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Dark Green Religion



Religion and Nature.com



SECTIONS

5712: Tuesday, Period 5-6 (11:45-1:40), Turlington, Room L011; Thursday, period 3 (9:35-10:25), Turlington 2306

5716: Tuesday, Period 5-6 (11:45-1:40), Turlington, Room L011; Thursday, period 5 (11:45-12:35), Computer Science & Engineering, Room E221

5723: Tuesday, Period 5-6 (11:45-1:40), Turlington, Room L011; Thursday, period 6 (12:50-1:40), Turlington 2306

INSTRUCTOR

Professor Bron Taylor (Ph.D.)

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Office: Anderson 121

Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., and by appointment

Jacob Jones (M.A., Teaching Assistant)

Email: jljgv9@ufl.edu

Office: Anderson 121

Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., and by appointment

DESCRIPTION

Brief Course Description (in UF Catalogue)

Exploration of competing secular and religious views regarding human impacts on and moral responsibilities toward nature and of the key thinkers and social movements in contention over them.

Role in Curriculum

This course serves as an elective for Religion majors and minors, and provides credit for the department's ethics emphasis. It also meets the ethics requirement in UF's Sustainability minor and for SNRE students, and provides Humanities General Education, and Gordon Rule Writing credit (E2/2000 words or more).

Overview

As concern over the well-being of the planet spreads, people frequently find themselves in conflict over how to balance conservation with the use of natural resources, about visions for our common future, and the wisdom of development. Such conflict stems in important ways from varying understandings of values and responsibilities, of what is good and right. In this course we will examine a wide range of intellectual efforts to address the problem of our obligations to [the] Earth and its living systems. Although we will focus on contemporary philosophical environmental ethics we will also introduce religious environmental ethics, examine ideas about nature prevalent in American culture and history, and examine how individuals involved in contemporary environmental movements express and endeavor to implement their environmental values.

Teaching Objectives

1. To understand the historical emergence and development of environmental philosophy in general, and environmental ethics in particular, in Western societies, as well as the ways such ethics become intertwined with and influenced by developments in religion, literature, and the arts, as illuminated by the Humanities.
2. To understand the range of perspectives on human responsibility to the environment and enable critical thinking and writing about them, including by arbitrating among competing views of environmental facts.
3. To understand the epistemological bases (philosophical, scientific, religious, aesthetic) for different ethical orientations as well as the various methodological approaches to making individual and public environment-related decisions.
4. To introduce the contribution of diverse humanities disciplines, especially art history, literary criticism, philosophy, and religious studies, to illuminating environmental ethics and practice.
5. To communicate effectively and logically one's own moral perspective and views of environmental facts and trends orally and in writing

READINGS

Many of the course readings are directly downloadable under the assignments found in the course's Schedule section. Required readings for the course not available via this website are available from the University of Florida bookstore and elsewhere, and students are expected to purchase or otherwise gain access to these readings:

Joseph DesJardins, *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy* (Thompson/Wadsworth, 4th edition)

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael* (Bantam, 1992)

REQUIREMENTS

The Writing Requirement (Gordon Rule) promotes students fluency in writing and is reflected in the following course assignments (see 1, 3, and 4, below), and includes written work in which the instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. Feedback and evaluation of written work will be returned to students before the end of the semester, and normally no more than one week after they are due. For due dates see the course schedule

1. **Study Guides & Reading Analysis.** Students will be expected to bring to class every week either a completed study guide or an analysis of readings.

The Study Guide is for weeks with readings in the *Environmental Ethics* text. It is downloadable as either a word (docx) or rich text document:

[http://www.brontaylor.com/courses/ee/DesJardines-StudyGuide\(s09\).docx](http://www.brontaylor.com/courses/ee/DesJardines-StudyGuide(s09).docx)

[http://www.brontaylor.com/courses/ee/DesJardines-StudyGuide\(s09\).rtf](http://www.brontaylor.com/courses/ee/DesJardines-StudyGuide(s09).rtf)

During weeks when the readings are not drawn from the main text you will prepare an analysis of the readings. It is essential with this assignment that you strictly observe the following guidelines: Write with a word processor single spaced, between 250 and 500 words every week, analyzing three things in your analytical journal: All students will do section (1), labeling it “reading arguments.” Under this heading describe the following about the most important perspectives articulated this week answering: *What are the central argument(s)? How do the author(s) build their argument(s)? What evidence do they cite? What do the authors think is at stake? With whom are the authors in contention and why?* In addition, there are two optional sections, in which you may use additional words. In the first one you will discuss the key presuppositions, strengths or weaknesses of the articles. Set this off with a heading “reading analysis.” The second optional section set off with the heading “personal reaction,” and will reflect on questions such as: *What surprised you? What did you hear or learn for the first time? What made sense to you or disturbed you, and why? With whom did you agree more than the others, and why?*

The study guides for a given week, and your analytical readings up to and including that week’s readings, must be brought every Thursday to your discussion session. They may be collected and graded at any time. They will be collected and graded at least five times during the course. Have them ready in an 8x10 envelope with your name on it.

This assignment is critically important if we are to have robust classroom discussions. It will prepare you for your exams as well as for classroom discussions.

2. **Mid term and final examinations.** These exams will typically have multiple-choice questions and fill-in sections, as well as short essay and/or take-home essay question(s). Exams are open note: you may use the materials you prepare in assignment #1. Study your notes because there will be only one in-class hour for these exams; you will not have time to find everything in them you will need.
3. **Essay Review.** You will write an essay review of *Ishmael*. In two to four double-spaced, word-processed pages, analyze the book, describing its overall moral perspective and the kind of evidence provided related to this perspective. Make an *argument* about what you take to be the strengths and/or weaknesses in the book’s assertions.
4. **Critical Essay.** Students will write a 2000-2500 word critical *ethical* analysis of an environment-related issue. Details will be distributed in class.
5. **Attendance and participation.** Students are expected to attend and participate in class -- this is part of the learning process. Students who miss the equivalent of three weeks of class will suffer a one-grade reduction; those missing more than this will fail the course. Students who distinguish themselves by contributing significantly to classroom discussions may receive extra points for doing so. Course instructors will be looking for the following: Do you demonstrate that you have read and understood the course readings and can you engage in discussions in an informed and civil manner? Do you regularly commit “fallacies of moral reasoning” as discussed early in the course? How well do you integrate what you are learning in this course with information gathered elsewhere?

We will regularly arrange forums and debates and hold them in class. Although I will not award points based on the quantity of participation, regular participation will insure that I have enough experience of you to evaluate. Do not miss class.

Monitoring email and participation in email discussions. Routine course logistics will be updated through email, via a list serve established for this purpose. These email messages will be sent to your official university email address, which you are responsible to monitor every day or two. Course Instructors will also send you short supplementary materials to read and about which you may be questioned on exams. A list serve has been established for the class and students may communicate with each other and the course instructors through it. Students may ask questions via email and instructors will respond either privately or to the class, as appropriate. It is critical to check your email because, *as the course progresses, the list of assignments and the readings are subject to modification. Always consult the latest version of the readings online.*

EVALUATION

Points Possible for Required Assignments

This chart shows the points it is possible to earn for each assignment:

Assignment	Points per Assignment	Total Possible Points
Weekly Journals	10 points each (or pro-rated to 100 total points if less than 10 are evaluated)	100
Exams (midterm & final)	100 (midterm), 150 (final)	250
Essay/Review of <i>Ishmael</i>	500 minimum, 750 maximum words	50
Critical Analysis	2000 minimum, 2500 maximum words	100
	Total Possible Points:	500

Calculating Grades

At the end of the semester, the total number of points earned by each student will be divided by the total number earned by the highest-scoring student. The resulting percentage will be used to calculate each student’s grade for the course. Put in a formula, it looks like this:

$$\frac{\text{the score of each individual student (your score)}}{\text{(divided by) the highest score earned by a student}}$$

The percentage arrived at by means of this formula will be evaluated according to the following scale:

93%	A
90%	A-
87%	B+
83%	B

80%	B-
77%	C+
67%	C
60%	D
59%	F

This kind of scoring is fairer than many other forms of grading because: (1) It is based on what students actually achieve rather than some preconceived standard held by the professor; (2) Each student can receive a high grade; (3) Hard-working students will not be penalized for staying in a demanding course full of industrious students. With a traditional curve, demanding courses that “weed out” less industrious students, leaving hard-working ones, can unintentionally harm good students putting them in competition with each other. This will not occur in this course. To further insure fairness, any extra credit points will be added to the individual student’s score, *only after the highest score earned by a student has been established*. This ensures that the extra credit earned will not increase the difficulty of the grading scale.

Course instructor reserves the right to lower or raise course grades based on classroom contributions or upon absences. Instructor also reserves the right to change course requirements.

Late or Missing Assignments

Students who do not turn in study guides or reading analyses on the days they are collected will not receive points. The total number of points *possible* for the review essay will be reduced by 20% for each day it is late.

Returned Assignments

Assignments will usually be returned to students no later than one week after they were due. At the end of the semester, unreturned course work will be available for pickup in the Religion Department office in Anderson 107 for 30 days after the official date that grades are posted by the registrar. After this time, they will be recycled.

Academic Dishonesty

Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the [Student Discipline Code](#), will be subject to other disciplinary measures. Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism and to understand and avoid inadvertent forms of it that can occur by cutting and pasting quotations from various texts on the world wide web and elsewhere.

SCHEDULE

WEEKS

January - [01](#) - [02](#) - [03](#) - [04](#)

February - [05](#) - [06](#) - [07](#) - [08](#)

March - [09](#) - [10](#) - [11](#)

April - [12](#) - [13](#)

Note: All readings are to be completed before the class date/week under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change so rather than printing it, I recommend bookmarking this online syllabus and consulting it regularly.

(Week 1) 5 & 7 January

What is Environmental Philosophy/Ethics?

On John Rawls and the necessity of ‘basic facts’ in ethical reasoning.

Introduction to the State of the Planet Report (Part One ~ On Growth and its Limits)

Readings (required)

- DesJardines, Chapter 1, “Science, Ethics & the Environment,” 1-15. “Limits to Growth” summary, [Limits to Growth \(summary\)](#); directly at [http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE1\(s09\)Intro+Limits2Growth.ppt](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE1(s09)Intro+Limits2Growth.ppt)
["Ethical Implications of Carrying Capacity"](#) by Garrett Hardin (1977) [skim]

Readings & Websites (recommended)

- [Club of Rome history](#)

- [Limits to Growth](#) (class powerpoint lecture, week 1), directly at: [http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE1\(s09\)Intro+Limits2Growth.ppt](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE1(s09)Intro+Limits2Growth.ppt)

(Week 2) 12 & 14 January

The State of the World Report

Types of Environmental Ethics (Part One), focus on rights and utilitarian theories

Readings (required)

- DesJardines, Chapter 2, “Ethical Theory & The Environment,” 17-39, and Chapter 5, “Responsibilities to the Natural World,” 94-118.

Website to review

- [Ecological footprint Network](#) (Peruse the site and familiarize yourself with it. Then go to the “personal footprint” link and do the analysis there – be ready to provide (confidentially) your footprint (‘how many planets needed’) in class on Thursday. Direct url at <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/>

- [State of the Planet-limits+biodiversity](#) (class powerpoint lecture, week 2), directly at: [http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE2\(s09\)StateOfPlanet.ppt](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE2(s09)StateOfPlanet.ppt)

Readings & Websites (recommended)

- Peter Singer, [The Animal Liberation Movement](#)

- Tom Regan, [The Case for Animal Rights](#)

(Week 3) 19 & 21 January

Readings (required)

- DesJardines, Chapter 6, “Biocentric ethics,” 125-145, Chapter 7, “Wilderness, Ecology & Ethics,” 148-72.

- Garrett Hardin, [“Carrying Capacity as an Ethical Concept”](#) (2001)

Reports to peruse (required)

- [United Nations Environmental Program, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#). Co-recipient with Al Gore of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. See especially the “Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report”, which is downloadable at <http://www.ipcc.ch/press/index.htm> (scroll down), or directly at http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf.

Reports to peruse (recommended)

- The IPCC “about” page, [‘presentations’](#), and the [2007 powerpoint reports](#). One of these that is also especially accessible is “Assessing the Physical Science of Climate Change: IPCC Working Group 1 (2007)”, which is downloadable from this page: <http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/>

- *Living Planet Report* (2008), http://www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/living_planet_report/index.cfm; directly at http://assets.panda.org/downloads/living_planet_report_2008.pdf

Readings (recommended)

- Garrett Hardin, [“Cultural Carrying Capacity”](#) (1986)

Websites & Video (recommended)

- [State of the Planet-toxics+biosphere](#) (class powerpoint lecture, week 3), directly at:

[http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE3\(s09\)StateOfPlanet.ppt](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE3(s09)StateOfPlanet.ppt)

- An Inconvenient Truth (Al Gore), UF Library or Video Store [Documentation of Climate Change](#) (link to many sites)

(Week 4) 26 & 28 January

Ethics presentations: "The Discipline of Ethics" and "Principles of Ethics: Rights, Justice, and Beneficence" (power point presentations)

Readings (required)

DesJardines, Chapter 8, “The Land Ethic,” 176-199.

[Leopold, Aldo](#), (biography)

Aldo Leopold, from *A Sand County Almanac* “[Forward](#),” “[Arizona and New Mexico](#)” (especially sub-section, “Thinking like a Mountain”), “The Round River,” “Goose Music,” and “[The Land Ethic](#).” (Note: The Oxford University Press edition (1949/1968) does not have “Part III”, which includes the Thinking like a Mountain, [Round River](#), and [Goose Music](#) essays. For these, see the Ballentine Books (1970) paperback edition. Also strongly recommended from the Ballentine paperback edition, read widely, esp. “A Sand County Almanac” and “Wilderness” and “Conservation Esthetic.”

Additional Resources

- [Ethics Analysis Chart](#); [http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE4\(s09\)DisciplineOfEthics.ppt](http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pp/EE4(s09)DisciplineOfEthics.ppt)

(Week 5) 2 & 4 February

“Key conundrums in Environmental Ethics” and “fallacies of moral reasoning”

(pp presentations) Pioneer-elders in environmental ethics

Readings (required)

- [Thoreau, Henry David](#) (biography)

- Thoreau readings, <http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/dgr/Taylor--DGR11-ThoreauAppendix.pdf>

- [Muir, John](#) (biography)

- John Muir. Read “[Cedar Keys](#),” and “[Wild Wool](#).” from *Nature Writings*. Edited by William Cronon. New York: Library of America, 1997.

- [Carson, Rachel](#) (biography)

- Rachel Carson, [Nature Religion Selections](#). and [selections and commentary](#) on *Silent Spring*. Also strongly recommended, peruse *Under the Sea Wind*, about which she ruminated in the hyperlinked selections, or read “[Preface](#)” and “[The Marginal World](#)” (pp. 1-7), and “[The Enduring Sea](#)” (pp. 249-50), in *The Edge of the Sea* (1955), or read widely from *The Sea Around Us* or *Silent Spring* (in this, her most famous book, see especially the introductory “[Fable for Tomorrow](#)” (pp. 1-3), and the concluding section, “[The Other Road](#),” pp. 177-97, esp. its concluding two pages).

(Week 6) 9 & 11 February

Anti-Hierarchical Environmental Ethics: Anarchism, Social Ecology, and Ecofeminism

Readings (required)

- DesJardines, Chapter 10, “Social Justice & Social Ecology,” 224-240, Chapter 11, “Ecofeminism,” 243-258.

- “[Anarchism](#)” and “[Social Ecology](#)” by John Clark in the ERN

- “[Ecofeminism](#)” by Laura Hobgood-Oster in the ERN

Readings (recommended)

- “[What is Social Ecology](#)” (originally 1993) and “[Social versus Deep Ecology](#)” (orig. 1987) by Murray Bookchin

(Week 7) 16 & 18 February

Mid Term Exam – In Class – TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY: short answer, matching, & multiple choice exam; with short essay bonus. The exam is open note and open book (DesJardines). No computers.

Readings (required)

ERN: ‘Religion and Environmental Ethics’ at

<http://www.religionandnature.com/ern/sample/Taylor--EnvironmentalEthics.pdf>

(Week 8) 23 & 25 February

Deep Ecology and Radical Environmentalism.

Readings (required)

- DesJardines, Chapter 9, “Deep Ecology,” 202-221.

- ERN: [Deep Ecology](#); [Radical Environmentalism](#); [Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front](#).

Michael Martin, “[Ecosabotage and Civil Disobedience](#)” from Environmental Ethics 12 (Winter 1990), pp. 291-310

- Dave Foreman with Edward Abbey and T.O. Hellenbach, [Why Monkeywrench?](#) Selections from Ecodefense, 7-23.

(Week 9) 2 & 4 March

The State of the World Report (Part Two)

Types of Environmental Ethics (Part Two), Aesthetics, holism and environmental ethics.

Readings (required)

- Daniel Quinn, Ishmael (complete by end of Spring Break, and note: essay due 19 March).

(Week 10) 17 & 19 March

Assignment

19 March: Essay on Ishmael due; last date to provide title, abstract, and sources for Critical Essays (see critical essay guidelines under week 9)

Pragmatism and Public Lands Management.**Readings (required)**

- DesJardines, Chapter 3, “Ethics and Economics: Managing Public Lands,” 45-66, and Chapter 12, “Pluralism, Pragmatism, and Sustainability,” 258-269.

“[Battling Religions in Parks and Forest Reserves](#): Facing Religion in Conflicts Over Protected Places” (with Joel Geffen), in Full Value of Parks and Protected Areas: From Economics to the Intangible, eds. D. Harmon & Allen Putney (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 281-94, this version in the George Wright Forum, 56-67.

Video

- *The Wildlands Project* or *In the Light of Reverence*

(Week 11) 23 & 25 March

Carrying Capacity and the ethics of procreation and consumption

[This week in addition to the study guide write an analysis of Hardin’s and Irvine’s articles following the guidelines in the syllabus]

Readings (required)

- DesJardines, Chapter 4, “Responsibilities to Future Generations: Sustainable Development,” 70-90

- Garrett Hardin, “[Lifeboat ethics](#),” Psychology Today (1974)

- Sandy Irvine, “[The Cornucopia Scam](#): Contradictions of Sustainable Development” in Wild Earth 4 (4):72-82, Winter 94/95.

Sources to peruse (required)

- Worldwatch report, 2008, pp. 7-23, 34-47 (and the rest recommended) at [http://www.brontaylor.com/courses/pdf/Worldwatch--Population\(2008\).pdf](http://www.brontaylor.com/courses/pdf/Worldwatch--Population(2008).pdf)

Ecofuture reports on [Overpopulation and Sustainability](#), this includes UC professor Al Bartlett’s article, [‘Is there a population problem?’](#) originally in Wild Earth.

Ishmael essays returned 25 March

(Week 12) 30 March & 1 April

Bioregionalism

Readings (required)

- Bron Taylor, “[Bioregionalism: An Ethics of Loyalty to Place](#),” Landscape Journal 19(1&2): 50-72, 2000.

Video

- Thinking Like a Watershed (or next week)

Recommended Readings

- Wendell Berry, “[Two Economies](#)”

April: Mandatory summary of articles due for critical essay. Last chance to submit critical essay draft (optional). (See critical essay guidelines under week 9)

(Week 13) 6 & 8 April

Global Issues: Triage Ethics and the Tragedy and Battle for the Commons; and Grassroots Ecological Resistance Movements

Required Readings

[This week write analyses of Hardin's views from this week's readings, another one contrast them with those expressed by Feeney et. al., and a third and fourth from Gedick's and Akula's articles, following the guidelines in the syllabus]

Garrett Hardin, "[Tragedy of the Commons](#)" from Science (1968). Also available in html at <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/162/3859/1243>. Feeney et al., "[The Tragedy of the Commons: Twenty-Two Years Later](#)" in Green Planet Blues, 53-62

Garrett Hardin responds, "[The Global Pillage: Consequences of Unmanaged Commons](#)" ch 21 from Living Within Limits "[The \(tuna\) Tragedy of the Commons](#)", New York Times, 26 November 2008

ERN: "[Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism](#)" by Robert Figueroa in the ERN.

Ecological Resistance Movements, Al Gedicks, on [Indigenous Environmentalism](#), 89-107.

Ecological Resistance Movements, on [Environmentalism in India](#), Vikram Akula, 127-144

Recommended Readings

- The Ecologist, [Whose Common Future?](#): Reclaiming the Commons (Philadelphia: New Society, 1994), ch 1-2 & 6 Many other articles by Hardin or related to his views are at the [Garrett Hardin Society website](#).

Podcast (recommended)

- Canadian Broadcasting System "Climate Wars" (mp3s), [Part1](#), [Part2](#), [Part3](#). Series based on Gwynne Dyer's Climate Wars (2008).

Video

- Lacandona: The Zapatistas and the rainforest of Chiapas, Mexico (26m/bt)

(Week 14) 13 & 15 April

Critical Essay Due 13 April (See critical essay guidelines under week 9 and do not forget to include the title, abstract, and sources assignments, that were due earlier and returned to you).

Social Philosophy and the Sustainability Revolution: How to structure livelihoods, communities, nations, and international relations

Required Readings

- "Theodore Kaczynski, "Industrial Society and Its Future," http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Industrial_Society_and_Its_Future.

"[Deep Ecology and its Social Philosophy: A Critique](#)," in Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays on Deep Ecology. Eds. E. Katz. A. Light, D. Rothenberg (Boston: MIT Press, 2000), 269-299.

Readings (recommended)

- Robert Paelke's Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics (Yale U.P, 1989), 273-283 (on reserve) Martin Lewis, Green Delusions (Duke U.P., 1992), p. 150-90 & 242-51.

(Week 15) 19 April (last scheduled class)

Is religion the solution or one of the problems?

Readings (required)

Bron Taylor, "[A Green Future for Religion?](#)" Futures Journal 36:991-1008, 2004

THE TIME AND PLACE FOR THE FINAL EXAM WILL BE ANNOUNCED HERE WHEN THIS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE.

RESOURCES

Writing Well

- [Joshua Sowin's 'A guide to writing well](#)

- [Bron Taylor's Writing Well Guide](#)

Websites

ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS AND INITIATIVES INVOLVED IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

[The International Society for Environmental Ethics \(ISEE\)](#)

[International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture](#)

[Environmental Ethics](#) (Journal)

[Environmental Values](#) (Journal)

[Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University](#)

[Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture](#)

Additional resources, such as links to podcasts, music, slideshows, video, music, and websites, will be made available here during the course. Students are encouraged to send their own ideas for resources to the course instructors.

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