

Religion, Nature and Society

Spring 2015

REL5195, Section 2361

M 4-6/10:40-1:40

Office Hours: M 2-3 pm and W 3-4 pm and by appointment

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Course Description

This course explores relationships between religion, nature and society as a means to understand how these relationships reflect and shape social relations among people. This course covers an important set of theories and methods in the study of religion and nature and approaches to studying the relationships between societies and nonhuman nature and will introduce students to those approaches by focusing in classic readings that underlie subsequent scholarship.

Case studies, focused on the global south, will familiarize students with theoretical approaches to the study of religion, nature and society, including indigenous/precolonial experiences of nature and religion; religion and nature in colonial encounters in Asia and Latin America; religion, post-colonialism and neo-colonialism; environmental justice; gender critiques and ecofeminism; and lived religion and sustainable communities.

READINGS

Arjun Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*

David Carrasco, *Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes*

John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*

Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*

Eliza Kent, *Sacred Groves and Local Gods: Religion and Environmentalism in South India*

Kirkpatrick Sale, *Christopher Columbus and the Conquest of Paradise*

Catriona Sandilands, *The Good-Natured Feminist and the Quest for Democracy*

Mart Stewart, *What Nature Suffers to Groe: Life, labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920*

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze relationships between religion, nature and society as a means to understand how these relationships reflect and shape social relations among people;
2. To familiarize students with theoretical approaches to the study of religion, nature and society;
3. To read theoretical texts and materials critically; and

4. To improve students' ability to write analytically and comparatively about the broad themes and theories, as well as specific texts and cases, studied.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Midterm project (25% of grade)

Students will select one work we have (or will read) and situate this work within its intellectual *parampara* (lineage). This project will help you determine the larger milieu into which this author and the work fits. Details will be discussed early in the semester.

2. Final research paper (30% of grade)

Students will write a research paper on a relevant topic of choice. Length and subject will be somewhat determined by whether one is taking this class for graduate or undergraduate credit. More detailed information will be provided early in the semester. Final projects will be due on April 20 and will be presented in class.

3. Response Papers (15%)

Response papers are 3-4 page double-spaced response papers to the week's readings. These papers will be completed nearly every week of the semester. These papers will help you summarize, synthesize and communicate the main points of the works read. Each paper will consist of two parts: 1. summarize the arguments and concepts of the day's readings; and 2. situate the reading within the relevant intellectual landscape.

Your summary should answer the following questions:

What is the author's main point and/or question?

How does the author argue this point? What evidence does he or she use?

Is the argument compelling? What does the author miss?

Place the author in the relevant intellectual landscape?

4. Discussion/Class participation (15%)

This class will be conducted in a seminar format, and in-class discussions of the material are critical. You are responsible for attending class.

5. Extra Reading and Presentation (5%)

Each student will read an extra book and make an oral presentation to the class. This assignment provides an opportunity for students to research further into an area of his or her choosing. Students will discuss book and presentation schedule with the instructor.

6. Blog Posts (10%)

Each student will write three blog posts during the semester, reflecting on issues that emerge in the class. Blogs are increasingly being used by academics and are one way of conveying ideas to the public. These blogs will be available to members of the class.

Grading Scale

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
F Below 60

POLICIES AND RULES

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 $\frac{1}{2}$ grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

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.

Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is required. Poor attendance will harm your course grade. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day's readings.

Common Courtesy

Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. You may take notes on a laptop computer, although 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.

Conferences

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours or by appointment.

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.

Counseling Resources

Resources available on-campus for students include the following:

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

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.

Readings and Assignments

January 12	Introduction/ David Carrasco, <i>Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes</i>
January 19	No Class-MLK Day
January 26	Kirkpatrick Sale, <i>Christopher Columbus and the Conquest of Paradise</i>
February 2	Stewart, <i>What Nature Suffers to Groe: Life, labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920</i>
February 9	John Bellamy Foster, <i>Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature</i> Blog #1 due
February 16	Foster, John Bellamy, <i>Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature</i> Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin, <i>Applied Biology in the Third World</i> ", <i>The Dialectical Biologist</i> , Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985): 225-237).

- February 23 Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*
Blog #2 due
- March 2 No class—Spring Break**
- March 9 Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.* Eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988: 271-313.

Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism". *New Left Review*, 146 (1984): 53-92.
Midterm project due
- March 16 Eliza Kent, *Sacred Groves and Local Gods: Religion and Environmentalism in South India*
- March 23 Selections from Edward Said, *Orientalism*
Meera Nanda, "Response to My Critics." *Social Epistemology.* (Special issue focusing on the Prophets) Vol. 19, January-March 2005: 147-191.
Abstract and annotated bibliography due
- March 30 Arjun Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*
- April 6 Catriona Sandilands, *The Good-Natured Feminist and the Quest for Democracy*
Blog #3 due
- April 13 Contemporary Movements and Intentional Communities/TBA
- April 20 Conclusion/Discussion of projects
Research papers due