will highlight multiple religious perspectives, especially those from Latin America and south Asia.

Topics and Organization

1. *What is Sustainability?*

The course begins with an overview of the concept of sustainability, including its origins in the notion of "sustainable development" and contemporary discussions.

2. *What is Religious Studies?*

We examine different approaches to and definitions of the academic study of religion, highlighting several key thinkers, issues, and perspectives that are especially relevant to Sustainability Studies.

3. *Religion and the "Three Legs" of Sustainability*

This unit will look at the relations of religion to the three traditional "legs" of sustainability: social, economic, and environmental. Religious approaches to sustainability often emphasize social justice, sometimes as a critique of ecological approaches, and often with a Third or Fourth World perspective. Topics include social and environmental justice movements in the U.S. and elsewhere, especially South Asia and Latin America. Case studies including agriculture, forestry, and other issues will explore the ways the three legs are integrated with more or less success, and the role of religion in such efforts.

4. *First Case Study: Religion and Sustainable Agriculture*

The next section will look at crucial features of religion and their relations to sustainability, with a focus on community identity, place, religious narratives, and ethics.

5. *Second Case Study: Religion and Sustainable Consumption*

This section looks at the ways religious ideas and institutions affect consumption practices of individuals and groups.

6. *Concluding session:* The class will finish with a mini-conference in which students present the result of their group research on the ways particular religious traditions or communities are interpreting and addressing the problems related to sustainability.

General Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

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 and Assignments

1. Attendance and participation in class discussions, including timely and close reading of all assigned texts.
2. Group project: Study 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 (15% of final grade).
3. Two individual short essays (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 (40% total).
 - 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.
4. Two hour exams (20% each of final grade; 40% total)
5. Weekly nature journal (5%)

Students will maintain a weekly nature journal to be submitted at the end of the semester. You will submit an initial entry on September 4 and a midterm journal on October 9.

*Consistent with Gordon Rule 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)

Gordon Rule –

This course counts for Gordon Rule 2 credit.

The Writing Requirement (Gordon Rule) 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 25, and feedback returned on October 2. Essay #2 will be due on October 16, and feedback returned on November 1.

Assessment:

1.) What type of feedback will be provided to the student (in reference to writing skill)?

Grade Corrections Drafts Other

2.) Will a published rubric be used? Yes (see below)

Grading Policies and Scale

Full information about UF's grading policy, including credit for major, minor, General Education, and other requirements, is available at this website:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

The grade scale for this course is as follows:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	Below 60

Please note that a C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, General Education, Gordon Rule, 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>

Policies, Rules, and Resources

1. *Handing in Assignments:* Place all papers in my mailbox in the Religion Department, 107 Anderson Hall. DO NOT slip them under the door or leave them on the door of my office, the main department office, or the teaching assistant's office. Please also keep a dated electronic copy of all your papers.

2. *Late or Make-Up Assignments:* You may take an exam early or receive an extension on an exam or essay assignment *only* in extraordinary circumstances *and* with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down 1/3 grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

3. *Completion of All Assignments*: You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing for any assignment. You are responsible for knowing the course requirements and making sure you hand them in. I will not remind you of missing assignments.

4. *Attendance and Participation*: Class attendance is required. Do not register for this class if you cannot arrive on time. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day's readings. Tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. After the first late arrival, the instructor reserves the right to mark you absent, without an excused absence. The instructor will *not* provide notes or discuss material that has already been covered for students who arrive late, barring extraordinary circumstances (which do not include failing to find a parking place or sleeping in).

5. *Common Courtesy*: Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls or text messages during class will be asked to leave and counted absent for the day. Students may take notes on a laptop computer only with prior approval from the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. If that occurs, the student will be marked absent for the day.

6. *Honor Code*: On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html>. Any student(s) demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in *any assignment* for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. *Accommodation for Disabilities*: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

8. *Counseling Resources*: Resources available on-campus for students include the following:

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling;
- Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling;
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling;
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

9. *Software Use*: All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to

monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

10. *Writing Assistance*: In addition to scheduling time with the instructor, students are highly encouraged to seek assistance from the University Reading and Writing Center (<http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/index.html>). For additional assistance, I recommend Joshua Sowin's "A Guide to Writing Well" (<http://www.fireandknowledge.org/archives/2007/01/08/a-guide-to-writing-well/>). The University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center is also a valuable resource, especially for basic citation information: (<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>).

Required Readings

PLEASE NOTE: All readings will be available on reserve at Library West and/or online on Sakai.

Required reading: Books

Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture* (San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1977).

Ramachandra Guha, *How Much Should a Person Consume? Environmentalism in India and the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Schedule

** PLEASE NOTE: There may be changes in dates and assignments as the semester proceeds. Students will be informed of any changes and will be responsible for having assignments completed by the updated due dates.

TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT

I. INTRODUCING SUSTAINABILITY

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

August 26 Introduction to the course

August 28 Willis Jenkins, "Sustainability Theory"

September 2 Science, Art, Literature, and Religion
Stephanie Kaza, "Why Environmental Humanities?"
<http://www.uvm.edu/~skaza/publications/assets/envhumanities.PDF>

II. 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. Lectures will introduce a number of key thinkers, perspectives, and terms, which will be referred to throughout the semester.

- September 4 Gary Gardner, "Invoking the Spirit: Engaging Religion and Spirituality in the Quest for a Sustainable World"
<http://iefworld.org/dgard03.htm>
Nature immersion and journaling exercise Entry #1 due
- September 9 Heather Foster, "The Role of Religion in Education About Sustainability" (E-learning)

III. RELIGION AND SUSTAINABILITY: SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

Reading and discussions in this section focus on religion's roles in the social aspects of sustainability. Theoretical emphasis will be on the ways religion, as a humanistic and cultural phenomenon, interacts and influences these other aspects.

- September 11 Guha, 1-10; "Democracy in the Forest", *How Much Should a Person Consume?*
- September 16 Guha, "Authoritarianism in the Wild", *How Much Should a Person Consume?*

IV. RELIGION AND SUSTAINABILITY: ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

This section emphasizes the role of religious perspectives and values in definitions of economic justice, a central value of sustainability, and in ecological economics. Buddhist and Roman Catholic ethics will be used as illustrations of diverse religious perspectives on these issues.

- September 18
Scott Russell Sanders, "Wilderness as Sabbath for the Land"
Schumacher, "Buddhist Economics"
Essay #1 due
- September 23 Rose Zuzworsky, "From the Marketplace to the Dinner Plate" (E-learning)
Final revision of essay #1 due

IV. RELIGION AND SUSTAINABILITY: 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.

- September 25 Sarah Taylor, "It Isn't Easy Being Green"

September 30 Wangari Maathai, "Sacred Groves, Sacred No More"
Martinus L. Daneel, "A Tree Planting Eucharist"
Essay #1 graded and returned with feedback

October 2 Examination #1

V. FIRST CASE STUDY: RELIGION AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

This case study begins to show the concrete significance of religion and related cultural values in food production and distribution systems. Perspectives from the U.S., Native American, and South Asian cultural and religious traditions are discussed.

October 7 Berry, *The Unsettling of America*

October 9 Berry, *The Unsettling of America*
Essay #2 due

October 14 **Marc Boglioli**, "A Discourse of Interdependent Human-Nature Relations"

CHERIE SAMPSON/ART AND ENVIRONMENT VISIT--TBA

October 16 Dennis Wall and Virgil Masayesva, "People of the Corn"
Final revision of essay #2 due

VI. SECOND 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 28 Mattson, "The Islamic View on Consumption and Material Development in Light of Environmental Pollution"

November 4 Guha, "How Much Should a Person Consume?"

November 6 Nash, "On the Subversive Virtue: Frugality"
Essay #2 graded and returned with feedback

November 11 Veteran's Day

November 13 Kaza, "Penetrating the Triangle"

November 18 Examination #2

November 20 Group Conferences

November 25 Group Conferences

November 27 Thanksgiving

VII. FINAL CONFERENCE

December 2 **Group presentations**

December 4 **Group presentations**

December 9 Conclusions and discussion

Grading Rubric for Essays:

Qualities & Criteria	Unsatisfactory (C-or below)	Satisfactory (B-C range)	Satisfactory (A-B+ range)
<p>Content/Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All elements of the topics are addressed • Critical evaluation and synthesizing of sources • Information based on careful research • Coherence of information <p><i>(Weight 60%)</i></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>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 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>Quality of Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of sentences and paragraphs • No errors and spelling, grammar and use of English • Organization and coherence of ideas <p><i>(Weight 25%)</i></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>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 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>References and use of references</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly level of references • How effective the references are used in the essay • Soundness of 	<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</p>	<p>Most of the references used are important, and are of good/scholarly quality. There is a minimum of 4 scholarly</p>	<p>All the references used are important, and are of good/scholarly quality. There is a minimum of 4 scholarly</p>

<p>references</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APA style in reference list and for citations <p><i>(Weight 15%)</i></p>	<p>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>	<p>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>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 APA style.</p>
<p>Overriding criterion: Originality and authenticity. If the essay is identified as not being original, and/or not done by the student, the instructor has the right to grade the paper as an F.</p>			

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