

## **Religion 2811 Religions and the Environment (Winter, 2022)**

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Attitudes in the major world religions to nature and the environment and recent responses by religious traditions to ecological degradation and crisis. Includes examination of religious sensibilities expressed in environmentalism.

The existential threats of climate change (and now the ongoing pandemic) have generated calls for a green shift, a green new deal, a transition, a reset of our culture's values and priorities. If we cannot continue on the old path with "business as usual," where is our society to find alternative visions of how to conduct ourselves vis à vis the environment going forward? Do the religious traditions of the world offer resources for re-thinking our values and behaviors? Do they offer alternatives to a fixation on economic growth and consumption? For instance, do Indigenous worldviews offer a corrective to the disenchantment and quantification of nature seen simply as resources and commodities?

This course looks at the influence of religious traditions on human interactions with nature. How have religions shaped human understandings of our relationship with other species, and care (or disregard) for the natural environment? The course provides a brief survey of major religions' teachings on nature and examines late twentieth- and twenty-first century debate and scholarship on the role of religion in either contributing to environmental crisis or, conversely, providing a way out of it.

In our own country, a central issue is reconciliation with First Peoples and conflicts over land and the resource extraction economy. A segment of the course will thus look at Indigenous voices on nature and the sacred in Canada. Internationally, climate disruption increases in its intensity and captures global attention (if not real action). We examine religious leaders' recent responses to the climate crisis. Finally, we will also evaluate the charge made by opponents of the environmental movement that environmentalism has become itself a sort of quasi-religion.

Course text:

*Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*. ed. Willis Jenkins, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

Further course readings (and documentaries) are provided as URLs and PDFs on Brightspace

The course is offered, live, in-person, in the classroom Wed. and Fri. 8:35 - 9:55 Steacie 103