2014

388-01 Theology and Ecology

Leon Chartrand

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/theology_syllabi_spring_2014

Recommended Citation
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/theology_syllabi_spring_2014/9
THEO 388-01
THEOLOGY AND ECOLOGY

Spring, 2014
MWF, 1:00-1:50pm
101 Hailstones Hall

INSTRUCTOR:
Leon Chartrand, Ph.D.
120 Hinkle Hall
Xavier University
Cincinnati, OH 45227-4442
Telephone: (307) 690-2994
email: chartrandl@xavier.edu

Office Hours:
Mon, Wed, Fri: 11:00am-1:00pm; 3:00-4:15pm
Or by appointment

I am generally here all day TR as well, but please call or text me to be sure I am in office)
(307) 690-2994 my cell open to student calls/txts

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We are in trouble now because we are, as Thomas Berry says, in between stories. A new way of engaging and thinking about our world must be nurtured. It is part of the great work of the human species as we transition from this terminal phase of the Cenozoic Era into an Ecozoic Era. This course seeks to challenge and inspire students to think theologically about ecological ideals and to consider how our ecological relation to the world is a manifestation of our theological relation to divine mystery. Throughout the semester, we will examine how religious imagination can foster an intimate, viable relation between the human and the more-than-human world. We will therefore examine how religious imagination can resolve issues of disconnectedness that are the primary cause of many of the environmental issues we face today. This course aims to challenge and inspire us to think about the relation between how we see the world (i.e., through story) and our relation to it. Since religious consciousness awakened, humans have been storytellers whose knowledge and ability to make sense of things comes from being situated within the earth community. If my THEO 245 class (God, Creation and Ecology) primarily focuses on the role of story as context for experience, this class, THEO 388 (Theology & Ecology), focuses primarily on experience and how experience enhances meaning/story. Both story and experience help us find some consonance between what resonates deep within and what is beyond our ability to grasp surrounding us.

COURSE GOALS:

This course aims:
• To bring critical attention to the ethical and religious dimensions of ecologically significant issues.
• To present a worldview that is oriented towards responsible action that recognizes the primary relation between ecological and social justice.
• To foster wisdom, understanding, and justice by opening up a way for students to make connections between their religious and ecological identities.
• To enable students to understand their religious tradition as a living tradition that demands students see the crucial role that public theology plays in the on-going dialogue about ecological issues.
• To encourage students to be ecologically literate through a consciously theological point of view.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this course, the student will be able:
• To describe the role that religious imagination plays in the human understanding of the world.
• To identify several ecologically critical issues that also reflect social injustices.
• To critically express how religious imagination can help resolve these critical issues.
• To demonstrate a more comprehensive knowledge of the Judeo-Christian tradition, including how notions like “wilderness”, “incarnation,” and “transcendence” influence the way we live on the land.
• To describe the difference between microcosmic and macrocosmic views of ecological issues and the value that both views play in resolving the ecological crisis.
• To provide a phenomenological and theological description of the relation between the human and the other-than-human so as to demonstrate how ecological concepts are inherently theological.

**STUDENT STATUS:**

This course is offered to Xavier undergraduate students as a 3 credit hour course at undergraduate rates. As such, this course can serve as an E/RS elective at the 300 level, as well as a course to satisfy Peace Studies and Environmental Studies minors (see sections below).

**ETHICS/RELIGION AND SOCIETY (E/RS) FOCUS:**

The E/RS Focus strives to realize Xavier University’s mission to educate the whole person by providing a learning experience characterized by critical thinking and articulate expression with specific attention given to ethical issues and values. In keeping with the Jesuit tradition, Xavier is a learning community dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, to the orderly discussion of issues confronting society; and, as would befit an American institution committed unreservedly to open and free inquiry.

**PEACE STUDIES MINOR:**

In keeping with the Jesuit tradition, Xavier believes that religious insights are complementary to the intellectual life, and that a continuing synthesis of the Christian perspective with all other forms of human knowledge is conducive to wisdom and understanding. Xavier shares in worldwide Jesuit commitment to a creative and intelligent engagement with questions of peace and justice. As such, this course can be taken for credit to satisfy requirements for a Peace Studies minor.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR/MINOR:**

With attention to the student as an individual, Jesuit education seeks to develop: 1. Intellectual skills for a full life in the human community and in service to the environment; 2. Critical attention to the underlying philosophical and theological implications of environmental issues; 3. A world view that is oriented to responsible action and recognizes the intrinsic value of the natural and human values; 4. An understanding and communication of the moral and religious values through personal concern and lived witness, as well as by precept of instruction; and 5. A sense of the whole person- body, mind, and spirit. That said, insofar as the whole person must address the relation between the human and the land, this course satisfies requirements for an Environmental Studies minor. Also, given the amount of ecological concepts to be presented throughout the lectures, this course is supported by Xavier University’s Biology Department and pre-med, pre-vet, and environmental studies students are encouraged to register.

**PERTINENT POLICIES:**

1). **ABSENTEEISM:** Attendance is 20% of the final grade. Absences do not excuse students from knowledge about the material discussed or about any announcements or syllabus changes or assigned work. For this course, students are allowed two (2) excused absences for the semester. A third absence, and any absence thereafter shall count as 20 pts off attendance/participation grades. For instance, a person who misses four days (less the two excused) will have a final attendance score of 160 (200 pts – (2x20pts)=160) and no more than a score of 160 for participation (since a student cannot receive a participation grade for classes unattended). This means that, on a scale of 1000 points, if a student misses four days, they can have no better than a final grade of 92 (1000 less 40 “attend” less 40 “partic” = 92).
920), assuming that a perfect score is achieved on all other assignments. Chronic absence will result in recommendation of withdrawal or failure from the course. This is because much of the material covered in class is in addition to assigned readings and will not be covered elsewhere. Attendance is the best way to prepare for a successful outcome in this class. If a student is absent on the day when a presentation, reflection paper, learning activity or assessment is due, the student must contact the instructor prior to the date assigned or make arrangements with professor to rectify the missed assignment. If working with team members, students must also contact team members. Failure to do so will lower the student’s grade for that assignment.

3). PARTICIPATION: Naturally, attendance and participation go hand in hand. Participation is worth 20% of the final grade. There is no credit given on days of absence. Participation includes involvement in group work, class discussions, asking questions, initiating discussions, and/or attentiveness. While students can receive a perfect score on attendance by attending every class, participation is weighted according to involvement. This does not mean a student has to be outspoken during open discussions, but it does mean the student has to be engaged. How participation is weighted alongside attendance is discussed in item #2 above.

4). Cell Phones/Laptops: Laptops are reserved for those students with special needs. Cell phones are absolutely not permitted unless a reasonable excuse is given beforehand. Cell phones used during class can result in 50% deduction on participation for that class. As an avid texter myself, I am well aware of the ability to text under your desk. This will not be tolerated.

4). ACADEMIC HONESTY: Work submitted for evaluation must be that of the student’s whose name is on the paper (for joint projects with classmates, please include their names). The direct and non-attributed use of another’s effort is prohibited. Penalties for violation will be in accordance with Xavier University policies as cited in the catalog. The Instructor reserves the right to use “Turn It In” at will.

5). LANGUAGE: While Xavier is committed unreservedly to open and free inquiry, any abusive, discriminatory, harassing language will not be tolerated. Gender neutral language is expected.

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:**

In addition to free and open inquiry based on inclusive language, this instructor and Xavier University are committed to accommodating special needs. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability, whether physical or learning or medical, should contact the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 on the 1st floor of Kuhlman Hall to accommodate reasonable accommodations. Students, if comfortable, are welcome to discuss concerns confidentially with the instructor. This instructor is committed to confidentiality and to fostering a safe, open, inclusive and positive learning environment.

**DEPARTMENTAL GRADING SCALE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92 or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>91-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>83-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>75-68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Professor reserves the right to assign + or – to borderline grades based on student performance.

**GRADING:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Papers (4)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Assessment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trip/Group Projects (3)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© CHALLENGE YOURSELF, HAVE FUN and LEARN SOMETHING NEW! ©
REQUIRED READINGS:

The only reading material necessary for purchase in this class is: Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988). All other resources we will use are hard to acquire or out-of-print (which doesn’t mean they’re not worth reading!). Required readings are provided below and must be completed before the lectures and discussions to be presented for that week. At the end of each class, the instructor will assign which readings are required for the proceeding class. Completing the readings prior to class is part of one’s participation grade. Proper preparation by keeping up on readings will make our learning experience more enriching. Thank you in advance!

ELECTRONIC RESERVES/BLACKBOARD:

Many of the resources we will use are hard to acquire or out-of-print. Thus, these will be made available through electronic reserves at the Xavier library or on the course page of Blackboard. You can access these resources through the library home page (e-reserves) and click on electronic reserves. You should be able to access the list under the title of the course (THEO-388 Theology and Ecology) and the instructor’s name (Chartrand). Whey you are asked for a password, please use the phrase: *grizzly.*

REFLECTION ESSAYS

Reflection essays are intended to challenge students to incorporate readings, discussion and lectures into a synthesis. In that way, they serve two purposes. Firstly, these essays will be used to assess the student’s completion of the assigned readings. Secondly, these essays are intended to encourage students to think more comprehensively about material presented that day. There will be four essays assigned. All essays will be due exactly one week after assigned unless otherwise noted.

YOUTUBE VIDEO PROJECTS

This project will involve students getting together to create a video on a particular theme (based on an assigned reading) with the potential for being posted on YouTube and Xavier Expeditions.com. The video will be assigned in addition to the Group Project assigned. Video projects will be assigned on Mar 21st. Video projects will be presented on Apr 28th.

FIELD TRIP & GROUP PROJECTS

A field trip/group assignment will be assigned for Sunday, April 13 (seriously!). A question will be assigned and students will need to utilize what they have learned in this class, both individually and in groups, to provide a response based on the surroundings. This assignment, and the group preparation will be held off-site, weather permitting. Site is to be determined and will depend upon restrictions or difficulties arranging student and instructor travel. Individual reflections will be assigned and due on the same day (Apr 13) while group presentations will be given April 23-25th. Group projects will be assigned on Mar 21st, the same day that video projects are assigned.

FINAL PAPER & ASSESSMENT

The Final Paper is an opportunity to integrate insights into your future with the earth, creation and the more-than-human world. Prompts will be given three weeks in advance of the paper’s due date. The paper will be 5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1 inch margins. Further details will be given at time paper is assigned and are subject to change. A final assessment will be given as scheduled on exam day.
**THEO 388**  
Theology and Ecology  
Course Syllabus

# COURSE PLANNER  
(WITH LECTURE TOPICS & ASSIGNED DAILY READINGS)

## PROFESSOR DISCRETION

Each group of students brings new challenges, new insights and possibilities. To address adult Montessori learning nuances, this professor reserves the right to alter or add or detract reading assignments, lecture topics, and assessment or field learning activities and their respective due dates according to pace of the class, discussions of interest as well as any new or relevant topics that may emerge that are pertinent to the direction and dynamic of student learning and course direction.

## WEEK 1

**Required Readings Prior to First Class**
- Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," 1-6 (ignore pg 7)
- Thomas Berry, "Christology," *Befriending the Earth*, 66-82.

**Jan 13**  
*Welcome & Course Overview, What is Ecology? What is Theology?*

**Jan 15**  
*Universe Story, Earth Story, Human Story or Christian Story—What Context?*

**Jan 17**  
*The Ecological Crisis as Krisis*

## WEEK 2

**Required Readings Prior to First Class**
- Aldo Leopold, "The Varmint Question," *River of the Mother of God*, 47-48
- Aldo Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain" and "Escudilla," *Sand County Almanac*, 129-149.

**Jan 20**  
*Martin Luther King Day—no class*

**Jan 22**  
*Seeing and Listening to the Earth*

**Jan 24**  
*Seeing and Listening to the Earth*

**REFLECTION PAPER #1 ASSIGNED**

## WEEK 3

**Required Readings Prior to First Class**
- Thomas Berry, "Ecological Age" *Dream of the Earth*, 36-49

**Jan 27**  
*From Modern Science to Geological Wisdom*

**Jan 29**  
*From Modern Science to Geological Wisdom*

**Jan 31**  
*Calculative and Originative Thinking*

**REFLECTION PAPER #1 DUE**

😊 CHALLENGE YOURSELF, HAVE FUN and LEARN SOMETHING NEW! 😊
WEEK 4

Required Readings Prior to First Class
- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "Heart of the Problem," Future of Man, 260-269.
- Thomas Berry, "The New Story," Dream of the Earth, 123-137.

Feb 3 Anthropocentrism
Feb 5 Cosmotheanthropic Dynamics
Feb 7 From Anthropocentrism to Cosmogenesis

REFLECTION PAPER #2 ASSIGNED

WEEK 5

Required Readings Prior to First Class
- Thomas Berry, "Patriarchy: A New Interpretation of History, Dream of the Earth, 138-162.
- Diarmud O'Murchu, "Reclaiming the Feminine Heart," Reclaiming Spirituality, 101-119.

Feb 10 From Patriarchy to Mother Earth
Feb 12 From Patriarchy to Mother Earth
Feb 14 Gender Neutral and the Poetic

REFLECTION PAPER #2 DUE

WEEK 6

Required Readings Prior to First Class
- Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," excerpt from A Sand County Almanac.

Feb 17 Social-Economic Injustice and the Ecological Crisis
Feb 19 Social-Economic Injustice and Ecological Justice
Feb 21 Earth as Primary Teacher

WEEK 7

Required Readings Prior to First Class

Feb 24 Questions Concerning Technology: SUSTAINABILITY HEROES, 4pm, EXTRA CREDIT
Feb 26 Technology and Earth Healing

REFLECTION PAPER #3 ASSIGNED
THEO 388
Theology and Ecology
Course Syllabus

February 28
Field Trip Exchange Day #1—no class

Week 8

Mar 3  Spring Break—no class
Mar 5  Spring Break—no class
Mar 7  Spring Break—no class

Week 9

Required Readings Prior to First Class


Mar 10  The Role of Myth and Story in a Crisis
Mar 12  The Role of Affective Experiences in a Crisis
Mar 14  Ecological Wisdom and the Landscape

Reflection Paper #3 Due

Week 10

Required Readings Prior to First Class


Mar 17  Ecological Wisdom and the Landscape
Mar 19  Ecological Wisdom and Metaphorical Expression
Mar 21  Group Video Projects/Group Presentations Assigned

Readings for project:

Week 11

Required Readings Prior to First Class

- Handouts

Mar 24  Vernal Equinox and the New Moon as Metaphor for Seeing Anew
Mar 26  The Encountering-Event
Mar 28  Horizon of Interpretation (Reflections on “World of Meaning”)

Week 12

Required Readings Prior to First Class


😊 CHALLENGE YOURSELF, HAVE FUN and LEARN SOMETHING NEW! 😊
# THEO 388
Theology and Ecology
Course Syllabus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 31</td>
<td>Horizon of Interpretation (Reflections on “Thing in World”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2</td>
<td>Meaningful Closeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 4</td>
<td>Overwhelming-Arrival Relation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WEEK 13**

- **Required Readings Prior to First Class**
  - Handouts
- Apr 7 | Overwhelming—Arrival Relation |
- Apr 9 | Self-Exploration and Discussion |
- Apr 11 | Field Trip Exchange Day #2—no class |

**April 13**

- **FIELD TRIP—Story/Experience: Ways of Naming the Holy Time and Activity to be determined.**

**Reflection #4 Assigned and Due**

**WEEK 14**

- **Required Readings Prior to First Class**
- Apr 14 | Thinking and Dwelling: **FINAL PAPER PROMPTS GIVEN** |
- Apr 16 | Field Trip Exchange Day #3—no class |
- Apr 18 | Easter Break—no class |

**WEEK 15**

- Apr 21 | Easter Break—no class |
- Apr 23 | Group Presentations |
- Apr 25 | Group Presentations |

**WEEK 16**

- **Required Readings Prior to First Class**
  - Thomas Berry, “The Ecozoic Era.”
- Apr 28 | Video Presentations |
- Apr 30 | The Ecozoic Era. |
- May 2 | Review, Evaluations |
- May 9 | **FINAL PAPER/ASSESSMENT**, Friday, 1-1:50pm, 101 Hailstones |