CREL 2413
RELIGION AND ECOLOGY
Fall 2011
Acadia University
Mon. days 7:00–10:00 p.m. BAC 236

Dr. Donna L. Seamone

Office: BAC 408
Office Hours for Fall 2011:
(Sign-up sheets for Appointments on my office door)
Tuesday 1:45-2:45 p.m.
Thursday 1:45-4:45 p.m.
e-mail: donna.seamone@acadiau.ca
Office Phone/voicemail: 585-1267 (safer to use e-mail)

SYLLABUS CONTENTS:
I. COURSE DESCRIPTION
II. COURSE OBJECTIVES
III. TEXTS
IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS
   IV.A RULES ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY
   IV.B WRITING CRITERIA—GUIDANCE—PAPER PROPOSAL / ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
   IV.C RESEARCH PAPERS: WRITING AND EVALUATION CRITERIA
V. SUGGESTED ESSAY TOPICS
VI. CLASS TOPICS (check ACORN FOR OFFICIAL VERSION, Dates, etc.)
I. COURSE DESCRIPTION
From the Acadia University Calendar: "This course reviews the relationship between religion and the environment from two perspectives. It first traces how traditional religions (Eastern, Western, Aboriginal) define things. Second, it provides an overview of contemporary ecological spirituality in Western society, including ecoactivism, ecofeminism, deep ecology, and animal rights."
Specifically, we will undertake an examination of attitudes toward nature or the environment in Native, Asian and Western Religious Traditions; the underlying assumptions of our contemporary view of the natural world.
The course is structured in four main topics: I. Traditional Cultures; II. Asian Religious Traditions; III. Background to the Contemporary Discussion of Ecology and Religion; IV. The Contemporary Discussion of Ecology and Religion. The format of the class will include lecture, discussion in-class small group work and videos.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES
1. To explore the interrelationships between religion and ecology.
2. To examine the role of cosmology in underscoring human-earth relations in a variety of cultures, religious traditions, and contemporary ecological activism.
3. To reflect on the ways human beings have perceived the relationship between themselves and the world in which they live (for example: nature, the natural world, external reality, etc.).
4. To consider the scientific worldview and the understanding of the relationship of human beings and the wider world.
5. To examine contemporary writers writing what might be termed ecological spirituality.

III. TEXTS
2. Collection of Course readings available through links on ACORN or for purchase. Check for weekly readings AND REVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS on ACORN. Reading Assignments are to be done prior to the class in which they are listed.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS
10% Class attendance and participation
   Class participation and interest displayed can change your mark by as much as a letter grade. Prepare for class by reading assigned texts and reflecting on general themes. In class contribute to discussion by sharing your questions and thoughts and by attending to the ideas of others. Bring at least one type-written critical question based on readings FOR DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES each week to be submitted to the instructor AS A RECORD OF ATTENDANCE—these questions will not be graded and cannot be handed in by a classmate.
25% Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (Due Oct.14th)
35% Essay: 8-10 pages (Due Nov.25th)
30% Final Exam (Final exam TBA: Exam period Dec 5-17)
   The final exam will be based on course texts, readings, videos and lecture materials. Exam format: 3 essay questions. The exam will consist of 3 sections each having 3 questions - Students answer 1 question from each section.

*Late Papers: There will be a 5% per day penalty for late assignments unless accompanied by a medical certificate or written explanation.

*Laptop/Cellphone Policy: Laptops can be both a benefit and a distraction in a classroom. While many students
benefit from taking notes using a laptop, other students cannot resist the temptation of checking e-mail, chatting, playing games or watching movies during class time. This class has a strict — no non-class related use — rule for laptops — if you are found violating this policy, then your in-class laptop privileges will be taken away. Cellphones are a distraction for everyone, and should be turned off during class. If there is a special situation where you need to have your phone on for a particular day, please let the instructor know the situation before class.

IV.A RULES ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND DISHONESTY

Each student is responsible for familiarizing themselves with University Policies on Academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please read the section "Academic Integrity" found in the Acadia University Calendar, 2006-2007, either in hard copy or on-line at: http://library.acadiau.ca/guides/plagiarism/student/index.html#aupolicy.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

All of these offences are serious breaches of intellectual ethics and serious offences. I will adhere to the policy of the history and classics department: plagiarized work will receive a grade of zero (no departmental appeal is possible). In especially bad cases more severe penalties, including a course grade of F (zero) and/or a recommendation for expulsion from the university, are possible.

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, grade of F for the course or suspension or expulsion from the university.

NOTE: In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. STUDENTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT THEIR WORK BOTH ELECTRONICALLY TO ACORN (WHICH IN TURN SUBMITS YOUR WORK TO TURNITIN.COM) AND IN HARD COPY TO THE PROFESSOR IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED SUBMITTED.

Acadia University has purchased Turnitin.com, which is a detection service. Students submit their assignment/work electronically where it is checked against the internet, published works and Turnitin’s database for similar or identical work. If Turnitin finds similar or identical work that has not been properly cited, a report is sent to the instructor showing the student’s work and the original source. The instructor reviews what Turnitin has found and then determines if he/she thinks there is a problem with the work.

IV.B WRITING CRITERIA-GUIDANCE—PAPER PROPOSAL /ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE, Oct. 14 (to be handed in no later than 4 p.m. in BAC 441 and on ACORN)

- Your proposal should be in the form of a one-page proposal with an annotated bibliography attached. The proposal should pose your question for research, briefly summarize the literature you will address, and propose the thesis you will argue in your paper. Your annotated bibliography should cite in an acknowledged form at least seven (7) key sources you are using to investigate your topic. Below each citation include a three to four (4-6) sentence summary of the source and its relevance to your research (example below). Course materials may be used as sources where applicable. Students may choose to write from a personal basis including their own experience as a "source" of insight and substance in the essay. Since the second assignment builds on the first, students should read carefully syllabus description of this assignment and the criteria for papers below.

- WHAT IS AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY? An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books,
articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 100-150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. (see the process below)

- **ANNOTATIONS VS. ABSTRACTS.** Abstracts are the purely descriptive summaries often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles or in periodical indexes. Annotations are descriptive and critical; they expose the author’s point of view, clarity and appropriate use of expression, and authority.

- **THE PROCESS.** Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis, and informed library research. First, locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic. Briefly examine and review the actual items. Then choose those works that provide a variety of perspectives on your topic. Cite the book, article, or document using the appropriate style. Write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. Include one or more sentences that (a) evaluate the authority or background of the author, (b) comment on the intended audience, (c) compare or contrast this work with another you have cited, or (d) explain how this work illuminates your bibliography topic.

For further instruction on the preparation of an annotated Bibliography you may follow the link from the Library website: [http://library.acadiau.ca/help/writing.html](http://library.acadiau.ca/help/writing.html) or go directly to the Cornell page entitled “Annotated Bibliography - How To” at [http://www.library.cornell.edu/t/help/res_strategy/citing/annotated.html](http://www.library.cornell.edu/t/help/res_strategy/citing/annotated.html)

**IV.C RESEARCH PAPERS: WRITING AND EVALUATION CRITERIA*****IMPORTANT***

**SECOND ASSIGNMENT: ESSAY DUE November 25 (to be handed in no later than 4 p.m. in BAC 441 and on ACORN)**

Length: Essay: 8-10 pages. This essay is the continuation of the research begun in assignment one.

I encourage you to take advantage of assistance available at the Acadia Writing Centre. The Writing Centre offers free help to all students wishing to improve their writing skills. You can sign up online today:

- To book a one-on-one appointment with a writing tutor, click here: writingcentre.acadiau.ca/writing-tutorials.html
  
- To see which helpful presentations and workshops you might want to attend this year, click here: writingcentre.acadiau.ca/workshops-and-presentations.html

Choose a topic in keeping with the goals of the course. Remember the paper is to be a thesis paper and not simply a report on a particular topic. You may choose to focus on one particular issue or religious tradition as a way of narrowing your focus.

This is a summary of the questions I ask in evaluating student papers. Research papers are still the most standard form of scholarly communication. An excellent book on writing such papers is Rolf Norgaard’s *Ideas in Action* (HarperCollins). Consider using it while writing your paper. The suggestions that Norgaard makes in chapter 5, “Troubleshooting Your Thesis,” are especially useful. If you are trying to improve your writing, it is acceptable to receive help from the Acadia Writing Centre, a friend, or an editor, provided that you (1) acknowledge this assistance in a foot- or endnote, and (2) attach the edited draft(s) signed by your editor.

- **FOCUS & ADEQUACY OF COVERAGE.** Is your response well focused? The biggest single problem in student research papers is that they attempt too much in too small a space. I almost never read a paper that is too tightly focused. So narrow your TOPIC, then cut it in half! Think more about less! Are you aware of the scope of your TOPIC? If you leave out important issues or related issues, say so and justify the omission. Say what are the limitations and scope of your treatment. If there is further work that might be fruitfully done, describe it (usually at the beginning of the paper after the thesis
statement and description of the how the paper will proceed OR as part of you conclusion OR both).

- **BASIC IDEAS, ORIGINALITY OF THOUGHT, CRITICAL ACUMEN.** Did you show comprehension of basic ideas and technical terms? Define every technical, private or ambiguous term, especially those that are central to your interpretation. Did you demonstrate that you can go beyond your sources? Pursue your own ideas and insights. Do not be content to parrot others. Think for yourself. Do not write a paper that simply summarizes sources. Did you ask good questions of your data? Were you critical? Do not accept everything you read as authoritative. If you use a theory or framework, don’t use it uncritically; question it as well as your data. When you take issue, develop, rather than merely state, your criticisms. If you employed comparisons, were you fair? Did you consider contrasts as well as comparisons?

- **CLARITY AND COGENCY OF THESIS; TREATMENT OF COUNTER-ARGUMENTS.** Did you overtly state and develop a thesis or pose a clear, central question? Did you consider counter-theses carefully? A thesis must not be either a truism or a tautology. The clearest way to do so is to articulate a question (or questions) to which most of your paper is a response. Do not write a paper which is merely a description, report, or paraphrase. You may, of course, do some describing, reporting, or paraphrasing, but do so for a purpose and state that purpose clearly. Take a stance in relation to what you report and develop that stance at least as thoughtfully as you present the reported material. Thinking comparatively or else approaching your topic using a theory or framework usually helps develop a distinctive point of view.

- **ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER; QUALITY OF WRITING.** Were the grammar and syntax impeccable? Did you provide concrete illustrations to ground your big generalizations? Was the paper well organized? Make sure divisions, transitions, and development of arguments are obvious and logically coherent. Write clearly. Was the paper in a clear, readable, consistent format? Type. Double-space. Number each page. Staple (paper-clipped pages often get attached to someone else’s paper). Leave ample margins for my responses. Did the paper flow? Were its transitions smooth and clear? Was the organization clear? Did you provide illustrations to ground your abstractions and generalizations? Did you use charts, diagrams, and other such aids when they would help clarify?

- **SELECTION AND HANDLING OF SOURCES.** Did you select and handle your sources well? Make it absolutely clear when you are paraphrasing someone else’s ideas; inform your reader when the ideas or arguments you are presenting are your own. Do not fuse together bits of paraphrase and bits of original thought. If you synthesize, synthesize ideas, not phrases and sentences. Write in your own words; do not pilfer or imitate the language of your sources, or you will raise the red flag of plagiarism. It is department policy that plagiarism results in an automatic zero. Did you use a standard documentation format and use it consistently? Did you provide all the appropriate bibliographic data formatted correctly? Did you do a good job of integrating READINGS and insights from the course? [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

V. **SUGGESTED ESSAY TOPICS**

The following are topics may be interested in pursuing for your essay (note: they are topics not theses). However, you are not required to select your topic from this list. You are encouraged to choose your own topic. If there is any question concerning the appropriateness of your essay topic, please clear the topic with me—it is most helpful if you bring a few sentences describing your proposed topic to me in office hours. These topics are meant to fertilize your imagination not limit it.

1. An analysis, commentary and interpretation of a passage from scripture (Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Christian) dealing with its ecological implications (e.g., Genesis 1:28).
2. Trace a theme with ecological implications in the scriptures or tradition of a given religion, e.g. the attitudes toward animals, plants, or "nature."

---

1 Example of a tautologous thesis (a statement whose predicate is already contained in the definition of the subject): “Bald men have no hair.” Example of a tautologous question: “Do bald men have hair?” Example of a truism (a statement so obviously true that it is not worth making), “These words are printed on a page.” Example of a truism in question form: “Are these words printed on a page?”
3. Hunting (including fishing) as a sacred occupation in a native culture.
4. Are human beings natural "aliens" in the world?
5. The moral implications of "environmental/ ecological racism."
7. The ecological significance of learning the "story" of the land one inhabits (e.g. among the Australian Aborigines).
8. The ecological implications of agriculture undertaken as religious ritual.
11. The "land ethic" in Aldo Leopold.
12. The ecological implications of Darwin's thought.
13. The idea of wilderness in John Muir.
14. Ecological themes in Gary Snyder's writings and poetry.
16. The Gaia hypothesis
17. Attitudes toward wilderness in Canadian and/or American thought and history.
18. The ecological implications of animal rights.
19. The debate between animal rightists and deep ecologists.
20. The spiritual dimensions of contemporary ecological protest (e.g. Greenpeace, Earth First).
21. The debate concerning Lynn White's accusation that Christianity is to blame for the contemporary ecological crisis.
22. Select one or more contemporary writers on ecology and test their ecological vision with some other theory.
23. The ecofeminist critique of patriarchy as the cause of environmental problems.
24. The critique of traditional Christianity in the writings of a contemporary eco-theologian (e.g. Matthew Fox, Thomas Berry, Rosemary Radford Reuther).
25. The attempt to reinterpret Christianity in ways that support an ecological spirituality in the writings of a contemporary eco-theologian (e.g. Matthew Fox, Sallie McFague, Douglas John Hall).
26. The ecological and ethical issues involved in the debate between animal rightists and native hunters/trappers.
27. Consumerism as a "religion" and its ecological views.
28. Growth and development as modern "religion" and their ecological implications.
29. The underlying "myths" and morality of the basic project of this university and its moral and ecological implications.
30. Some as of Neopagan ritual/practice as an earth religion.

AWARDS:

Canadian Society for the Study of Religion Undergraduate Student Essay Contest

Subject: Any topic in the general field of religious studies
Language: English or French
Length: 2500-3500 words, typed and double-spaced
Eligibility: Any undergraduate currently registered in a Canadian university or college
First Prize: $300
Second Prize: $100
Deadline: TBA

Essays do not need to be written specifically for this contest. They may be assignments from a religious studies course. Essays must be accompanied by a letter from a member of the sponsoring religious studies department or programme, indicating that the student is an undergraduate in good standing in that university or college. Students entering the contest must submit an electronic copy as well as a hard copy of her/his essay, their full mailing address on the first page of the essay, and a letter of certification, no later than TBA (April 2012) to:

Dr. Darlene Juschka
Dept. of Religious Studies
VI. CLASS TOPICS
READING ASSIGNMENTS and review guide posted on Acorn during semester for each week may change from this outline.

Week 1 Mon., Sept. 12: COURSE INTRODUCTION

Tuesday Sept 13th 7-8:30 p.m. BAC 132 As you can see we have 1 less class because of the Thanksgiving holiday, so on you are to attend the public lecture to be given by Stuart Lachs called Zen Buddhism: Eyes Wide Open (should you have another class you will not be penalized)

Week 2 Mon., Sept. 19: WORLDVIEWS, RITUAL, AND RELIGION
READING:
1. Kinsley, p. XV-XXI
(READINGS on ACORN)

Week 3: Sept 26: TRADITIONAL CULTURES North America

Week 4: Oct. 3: TRADITIONAL CULTURES Australia and New Zealand
Oct 10 Canadian Thanksgiving no class
Week 5 Mon., Oct. 17: ASIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS - Hinduism

Week 6 Mon., Oct. 24: ASIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS: Buddhism
1st Assignment due (no extensions)

Week 7: Mon., Oct. 31: BACKGROUND TO THE CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSION OF ECOL. & REL.

Week 8 Mon., Nov. 7: BACKGROUND TO THE CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSION OF ECOL. & REL

I would like to move this class to the Thursday evening of the Previous week to be negotiated in class:

Week 9 Mon., Nov. 14: THE CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSION OF ECOLOGY AND RELIGION: ECOFEMINISM

Week 10 Mon., Nov 21: THE CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSION OF ECOLOGY & RELIGION Papers Due Nov. 25

Week 11 Mon., Nov. 26 COURSE SUMMARY: WHAT OF CONTEMPORARY ECO-SPIRITUALITY?
You are invited to a public talk by Stuart Lachs
a Zen practitioner since 1967 and an Independent Scholar of
contemporary Zen Buddhism in the West

When? 7 p.m. Tuesday September 13th 2011
Where? Beveridge Arts Centre (BAC) Room 132

The talk will consist of three parts. First Stuart will
narrate his Zen biography which includes practice in the
USA as well as in Korea, Taiwan and Japan. He will
articulate a description of Zen, what he calls “the
Standard Model of Zen.” The Standard Model is what is
presented in most books and even in college texts on Zen.
It is the Zen institution’s presentation of itself. The third
part of the talk will be a critical look at parts of the
Standard Model showing the constructed nature of as well
as a basic duplicity of the Model. This part will include
historical and sociological analysis.
There will be time for a question and answer period.

Sponsored by the C.B. Lumsden Chair in Religious Studies (Comparative Religion),
History and Classics and the Office of the Dean of Arts