

Course Syllabus

Communities of Earth and Spirit: Ecology and Religious Traditions

STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION. SOME CHANGES POSSIBLE BEFORE CLASS BEGINS IN FEBRUARY.

TH 4903

Spring Semester, 2025

M 1:30pm-4:20pm

Gardencourt 206

Instructor: Christopher Elwood (he, him, his; celwood@lpts.edu (<mailto:celwood@lpts.edu>))

The forest is alive. It can only die if the white people persist in destroying it. If they succeed, the rivers will disappear underground, the soil will crumble, the trees will shrivel up, and the stones will crack in the heat. The dried-up earth will become empty and silent. The xapiri spirits who come down from the mountains to play on their mirrors in the forest will escape far away. Their shaman fathers will no longer be able to call them and make them dance to protect us. They will be powerless to repel the epidemic fumes which devour us. They will no longer be able to hold back the evil beings who will turn the forest to chaos. We will die one after the other, the white people as well as us. All the shamans will finally perish. Then, if none of them survive to hold it up, the sky will fall.

Davi Kopenawa, *The Falling Sky* (2013)

Course description:

This course gives you an opportunity to explore the growing field of religion and ecology, an area of study and advocacy that (1) seeks to understand how various religious traditions and worldviews have made sense of the natural world, of life and of land, and (2) works to engage these traditions for the purpose of responding to an ever-deepening environmental crisis.

Among the premises of this work are two fundamental convictions. First, approaches to understanding and influencing the dynamics of humans' impact on our earth-home must aspire to a holistic vision of the relation of nature and culture, and so this study has to be multidisciplinary: it must engage religion, theology, ethics, the arts, history, social science, natural science. Second, to effectively reckon with the reality of how human schemes of vision, value, and practice relate to our environment, we need to aspire to a global scope. It is not enough to look at one religious or confessional tradition, or one theological paradigm, to find a key to solve the puzzle of effective response to what ails our world. We need, instead, to encounter the diversity of human traditions of value and meaning-making, both the traditions that have had global reach and those that have been formative locally.

In this course, you will have a chance to examine the intersections of religion and the disciplines that help us interpret the ecological crisis and explore a range of religious traditions from the point of view of their ways of making sense of the relation of earth and spirit.

*Prerequisite: Introductory theology course (**Systematic Theology**)*

*This course fulfills LPTS's requirement for a course in **ministry in the context of religious diversity**.*

Goals and objectives:

The goal of the course is to help students grow in their capacity to interpret multiple religious traditions' engagement with nature, life, and land and to develop the art of faithful and coherent theological expression in their vocational practice.

In LPTS's structure of assessment, this aim is most closely related to MDiv Student Learning Outcome (SLO)3: *Students will be able to think theologically and ethically in relation to particular traditions and contemporary needs*; and MA(Religion) SLO3: *[Students will] Demonstrate an understanding of multiple theological perspectives, historical and contemporary*; and aspects of MAMFT SLO4: *Graduating students will be able to use a multi-contextual, anti-racist approach to Marriage and Family Therapy that attends to religious, cultural, racial, economic, gender, and sexual orientation diversity and intersectional contexts in client, client-therapist, supervisory, and broader social systems.*

Students will

- gain an understanding of the field of religion and ecology and a beginning acquaintance with a variety of different traditions of religion and worldviews from the perspective of their ways of engaging

with the natural world and responding to the environmental crisis;

- sharpen their skills of religious and theological interpretation through the reading and discussion of textual and visual sources, orally and in writing;
- clarify their own theological and ethical understandings;
- and reflect on connections among religious vision, theological conviction, and the practices of ministry.

Required text:

- Willis Jenkins, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*. London: Routledge, 2017. (Abbreviation: *RHRE*)

Reserve reading—sources:

- Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Trans. Philip Berryman. Maryknoll, N.Y., 1997.
- Cobb, Jr., John B. *Is it Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*. Denton, Texas: Environmental Ethics Books, 1995. (First edition: 1972)
- Gebara, Ivone. *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*. Trans. David Molineaux. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.
- Harris, Melanie L. *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2017.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013.
- Kopenawa, Davi and Bruce Albert. *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Trans. Nicholas Elliot and Alison Dundy. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Malcolm, Hannah. *Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church*. London: SCM Press, 2020.
- Rasmussen, Larry. *Earth-Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Requirements:

1. *Course engagement*: Thorough preparation for class, thoughtfully active participation in discussion, and appropriate note-taking together constitute a basic expectation and requirement of the course. Attendance is mandatory. Students will submit a one-paragraph self-assessment of their course engagement, including a grade for this requirement, on June 17. The following is a rough guide to letter grade assignment: A = completed 95-100% of the reading prior to class discussion, with critical reflection, and engaged thoughtfully and with respect for others in class exchanges; B = completed 85% ...; C = completed 75% ... Grades should be lowered appropriately for absences, tardiness,

leaving class early, in-class texting or other forms of non-participation. The instructor reserves the right to adjust the reported grade when necessary. (about 15 percent)

2. *Reading Notebook*: Write brief (1-2-paragraph) summaries and reflections on each of the reading assignments you do for this course, including your questions for reflection and discussion. These should be written daily and the collected entries are to be submitted as one document (Word doc, please) at the end of the class; **due May 9**. *In addition, students should write an introductory self-reflective **Preface** (see description and guidelines in the Appendix on page 8) and submit this through Canvas on or before **Friday, February 7**. As a final entry in your Notebook, re-visit what you wrote in the preface and write an **Afterword**: Do you have new perspectives, thoughts or ideas on your experience, your location, your contextual reality after your engagements with the readings and resources of the course? What's confirmed about what you first wrote? What has been modified? What would you amplify? How would you now express the trajectory of your experience and vocation in relation to the earth, its communities, and their care?* Note that your writing for this exercise will supply the basis for three in-class oral reports on particular readings—see next requirement. (about 40 percent)
3. *Reflection panel/In-class oral reports/Sharing time*: Three oral reports/reflections on assigned readings, to be given during class meetings, may be based on your reading notebook entries. You will be assigned dates (**sessions 2-10**) and you have the freedom to choose which of the assigned readings for the day to report on. (Switching days with classmates to accommodate special circumstances or interests is a possibility, but clear this with the instructor, please.) These reports should be light on summary (as *all* students are assigned these readings) and focus more on what *you* have learned, where you find yourself challenged, what your learning encourages you to reflect on and do, what questions you have generated for yourself and for others. Limit your reporting time to 10 minutes please. (about 10 percent)
4. A final project, self-designed. Take one or more of the chapters from Part VII of the textbook (*RHRE*), “Disciplinary intersections,” as the jumping-off point for your project, under the heading, “What I want to do next ...” Your project should adopt a form and style appropriate to your interests and vocational ambitions or concerns. It can take any number of forms: a reflective essay; an art project; a story; a series of poems; a report on your deeper research or research plans for a particular environmental, ethical, or theological challenge; a service of worship; a plan for a retreat; a curriculum; notes for an advocacy strategy; a report on organizations in your community (including faith communities) that organize and advocate for environmental justice. The possibilities are probably endless, but the **due date for final submission of all materials is Friday, May 9**. Students will sign up for slots to present their project on either week 11 or 12, **April 28** or **May 5**. (about 35 percent)

N.B. All work is submitted through Canvas. In order to pass the course, students must complete and submit all assigned work, as stipulated above.

Topics and reading/viewing assignments:

0. F 2.7: Please submit your introductory notebook entry through CANVAS (see the [assignment \(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/assignments/4848\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/assignments/4848)).

1. M 2.10: Introductions to the course and subject matter

- Primary reading: Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, “The Movement of Religion and Ecology” (*RHRE* 3-12); Willis Jenkins, “Whose Religion? Which Ecology?” (*RHRE* 22-32); Nalini Nadkarni, “Ecology” (*RHRE* 412-419); Hannah Malcolm, [“Introduction: The End of the World?” \(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554383?wrap=1\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554383?wrap=1) ↓ [\(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554383/download?download_frd=1\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554383/download?download_frd=1) and Grace Thomas, [“Eve as Everywoman: Climate Grief as Global Solidarity,” \(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554364?wrap=1\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554364?wrap=1) ↓ [\(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554364/download?download_frd=1\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554364/download?download_frd=1) in Hannah Malcolm, *Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church*
- Background (recommended, not required): John B. Cobb, Jr., [“Is Ecology the Issue?,” etc. \(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554384?wrap=1\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554384?wrap=1) ↓ [\(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554384/download\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554384/download) in *Is it Too Late?* [1972], 5, 11-21; Larry Rasmussen, [“The World We Have,” \(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554370?wrap=1\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554370?wrap=1) ↓ [\(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554370/download\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554370/download) in *Earth Honoring Faith*, ch. 2, 43-79; Pope Francis, [*Laudato si’* ↗ \(http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html\)](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) (paragraphs 17-61); [“The Earth Charter” ↗ \(https://earthcharter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/echarter_english.pdf\)](https://earthcharter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/echarter_english.pdf); The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), [“Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5° C, Summary for Policy Makers” ↗ \(https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/\)](https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/) (2018); Coral Davenport, [“Major Climate Report Describes a Strong Risk of Crisis as Early as 2040,” ↗ \(https://nyti.ms/2DADKKs\)](https://nyti.ms/2DADKKs) ↓ [\(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554385?wrap=1\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554385?wrap=1) ↓ [\(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554385/download?download_frd=1\)](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554385/download?download_frd=1)) New York Times, Oct. 7, 2018; Abrahm Lustgarten, [“The Great Climate Migration has begun,” ↗ \(https://nyti.ms/3a2wUK8\)](https://nyti.ms/3a2wUK8) *New York Times Magazine*, July 26, 2020; two short piece on the “rights of nature”: Kennedy Warne, “A Voice for Nature” (a *National Geographic* article on the Māori, the Whanganui River, and the effort to recognize the “personhood” of this river in Aotearoa/New Zealand) [https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/graphics/maori-river-in-new-zealand-is-a-legal-person ↗ \(https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/graphics/maori-river-in-new-zealand-is-a-legal-](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/graphics/maori-river-in-new-zealand-is-a-legal-person)

person); Ed Shanahan, ["Happy the Elephant Isn't Legally a Person, Top New York Court Rules,"](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554387?wrap=1) (https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554387?wrap=1) ↓
(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554387/download?download_frd=1) New York Times, June 14, 2022

2. M 2.17: First Nations lifeways (*student oral reports: Margaret)

- Primary reading: Melissa K. Nelson, "North America—Native ecologies and cosmovisions renew treaties with the earth and fuel indigenous movements" (*RHRE* 107-108, 138-147), Frederic Laugrand, "Arctic—Ontology on the ice: Inuit traditions, ecology, and the problem of categories" (*RHRE* 148-157), Manuka Henare, "Pacific Region—In search of harmony: Indigenous traditions of the Pacific and ecology" (*RHRE* 129-137)
- Background: Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* 1-21, 48-59 [not posted with a link because of permissions difficulty; on library reserve]; Address and conversation with Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Marrying Indigenous Wisdom and Scientific Knowledge: Reimagining the Human Place in Nature" <https://youtu.be/ucNmu-WNNDk> ⇨ (https://youtu.be/ucNmu-WNNDk)



(<https://youtu.be/ucNmu-WNNDk>)

; Naomi Klein, "Dancing the World into Being: A Conversation with Idle No More's Leanne Simpson," *Yes! Magazine* <https://bit.ly/3fZvjWV> ⇨ (https://bit.ly/3fZvjWV); two short documentaries on Standing Rock protests, *Mni Wiconi: The Stand at Standing Rock* (2016; 8.5 min.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FDuqYld8C8&feature=youtu.be> ⇨

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FDuqYld8C8&feature=youtu.be>)



(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FDuqYld8C8&feature=youtu.be>)

; *Standing Rock and the Battle Beyond* (2016; 30 min.)

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/faultlines/2016/12/standing-rock-battle-161226110834428.html> ⇨ (https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/faultlines/2016/12/standing-rock-battle-161226110834428.html); and a couple of feature-length documentaries: *Black Snake Killaz* (2017; 120 min.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dWeg_jHdK0 ⇨ (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dWeg_jHdK0)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dWeg_jHdK0

, and John Gussman and Jessica Plumb, *Return of the River* (Amazon Prime, 2014; 72 min.); Webinar on the indigenous inhabitants of Kentucky: Gwynn Henderson, *Dispelling the Myth: The Archaeology of Kentucky's Ancient Peoples*

<https://youtu.be/v1wSckvOTuk> ↗ <https://youtu.be/v1wSckvOTuk>



<https://youtu.be/v1wSckvOTuk>

; Tuvalu National Adaptation Programme of Action - Essential Adaptation: Planning for Climate Change (2012; 8 min.)

<https://youtu.be/hR5fYBSh5wQ> ↗ <https://youtu.be/hR5fYBSh5wQ>



<https://youtu.be/hR5fYBSh5wQ>

; Naomi Klein, ["Beyond Extractivism: Confronting the Climate Denier Within,"](#)

<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554367?wrap=1> ↓


https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554367/download?download_frd=1) in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014); Pete McKenzie, ["How Maori Stepped In to Save a Towering Tree Crucial to Their Identity"](#)

<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554399?wrap=1> ↓

https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554399/download?download_frd=1) (Tāne Mahuta, an ancient tree named after the god of forests in Māori mythology, is threatened by the slow creep of an incurable disease) *New York Times*, March 8, 2022


3. M 2.24: Indigenous visions (*student oral reports: Kolby, Tatyana)

- Primary reading: Miguel Astor-Aguilera, "Latin America—Indigenous cosmovision" (*RHRE* 158-167), and Anna Peterson, "Latin America" (*RHRE* 169, 190-198), Davi Kopenawa (and Bruce Albert), ["Talking to White People,"](#) <https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554365?wrap=1> ↓ https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554365/download?download_frd=1) and ["Words of Omama,"](#) <https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554389?wrap=1> ↓


(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554389/download?download_frd=1) from *The Falling Sky* 303-313, 412-423 (plus, [Endnotes](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554400?wrap=1) (<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554400?wrap=1>)  (https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554400/download?download_frd=1) for these readings).

Optional reading (for background): "[Setting the Scene,](#)"

(<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554397?wrap=1>) 

(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554397/download?download_frd=1) from *The Falling Sky* 1-5; and [Yanomami Timeline](#) (<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554391?wrap=1>) 

(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554391/download?download_frd=1) (from Survival International)

- Background: Robin M. Wright, "‘Earth Eaters’ and the Spirits of Omama: A Review of *The Falling Sky* by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, January 1, 2016 <https://bit.ly/3fVGIqu>  (<https://bit.ly/3fVGIqu>); Davi Kopenawa interview (2019; 26.5 min.)


<https://youtu.be/u0qkzNPzYag>  (<https://youtu.be/u0qkzNPzYag>)



(<https://youtu.be/u0qkzNPzYag>)

; Ernesto Londoño and Letícia Casado, "As Bolsonaro Keeps Amazon Vows, Brazil's Indigenous Fear 'Ethnocide'" *New York Times*, April 19, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/19/world/americas/bolsonaro-brazil-amazon-indigenous.html?referringSource=articleShare> 

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/19/world/americas/bolsonaro-brazil-amazon-indigenous.html?referringSource=articleShare>) (pdf (<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554363?wrap=1>) 


(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554363/download?download_frd=1); Dan Smyer Yü, "Asia—An indigenous cosmovisionary turn in the study of religion and ecology" (*RHRE* 120-

128); María Alejandra Andrade Vinueza, "[When Man and Woman were Soil: A Latin American Decolonial and Intercultural Perspective on Creation, Spirituality and Environmental Grief,](#)"

(<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554373?wrap=1>) 

(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554373/download?download_frd=1) in Hannah Malcolm, *Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church*

4. M 3.3: Traditions of Africa and the African diaspora (*student oral reports: Lyndsey Jayne)

- Primary reading: Jesse N. K. Mugambi, "Africa—African heritage and ecological stewardship" (*RHRE* 109-119); Melanie L. Harris, "African Diaspora—African American environmental religious ethics and ecowomanism" (*RHRE* 199-207). **Optional readings (to discuss):** Isabel Mukonyora, "[Johane Masowe: An African Man of Sorrows](#)" (<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554394?wrap=1>)  (https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554394/download?download_frd=1) and Peter Fox

and Miles Giljam, "[Failing Mandela,](https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554395?wrap=1)" (<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554395?wrap=1>)
↓ (https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554395/download?download_frd=1) in Hannah
Malcolm, *Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church*; and
(recommended to supplement the first assigned reading's neglect of tradition religions) Jacob K.
Olupona, "Rethinking the Study of African Indigenous
Traditions," <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/rethinking-the-study-of-african-indigenous-religions/> ↗ (<https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/rethinking-the-study-of-african-indigenous-religions/>)

- Background: Melanie Harris lecture "Making the Connections" (2014; 14 min.)
<https://youtu.be/M7vsZp92yqU> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/M7vsZp92yqU>)



(<https://youtu.be/M7vsZp92yqU>)

; short documentary on Wangari Maathai (8 min.) <https://blog.ecosia.org/wangari-maathai/> ↗
(<https://blog.ecosia.org/wangari-maathai/>); "Climate change and its potential effects in Africa," WHO
African Region
<https://youtu.be/VC7rsWVI7so> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/VC7rsWVI7so>)



(<https://youtu.be/VC7rsWVI7so>)

; "How Africa is affected by climate change," DW News
<https://youtu.be/8P1WG43VvgU> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/8P1WG43VvgU>)



(<https://youtu.be/8P1WG43VvgU>)

; "Pollution is Segregated" Says the Father of Environmental Justice," *Amanpour and Company*
(2020; 18 min.)
<https://youtu.be/gU-D3YkOe-w> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/gU-D3YkOe-w>)



(<https://youtu.be/gU-D3YkOe-w>)

; Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, "I'm a Black Climate Expert. Racism Derails our Efforts to Save the Planet," *The Washington Post*, June 3, 2020 <https://wapo.st/3kELcW3> ↗ (<https://wapo.st/3kELcW3>); Ethan Smith, "An Environmental Injustice Tour of West Louisville," *Leo Weekly*, Nov. 25. 2015 <https://bit.ly/3gXI6dJ> ↗ (<https://bit.ly/3gXI6dJ>); Linda Villarosa, "Pollution is Killing Black Americans. This Community Fought Back," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 28, 2020 <https://nyti.ms/3iAULng> ↗ (<https://nyti.ms/3iAULng>); *Spotlights*, 2.25: "The Spirit of Soul Food, with Christopher Carter" (2022, 49 min) <https://youtu.be/Up2ev4tBaW8> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/Up2ev4tBaW8>)



<https://youtu.be/Up2ev4tBaW8>

5. M 3.10: Confucianism and China (*student oral reports: Margaret, Mary)

- Primary reading: Yong Hwang, "Confucianism—Confucian environmental virtue ethics" (*RHRE* 52-59), James Miller, "China—Landscapes, cultures, ecologies, religions" (*RHRE* 181-189)
- Background: Tu Wei-Ming lecture "Spiritual Humanism: Self, Community, Earth, and Heaven" (2018; 77 min.)

<https://youtu.be/oTiPiMaroY0> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/oTiPiMaroY0>)



<https://youtu.be/oTiPiMaroY0>

; Eleanor Albert and Beina Xu, "China's Environmental Crisis," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 2016 <https://on.cfr.org/3gYVSN6> ↗ (<https://on.cfr.org/3gYVSN6>); Ma Tianjie, "How Green is China?" *New Internationalist*, November 2019 <https://bit.ly/33ZODAF> ↗ (<https://bit.ly/33ZODAF>)






6. M 3.24: Dimensions of environmental threat (*student oral reports: Kolby)

- Primary reading: ALL read Mike Hulme, "Climate Change" (*RHRE* 239-248); then read and report (notebooks and time to share in class) on TWO other challenges in *RHRE* Part VI: "Planetary challenges" (chapters 26-35)
- Background: "6 unexpected connections between Coronavirus and Environment," *Sustainability Climate Change*

<https://youtu.be/R1h1L6vj3BI> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/R1h1L6vj3BI>)




<https://youtu.be/R1h1L6vj3BI>


; Sigal Samuel interview with Sonia Shah, “Our environmental practices make pandemics like the coronavirus more likely” <https://bit.ly/2DSgw37>  (<https://bit.ly/2DSgw37>) (pdf <https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554412?wrap=1>)  https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554412/download?download_frd=1) of interview transcript), [YouTube video link](https://youtu.be/qp5CEclyk94)  (<https://youtu.be/qp5CEclyk94>) (7 min.); [Gasland](#)  (https://youtu.be/Xvz_m5uPV4s), and *Gasland part II* (stream on Hulu or HBO Max); *Frontline: Flint's Deadly Water* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj4xZs9cXyU>  (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj4xZs9cXyU>).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj4xZs9cXyU>

(55 min.); [“The Legacy of the Flint Water Crisis,”](#)  (<https://youtu.be/GYiVHh4U4pE>)” 60 Minutes, January 2021 (13 min.)

7. M 3.31: Hindu and Buddhist traditions (*student oral reports: Lyndsey Jayne, Tatyana)

- Primary reading: David L. Halberman, “Hinduism—Devotional love of the world” (*RHRE* 35-42), Christopher Ives, “Buddhism—A mixed dharmic bag: Debates about Buddhism and ecology” (*RHRE* 43-51), Christopher Key Chapple, “India” (*RHRE* 171-180)
- Background: Michael Safi, “The Yamuna, India’s most polluted river,” *The Guardian* July 2017 <https://youtu.be/eHCalvPN2rY>  (<https://youtu.be/eHCalvPN2rY>)



<https://youtu.be/eHCalvPN2rY>

(10 min.); Vasudha Narayanan, “Religion, Faith, and the Environment” (2013; lecture on Hindu faith-practice with a focus on the river Ganga/Ganges)

<https://youtu.be/nKkZ8RYp-RU>  (<https://youtu.be/nKkZ8RYp-RU>)



<https://youtu.be/nKkZ8RYp-RU>

(31 min.); Vandana Shiva, International Womxn's Day Lecture, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, March 2020

https://youtu.be/_ErD5Vx8dTw ↗ https://youtu.be/_ErD5Vx8dTw



https://youtu.be/_ErD5Vx8dTw

(71 min.); *Wounded Hills: A documentary on environmental issues of the Western Ghats* (an ecological hotspot in India's Kerala state)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTV-56QagQM> ↗ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTV-56QagQM>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTV-56QagQM>

(20 min.); *Fleeing climate change* (the impact and lived experience of climate change in areas of Indonesia, Siberia, Cameroon)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl4Uv9_7KJE ↗ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl4Uv9_7KJE



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl4Uv9_7KJE

(43 min.); "The Time to Act is Now: A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change"

(2015) <https://bit.ly/2Yg8kAu> ↗ <https://bit.ly/2Yg8kAu> (pdf

<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554407?wrap=1>) ↓

https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554407/download?download_frd=1))

8. M 4:7: Global monotheisms (*student oral reports: Mary, Margaret)

- Primary reading: Read and report on two: Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, “Judaism” (*RHRE* 60-69), Ernst M. Conradie, “Christianity—An ecological critique of Christianity and a Christian critique of ecological destruction” (*RHRE* 70-78), Zainal Abidin Bagir and Najiyah Martiam, “Islam—Norms and practices” (*RHRE* 52-59)
- Background: Interview with Lawrence Troster, “Judaism and Ecology” (10 min.)

<https://youtu.be/JsnSsngtTkl> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/JsnSsngtTkl>)



(<https://youtu.be/JsnSsngtTkl>)

; Naomi Klein, “Let Them Drown: The violence of othering in a warming world,” *London Review of Books*, June 2016 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v38/n11/naomi-klein/let-them-drown> ↗
(<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v38/n11/naomi-klein/let-them-drown>), or the video lecture, May 2016 (48 min.)

<https://youtu.be/CChLEtlu4iY> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/CChLEtlu4iY>)



(<https://youtu.be/CChLEtlu4iY>)

; “The Green Patriarch” (film on Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, 2009, 42 min.)

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



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

; Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Reflection and Action on *Laudato si*” (43 min.)

<https://youtu.be/KTyY9rvRlfg> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/KTyY9rvRlfg>)



(<https://youtu.be/KTyY9rvRlfg>)

; Interview with Safei-Eldin Hamed, “Islam and Ecology” (13 min.)

<https://youtu.be/4p3BqAzvWdc> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/4p3BqAzvWdc>)



<https://youtu.be/4p3BqAzvWdc>

; “Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change” (from the UK-based Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences [IFEES], 2015) <https://bit.ly/2Q9ZKPz> ↗ <https://bit.ly/2Q9ZKPz> (pdf <https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554386?wrap=1>) ↓
(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554386/download?download_frd=1))

9. M 4.14: Old and new religion engaging nature (*student oral reports: Lyndsey Jayne, Tatyana)

- Primary reading: Graham Harvey, “Paganism and Animism” (*RHRE* 209-219); Leslie E. Sponsel, “Spiritual ecology and radical environmentalism” (*RHRE* 220-228), Douglas E. Christie, “Nature writing and nature mysticism” (*RHRE* 229-236)
- Background: “A Pagan Community Statement on the Environment” <https://ecopagan.com/> ↗ (<https://ecopagan.com/>); John Halstead, “Roots of the Deep Ecology Tree: The Transcendentalists, ‘An Original Relation to the Universe’” <https://bit.ly/2E7rMbO> ↗ (<https://bit.ly/2E7rMbO>); Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry conversation, Festival of Faiths, 2014
<https://youtu.be/yjB6UqLVrwU> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/yjB6UqLVrwU>)



<https://youtu.be/yjB6UqLVrwU>

; Wendell Berry, Short address and “Sabbaths”

<https://youtu.be/mJN7zb0oCvc> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/mJN7zb0oCvc>)



<https://youtu.be/mJN7zb0oCvc>

; *Writers Uncensored*: Gary Snyder, “If Trees Could Talk”

<https://youtu.be/mokAW4T92kE> ↗ (<https://youtu.be/mokAW4T92kE>)



<https://youtu.be/mokAW4T92kE>

10. M 4:21: Reformations (*student oral reports: Kolby, Mary)

- Primary reading: ALL read [“The Earth Charter”](#)
(<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554404?wrap=1>) ↓
(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554404/download?download_frd=1) ; choose TWO readings from the following: Leonardo Boff, [“Liberation Theology and Ecology,”](#)
(<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554368?wrap=1>) ↓
(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554368/download?download_frd=1) in *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* 104-114; Ivone Gebara, [“That All May Have Life: The Way to a New Understanding of Religion”](#) (<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554405?wrap=1>) ↓
(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554405/download?download_frd=1) in *Longing for Running Water* 193-212; Melanie Harris, [“Taking Action for Earth Justice: Teaching Ecowomanism,”](#) (<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554406?wrap=1>) ↓
(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554406/download?download_frd=1) in *Ecowomanism* 133-140, Larry Rasmussen, [“The Sacred and the Commodified,”](#)
(<https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554401?wrap=1>) ↓
(https://lpts.instructure.com/courses/772/files/554401/download?download_frd=1) in *Earth-Honoring Faith* 255-284. Read and be prepared to discuss The Earth Charter and your two reading choices.
- Background: [The Earth Charter site](#) ↗ (<https://earthcharter.org/>)

11. M 4.28: Student presentation of the final project (Students:)

12. M 5.5: Student presentation of the final project (Students:)

Friday May 9*: **Final project and completed Notebook are due this day. Submit material through Canvas (see assignments).**

*We might end up negotiating this date. Stay tuned.

The world needs to listen to the cry of the earth, which is asking for help. If you carry on killing people and you continue to destroy nature and you take out all the oil, the minerals and the wood, our planet will become ill and we'll all die.

~ Davi

Kopenawa

COURSE AND SEMINARY POLICIES

Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructor 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. Also covered by the Seminary's prohibition of academic dishonesty are incidents of self-plagiarism or "double-dipping": reusing an assignment written for another course (whether at LPTS or elsewhere) or incorporating a substantial portion of work submitted for another course in an assignment submission. Unless a student communicates in advance to their professor and obtains the express permission of the instructors of the two courses to re-utilize and re-submit an assignment or portions of an assignment, re-submitted work will be treated as an incident of (self-)plagiarism. 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 the Seminary policy, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Accessibility and Accommodation:

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu (<mailto:bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu>)) during the first two days of the course (or, better, before the class 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.

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. For more information, see <http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias> ↗ (<http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias>).

Grading:

This course is letter graded. The Seminary's grading system defines the following grades:

A = superior, B = good, C = satisfactory, D = marginal, F = failure.

Grading for this course will seek to maintain standards commensurate with a graduate level of teaching and learning. Students should understand that assignments that are completed with a level of competence expected of graduate students—in ordinary language, “good” or “very good” work—earn a grade in the range of “B.” “A” work is work that exceeds basic expectations, in which there is a quality of originality in thought and execution that goes beyond the level of basic competence.

Percentage scale:

A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 65-66; F: 0-64

300 point scale (used for Canvas point calculations):

A: 279-300; A-: 270-278; B+: 261-269; B: 249-260; B-: 240-248; C+: 231-239; C: 219-230; C-: 210-218; D+: 201-209; D: 195-200; F: 0-194

Note this Seminary policy: *Ordinarily, all students in a course are subject to the manner of grading (letter grades or Pass/Fail) used in the course. However, at the discretion of the instructor, exceptions may be granted for students who make a case (within the first 20% of course sessions) for the need for a letter grade in a Pass/Fail course or for Pass/Fail assessment in a letter-graded course (in the face of extraordinary changes in life circumstance).*

Policy on late work:

All written assignments are due, unless indicated otherwise, by 11:59 pm on the date given in the syllabus. Students who encounter unusual obstacles to getting an assignment in may ask for an extension of the due date. They should contact the instructor to request an extension before the work comes due, giving the reason for the request, and a proposal for a new, extended due date for the instructor's consideration. Students may speak to the instructor directly, but they are required to communicate *by email* so as to provide a record of the request. Extensions are granted solely at the discretion of the instructor. Assignments submitted late, when no extension has been granted, will be

penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day. Assignments submitted more than four days after the agreed due date will not be accepted.

Use of electronic devices in class:

Do not send or read text messages during class time. Cell phones should be turned off. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask the instructor for an exception to this rule. Laptops should not be used if you cannot trust yourself to restrict your use to note-taking and referring to the assigned primary source readings for the day. You may not access the Internet during class time unless specifically for purposes directly relevant to the course and approved by the instructor. Do not record class sessions or make use of video chat applications without the express permission of the instructor. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites will negatively affect the course grade.

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. Two or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a reduced or failing grade in the course.

Contacting the instructor:

While students are always welcome to speak to the instructor at any time about questions or issues that arise, the most reliable and efficient means of setting up an opportunity to meet and talk over important matters is through email. Students are strongly encouraged to contact the professor when they feel they need clarification on topics and questions that arise in the class, or when they are confronting significant challenges in their learning.

Appendix: Notebook Preface

The preface should come at the beginning of your notebook, which is due at the end of the class meeting sessions (May 5). However, you are asked to work on the preface prior to the start of class and

submit what you write in the assignment given in Canvas **by Friday, February 7**. This will help to facilitate both your own and the class's learning and orientation, at the start, about where we are and where we might be headed. You are not expected to do research in order to write the preface, but you are welcome to look up information you don't immediately have in your head, if your curiosity is peaked by the questions below. The initial submission of the preface is not a "graded exercise." It is simply a way to begin.

Assignment: Write a self-reflective and contextualizing introduction of yourself. Reflect on your own experience and settings as they pertain to the themes covered in the course. There is no prescribed length for this assignment. Write as much or as little as helps you to express your understanding and your experience at the present time.

Some questions to get you started (you may write your preface as a series of responses to these questions):

- Who am I, and where do I come from? Where do I live presently, and where have I lived in the past? (Include in your thinking about places the communities that live in those places.) What do I know of the history of my physical surroundings— the land I live on or have lived on, its present and past, its uses today and in the past, the history of habitation and its past inhabitants? How do I respond if I am asked, To whom does this land belong?
- How would I describe my experience and awareness of ecology? What events have marked my engagement with issues related to environmental threats or the sustainability of habitats and ecosystems?
- How have I tended to think of the relation between human needs/desires or threats to human, communal flourishing and threats to nature, natural systems, to trees or plants, or non-human creatures? How do my own religious or spiritual experiences as well as any particular patterns of theological belief or worldviews impact my orientation to the natural world?

Note: These prompts, as well as the Preface you write responding to them, will be the basis for your Notebook's Afterword. See the description under Course Requirements, above.