

SM 300-3B: Big Question Course: Faith and Creation

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Mondays, 1:00-4:00 pm

Lost Beagle Lake, 920 Staton Road, Henryville, IN 47126 (unless otherwise specified)

Instructors

The Rev. Dr. Patricia K. Tull
A.B. Rhodes Professor Emerita of Hebrew Bible
ptull@lpts.edu
502-608-8816

The Rev. Dr. Tyler Mayfield
A.B. Rhodes Professor of HB/OT
tmayfield@lpts.edu
502-992-9375

Course Description

This course will employ Bible study, ecological reading, experiential learning, and group reflection to develop a repertoire both pastoral and practical for addressing the ecological challenges we face in the early twenty-first century. Three primary convictions underlying the course are:

- 1) That God, who loves this world and all its inhabitants, is calling people of faith to unprecedented levels of ecological awareness and action;
- 2) That the challenges are broad enough that everyone is invited to bring our talents and wisdom to these efforts; and
- 3) That faith leaders have a particular calling to use our energy, imagination, and leadership to help other people of faith and good will to rise to these challenges.

We will explore understandings of our place on earth that landed us in this situation and understandings that may be emerging to help heal us. Specifically, we will learn about ecological health and degradation, environmental justice and injustice, and the variety of proposals being promoted for healing our community on God's earth. We will also learn about sustainable practices in agriculture, buildings, and human systems.

NOTE: The class will usually meet at the home of Trisha Tull and Don Summerfield at Lost Beagle Lake, about 30 minutes from campus. Please be on time and ready to begin class at 1:00. Bring your preferred Bible as well as books and notes for class discussion. Bring a small spiral notebook for field notes.

Henryville is generally about five degrees cooler than Louisville. Please check the weather and dress for comfort during our planned outdoor activities. Bring shoes or boots to change into that you don't mind getting muddy. You may also bring gardening gloves, a seasonal hat, and tools appropriate for the day's activities. Whenever you would like to come early with a picnic lunch, tables and chairs are available.

“The garden is one place where people can, over a committed period of time ... listen and watch patiently, enter into alliances, perform rituals, give thanks, know intimately the myriad persons of their community, and experience a sense of living in place.” (D. Deffenbaugh, *Learning the Language of the Fields*, 59)

Course Objectives, Dreams, Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Articulate a biblical and theological basis for repairing the relationships between humans and the earth community.
- 2) Explain several dimensions of environmental efforts in terms understandable to congregation members, both adults and children. Articulate, for example, the nature and future of our challenges in terms of species extinction and preservation; sustainable use of resources; farming and eating; and human environmental equity.
- 3) Increase awareness, vocabulary, and skill in knowing and tending trees and plants and understanding their benefits and needs, and recognizing the needs and benefits of wild creatures around us.
- 4) Gain confidence in continuing to learn and grow in ecological knowledge, skill, and practice, and draw up commitments for the coming year that intersect with your own skillset and calling, as well as the world’s deep need.

Assignments & Evaluation

1. Participation (30%)

Students should come **eagerly ready** to discuss the assigned readings. Active participation includes, but is not limited to, listening carefully to others’ presentations and thoughts, taking notes, asking relevant questions, responding to others’ comments, and inviting others into the conversation. It does not include dominating a group or class discussion by constant talking. Monitor and vary your forms of participation; introverts should force themselves to speak more than they think necessary; extroverts should force themselves to speak less than they think necessary.

While reading and preparing for class, students will be expected to take notes (jot down questions, write up summaries, etc.), so they will have resources to refer to during class discussion. You will need at least 6 hours each week to prepare for our approx. 3-hour class; do not expect to prepare in one sitting per week.

Beyond academics, participation will also include nature walks, in-class meditative practices, close observation of a selected tree, and tending garden plots.

2. Weekly 2-page Papers (40% of final grade)

Students will write a 2-page paper responding to a specific question or prompt in preparation for each class session (excepting the first class and one other class of their choosing); 10 papers total. They are due at the beginning of class time each week via Canvas. Students will use the paper as well as their reading notes to contribute to class discussion.

3. Campus-Wide Event in celebration of Earth Day (30% of final grade)

The class will create an Earth Day event open to the LPTS community. This event can be a play, poetry reading, conference, concert, discussion, workshop, worship service, etc., or some combination thereof. The event will incorporate class materials and topics in some substantial way. We will invite the entire LPTS community—students, staff, faculty, and administration—to this event. Earth Day is Saturday, April 22, 2023. Chapel has been reserved on Wednesday, April 19 as one option.

Grading Scale

95-100	A	73-76	C
90-94	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	0-59	F

Course Readings

These books will be read in full:

Wangari Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World*. New York: Doubleday, 2010.

Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology: Kenosis, Climate Change, and Befriending Nature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021.

James Gustave Speth and Peter Denton, *Imagine a Joyful Economy*. Kelowna, BC: Wood Lake Books, 2020.

Patricia Tull, *Inhabiting Eden: Christians, the Bible, and the Ecological Crisis*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013.

Other readings will be posted on Canvas or accessible through internet links in this syllabus. Since many readings are excerpted from books that you may wish to read further, bibliography is provided at the end of the syllabus.

Course Schedule

Monday, February 6, Session #1

Location: 920 Staton Road, Henryville, IN 47126

Topic: Our Current Ecological Moment

Bible Study: Acts 9:1-22

Activities: tour of house and surroundings; seed sowing

Preparation

No paper due this week

Reading

Lynn White, Jr., "[The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis](https://www.cmu.ca/faculty/gmatties/lynnwhiterootsofcrisis.pdf)," *Science*, New Series, 155:3767 (Mar. 10, 1967), 1203-7.
<https://www.cmu.ca/faculty/gmatties/lynnwhiterootsofcrisis.pdf>

Dr. White was an American historian who is perhaps most well-known today for the essay you are reading.

Patricia Tull, *Inhabiting Eden*, chapter 1 ("The Problem of Change, Then and Now").

Dr. Tull, LPTS's first professor emerita, began writing on the nexus of Bible and ecology in 2008.

Optional:

David N. Livingstone, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis: A Reassessment," *Fides et Historia* 26:1 (1994): 38-55. [Canvas]

Dr. Livingstone is a professor in the School of Natural and Built Environment at Queen's University in Belfast. His essay offers interesting background on the author whose work he is revisiting, Lynn White, Jr.

"[Getting to Net Zero at Home](#)," recording of Trisha Tull's webinar for the Presbyterian Hunger Program March 12, 2021. PHP news article [here](#).

Monday, February 13, Session #2

Topic: Humans in Creation

Bible Study: Genesis 1 and 2

Activities: tour continued; soil preparation with discussion of what plants need

Preparation

Paper Topic (due via Canvas before class begins)

Using the preparatory materials for today (readings and videos), reflect on the relationship between humans and creation. What is humanity's role in the world?

Reading

Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical, [*Laudato Si': On the Care of Our Common Home*](#), introduction and chapter 1 ("What Is Happening to Our Common Home").

https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf

Pope Francis is the Catholic Church's first South American pope, and Laudato Si' is the first papal encyclical to deal with climate change. Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he worked as chemical technician before becoming a Jesuit priest.

Tull, *Inhabiting Eden*, chapter 2 ("Humans and Creation").

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, "The Council of Pecans." [Canvas]

Dr. Kimmerer, a member of the Potawatomi Nation, teaches environmental and forest biology and directs the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment at SUNY in Syracuse, NY. She received the MacArthur Genius Award in 2022.

David C. Holzman, "[Accounting for Nature's Benefits: The Dollar Value of Ecosystem Services.](#)" *Environmental Health Perspectives* 120:4 (April 2012). <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/epdf/10.1289/ehp.120-a152>

David Holzman is a freelance writer based in Lexington, Mass., who covers medicine and science.

Watch 50-minute lecture by Dr. E. O. Wilson, "[The Diversity of Life.](#)" describing the earth's biodiversity and warning of the danger of "the sixth mass extinction," caused by humans. Find it by scrolling down this page:

<https://eowilsonfoundation.org/video-library-inspiration-from-e-o-wilson/>.

Dr. Wilson, who died in 2021, was a prolific science writer and professor of entomology at Harvard University in Massachusetts, the world's leading expert on ants, and "the father of biodiversity."

Optional:

Watch the beautiful and heartbreaking movie *Chasing Coral*, free on Netflix.

Dr. Mark Eakin, a NOAA coral specialist and Chasing Coral's science advisor, is a Presbyterian elder active in Presbyterians for Earth Care.

Monday, February 20: Session #3

Topic: Creation in Trouble

Bible Study: Genesis 3-4

Activities: Vocabulary lesson; planting trees

Preparation

Paper Topic

How would you describe creation in 2022? What challenges does the earth face?

Reading

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, chapter 2 (“The Gospel of Creation”).

Tull, *Inhabiting Eden*, chapter 3 (“Leaving the Garden”).

Wangari Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*, intro and chapters 1-4 (“Beginnings,” “The Wounds,” “Changing Perspectives,” “The Power of the Tree”).

Dr. Maathai, a Roman Catholic, was a Kenyan social, environmental, and political activist, founder of the Green Belt Movement, and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, [“Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability Summary for Policymakers.”](#)

https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf

IPCC, established in 1988, is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change and the foremost internationally accepted authority on climate change.

Optional:

Jim Robbins, [“The Plan to Turn Half the World into a Reserve for Nature.”](#) BBC Future (March 18, 2020).

[https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200318-the-worlds-largest-nature-reserve.](https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200318-the-worlds-largest-nature-reserve)

Jim Robbins is a veteran journalist based in Helena, Montana. His latest book is The Wonder of Birds: What they Tell Us about the World, Ourselves and a Better Future.

Monday, February 27, Session #4

Topic: Generativity and Simplicity

Bible Study: Isaiah 5:8-13; Matt 6:19-33

Activities: Begin brainstorming for Earth Day event. Depending on the weather, pot up spring seedlings; tend the greenhouse; and/or continue soil preparation.

Preparation

Paper Topic

After watching Ayana Johnson’s TED talk (listed below), try mapping your own ecological Venn diagram. What do you learn about your own commitments to environmental health?

Reading

Tull, *Inhabiting Eden*, chapter 4 (“Commerce and Contentment”).

bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, chapters 3, 4, and 5 (“Moved by Mountains,” “Touching the Earth,” “Reclamation and Reconciliation”). [Canvas]

Gloria Jean Watkins, a Kentucky native who died in 2021, adopted the pen name bell hooks in honor of her maternal great-grandmother, Bell Blair Hooks. A prolific author and postmodern African American cultural critic, in 2014 she founded the bell hooks Institute at Berea College in Kentucky.

Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*, chapter 5 (“Sacred Groves, Sacred No More”).

James Gustave Speth and Peter Denton, *Imagine a Joyful Economy* (“The Joyful Economy: A Next System Possibility,” “Creation Ecology”).

Gus Speth is an American environmental lawyer who cofounded the Natural Resources Defense Council. He is former dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, and has advised U.S. presidents and the

U.N. on sustainable development. Dr. Peter Denton's teaching and research focus on the interdisciplinary nexus of science, technology, and society, especially ethics.

Watch the 20-minute video "The Story of Stuff": <https://www.storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of/>

Annie Leonard, creator of The Story of Stuff, is now the executive director of Greenpeace USA.

Watch TED Talk by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, "How to Find Joy in Climate Action,"

https://www.ted.com/talks/ayana_elizabeth_johnson_how_to_find_joy_in_climate_action

Dr. Johnson is a marine biologist, policy expert, cofounder of the climate initiative All We Can Save Project, and co-creator of the podcast How to Save a Planet.

Optional:

Watch the movie *Kiss the Ground*, available on Netflix and Vimeo.

"By regenerating the world's soils, we can completely and rapidly stabilize Earth's climate, restore lost ecosystems and create abundant food supplies. Using compelling graphics and visuals, along with striking NASA and NOAA footage, the film illustrates how, by drawing down carbon, soil is the missing piece of the climate puzzle."

Monday, March 6, Session #5

Topic: An Environmentally Just Economy

Guest speaker: Rebecca Barnes

Rev. Barnes, a graduate of LPTS, is Coordinator of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, former Associate for Environmental Ministries, and author of 50 Ways to Help Save the Earth.

Bible Study: Ezekiel 34:17-22

Activities: Organizing for Earth Day. Checking for early-growing perennials, spring ephemerals, and covered crops. (NOTE: this may be traded with March 20 activity, depending on weather.)

Preparation

Paper Topic

What environmental injustices have you become aware of in places where you have lived or traveled? What are their roots, and what are people doing to address them?

Reading

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, chapter 3 ("The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis").

Tull, *Inhabiting Eden*, chapter 7, "Environmental Fairness" OR parts of Horizons Bible

Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*, chapter 6 ("Gratitude and Respect").

Luke Cole and Sheila Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*, Preface ("We Speak for Ourselves: The Struggle of Kettleman City"), Introduction, chapter 1 ("A History of the Environmental Justice Movement"), chapter 3 ("Environmental Racism: Beyond the Distributive Paradigm"). [Canvas]

Luke Cole was an environmental lawyer and teacher, cofounder of the Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment, and a pioneer in using legal work for the environmental justice movement. Dr. Foster is a professor of law and policy at Georgetown University and writes in areas of environmental law and justice.

Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*, introduction ("The Standing Rock Saga"), chapter 1 ("Environmental Justice Theory and Its Limitations for Indigenous Peoples"), chapter 2 ("Genocide by Any Other Name: A History of Indigenous Environmental Injustice"). [Canvas]

Dina Gilio-Whitaker is a Colville Confederate Tribes member who studies, writes, and teaches on Native Americans, decolonization, and environmental justice.

Read the PCUSA web page on Environmental Racism and Justice

(<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/environmental-issues/environmental-racism-justice/>).

Download and read the brief poster. You will also find some linked videos to watch. In particular, watch the video on lead poisoning in La Oroya, Peru, and then read this recent follow-up report, which highlights the complexity of environmental action: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/together-justice/2021/11/04/major-victory-against-mining-toxins-in-peru/>.

Optional:

Peruse United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* (1987).

<https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ToxicWastesRace.pdf>

The United Church of Christ was the first denomination to document the inequitable harms of pollution, and to coin the term “environmental racism.”

Monday, March 20, Session #6

Topic: Feeding the World

Guest Speaker: Sajal Sthapit

Dr. Sthapit, a citizen of Nepal, holds a PhD in Plant Pathology from Washington State University, and works for the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas, analyzing genetic characteristics of perennial grains. He will discuss industrial agriculture and its alternatives: place-based food systems; biodiversity in agriculture; perennial crops.

Bible Study: Exodus 13:13b-26

Activities: Check-in about Earth Day; planting out spring edibles; starting sweet potatoes and rooting basil; sowing summer seedlings.

Preparation

Paper Topic:

Wendell Berry famously said that “eating is an agricultural act.” Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, added, “It follows that eating is a political act, too.” How would you characterize the ways you were taught to think of farming and eating, and what might you wish to reconsider?

Reading

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, chapter 4, “Integral Ecology.”

Tull, *Inhabiting Eden*, chapters 5 and 6 (“Food for Life,” “The Needs of Animals”).

Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*, chapter 7 (“Self-Empowerment”).

Mary K. Hendrickson, Philip Howard, et al., “The Food System: Concentration and Its Impacts,”

https://farmaction.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Hendrickson-et-al.-2020.-Concentration-and-Its-Impacts_FINAL_Addended.pdf.

Dr. Hendrickson teaches at the University of Missouri, and is interested in the implications of food system changes for farmers, rural communities, environment and health. Dr. Howard teaches at Michigan State University. His most recent book is Concentration and Power in the Food System: Who Controls What We Eat?

Norman Wirzba, ed., *The Essential Agrarian Reader: The Future of Culture, Community, and the Land*. Wirzba

(“Introduction: Why Agrarianism Matters—Even to Urbanites”), chapters 1 (Wendell Berry, “The Agrarian Standard”), 2 (Brian Donahue, “The Resettling of America”), 4 (Herman E. Daly, “Sustainable Economic Development”), 8 (Wes Jackson, “The Agrarian Mind”), and 15 (Wendell Berry, “Going to Work”). [Canvas]

Dr. Wirzba teaches at Duke University at the intersections of theology, philosophy, ecology, and agrarian and environmental studies.

Optional:

Frederick Kirschenmann, “The Current State of Agriculture,” chapter 6 in *The Essential Agrarian Reader*.

Monday, March 27, Session #7

Topic: Addressing the Climate Crisis and Mending the Earth

Bible Study: Isaiah 65:17-25

Activities: Tending perennials and fruit trees; planning the summer garden (companion planting, succession, regenerative methods)

Preparation

Paper Topic:

Discuss 2-3 practical solutions to the climate crisis. What are these measures and proposals? What is preventing us from moving in these directions?

Reading:

Tull, *Inhabiting Eden*, chapters 8 and 9 (“Our Children’s Inheritance,” “Living within Our Means”).

Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, “The Three Sisters.” [Canvas]

Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine Wilkinson, *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*. Read the short essays by Naomi Klein (“On Fire”), Mary Anne Hitt (“Beyond Coal”), Katharine Hayhoe (“How to Talk about Climate Change”), Kate Knuth (“Becoming a Climate Citizen”), Tara Houska-Zhaabowekwe (“Sacred Resistance”), Gina McCarthy (“Public Service for Public Health”), Mary Anaise Hegler (“Home Is Always Worth It”), Jane Zelikova (“Solutions Underfoot”), Leah Cardimore Stokes (“A Field Guide for Transformation”), Christine E. Nieves Rodriguez (“Community Is Our Best Chance”), and poems by Alice Walker (“Calling All Grand Mothers”) and Mary Oliver (“Mornings at Blackwater”). [Canvas]

Dr. Wilkinson studied geography and environment and was the lead writer of Drawdown (2017) She leads the All We Can Save Project and cohosts the podcast A Matter of Degrees. For information on Dr. Johnson, see Session 4.

Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*, chapter 8 (“Self-Knowledge”).

Watch this very brief video by Katharine Hayhoe, “Climate Change’s Best Hope”

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWu3TlB7XdY>)

Dr. Hayhoe, a Canadian atmospheric scientist and evangelical Christian, teaches at Texas Tech. She is Chief Scientist at the Nature Conservancy and is widely recognized as an outstanding speaker and teacher on climate change.

Optional:

View episodes on YouTube channel Global Weirding with Katharine Hayhoe: “It’s too late to do anything about climate change... right?” (<https://www.pbs.org/video/its-too-late-to-do-anything-about-climate-change-right-06h1km/>);

“Religion has nothing to say about climate change, right?” (<https://www.pbs.org/video/religion-has-nothing-to-say-about-climate-change-right-flhm6p/>)

Monday, April 3, Session #8

Topic: What Congregations Are Doing

Guest Speaker: Jessica Maudlin

Jessica Maudlin is Presbyterian Hunger Program’s Associate of Sustainable Living and Earth Care Concerns, managing the Earth Care Congregation and Hunger Action Advocate networks.

Bible Study: Romans 12:1-8

Activities: Planting potatoes and onions

Preparation

Paper Topic:

While all people who live on earth bear responsibility toward one another and the rest of the earth community, people of faith may have some particular gifts to offer efforts toward environmental responsibility. What, in your view, are some of these, and how have you seen these lived out?

Reading:

Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*, chapter 9 (“The Commitment to Service”).

Mark Torgerson, *Greening Spaces for Worship and Ministry*, chapter 3 (“Green Synagogue and Church Building as Creation Care”). [Canvas]

Dr. Torgerson is professor of worship arts and biblical and theological studies at Judson University in Illinois.

Moving Forward: A Guide to Climate Action for Your Congregation and Community (Blessed Tomorrow—short publication) <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/moving-forward-a-guide-to-climate-action-for-your-congregation-and-community/>

Monday, April 10, Session #9

Location: First Presbyterian Church, 222 Walnut St., Jeffersonville, IN 47130

Topic: Creation Care in Buildings and Grounds

Guest Speakers: Rev. Don Summerfield and Elder Beth Snyder

Don Summerfield is former pastor of First Prez in Jeffersonville and current pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Scottsburg. Beth Snyder was Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Program Administrator for the PCUSA until her recent retirement. She chairs the Green Team at First Prez, Indiana’s first Earth Care Congregation.

Bible Study: Acts 4:32-37

Activity: Prepare for a new pollinator garden on the church grounds.

Preparation

Paper Topic:

What might care for creation look like in our church buildings and on our church grounds? Think about specific actions that might be taken in congregations you have participated in.

Reading:

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, chapter 5 (“Lines of Approach and Action”).

Torgerson, *Greening Spaces for Worship and Ministry*, chapters 4 (“Models for Creation Care Building and Renovation”), 5 (“The Land We Occupy”), 6 (“The Buildings We Use”) [Canvas]

Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*, chapter 10 (“Spirituality Meets Activism”).

Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, prologue, introduction, and chapter 1 (“The Kenotic Stories of Jesus and God”) and chapter 2 (“Postmodern Insights for Climate Change”)

Dr. McFague, a feminist Christian theologian and first woman dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School, wrote extensively on care for the earth as God’s body. A New Climate for Christology was her final book, finished in the year before she died in 2019.

Monday, April 17, Session #10

Topic: Creation Care in Preaching and Worship

Guest Speaker: Leah Schade

The Rev. Dr. Schade, a Lutheran minister, teaches preaching and worship at Lexington Theological Seminary. She received the Kentucky Council of Churches award in 2019.

Bible Study: TBA

Activity: Tending spring plants; potting up summer seedlings; exploring methods for storing and extending the harvest.

Preparation

Paper Topic:

Offer 2-3 specific suggestions of how you might incorporate creation care into preaching and worship in your local context. What factors do you need to consider?

Reading:

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, chapter 6 (“Ecological Education and Spirituality”).

Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*, chapter 11 (“Responding to the Call to Serve”).

McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, chapter 3 (“Relational Ontology”)

Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit*, Introduction, Chapters 1-2. Optional reading, Chapter 3. [Canvas]

Monday, April 24, Session #11

Location: Passionist Earth & Spirit Center, 1924 Newburg Rd., Louisville, KY 40205

Topic: Creation Care in Religious Education

Guest Speakers: Kyle Kramer, with Tim Darst and Lori Hadorn-Disselkamp

Kyle Kramer is Executive Director of the Earth & Spirit Center. Tim Darst is Associate Director for Earth Literacy Programs. Lori Hadorn-Disselkamp is Program Manager and Retreat Director.

Bible Study: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Activities: Earth Day follow-up; TBA

Preparation

Paper Topic

Consider how you yourself have grown in your own environmental education. What experiences or encounters have influenced or changed you? What do your reflections teach you about ways to incorporate environmental learning into religious education?

Reading

McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, chapter 4 (“God as Friend and We as Friends of the World”)

Kramer, *Making Room: Soul-Deep Satisfaction through Simple Living*, introduction and Part One (“Why Simplicity”). [Canvas]

Jennifer Ayres, *Inhabitation: Ecological Religious Education*, chapters 2 (“Becoming Inhabitants”), 3 (“Religious Education for Inhabitation”), and 4 (“Educational Practices for Inhabitation”). [Canvas]

Dr. Ayres teaches religious education at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, and investigates cultivating faith that is deeply rooted in our ecological context, and the kinds of religious leaders needed for this work.

Go to Earth and Spirit Center website (<https://www.earthandspiritcenter.org/>) and poke around to learn more about the place, its mission, and staff.

Go to <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/1004504654/earth-and-spirit> to peruse the podcasts Kyle hosts and listen to one of them.

Monday, May 1, Session #12

Topic: Creation Care with Neighbors, Community, and World

Bible study: Psalm 19

Activities: semester wrap-up; hardening off seedlings for planting; planning September harvest meal

Preparation

Paper Topic

We have been reading Sallie McFague's book over the last several weeks. Write a response to her ideas of "relational ontology" and "kenosis" and "model of friend."

Thinking

Everything that can be done to improve human lives has a bearing on creation care. Make a list of 3-4 specific ways in which your congregation does outreach (e.g., disaster assistance, evangelism, political advocacy, hosting community events or mission trips, vacation Bible school, alleviating hunger, etc.). Looking at the list, brainstorm ways each of these actions can relate directly to environmental healing. For instance, how does climate change relate to a recent disaster your congregation sent relief workers for? What immediate bills facing your state or national legislature relate to climate, and how can you advocate? When you host a soup kitchen or community meal, how can you minimize waste? How can you highlight environmental dimensions of mission efforts? Come to class with your ideas.

Reading

McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, chapter 5 ("Christian Theology in View of Kenosis, Theosis, and Postmodernism").

Kim, *Making Peace with the Earth: Action and Advocacy for Climate Justice*, chapters 2 (Skuratovskaya et al., "Health as a Human Right"), 3 (Shaw, "Advocacy and Action in Scotland"), 6 (Awad, "Advocacy for Ecojustice in Palestine"), 8 (Abramides, "Religious Responses to Climate Change"), 12 (Sartorius and Werner, "Eco-Theology, Climate Justice, and Theological Education"). [Canvas]

Optional:

Go to <https://www.coolcongregations.org/> and scroll down to read about prize-winning projects other congregations have undertaken this year.

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

See also the library's citation help page: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Bibliography of Course Readings (books and Canvas excerpts)

- Jennifer R. Ayres, *Inhabitanace: Ecological Religious Education*. Baylor University Press, 2019.
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