



# GREEN COURSES

University of Toronto, School of the Environment

**ENV382: Waste Not, Want Not: Stories of Wastefulness in Religion and Society**

**Winter 2020, Wednesdays 10 am -12 pm**

## General Information

Time: Wednesdays 10 am - 12 pm

Location: AB107 (50 St. George St.)

Instructor: Prof. Tanhum Yoreh

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The environmental movement is often seen as secular, at odds with religious teachings and/or practice. This overlooks the long religious engagement with the natural world and the moral imperative of religion as a motivator of behaviour. This course explores religious environmentalism, its proponents and opponents, and its core values within three of the major Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Religious environmentalists have used teachings from sacred texts as exemplars of sustainability. Some, however, claim that these texts teach domination, anthropocentrism and hierarchical values. Looking at a broad range of worldviews, we focus on the topics of wastefulness, consumption, and simplicity. For instance, we look at ways in which religious communities in the past have taken measures to limit individual consumption through sumptuary laws and compare the moral arguments used historically to those used today by contemporary social movements such as the voluntary simplicity movement. Can we learn from the past? Are the arguments similar across time and place? Are they still relevant? Are they effective? What is the roll of religious environmentalism in tackling the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

We look at a wide range of historical texts from sources such as the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Quran, Hadith, Talmud, legal codes, church sermons, and philosophical treatises, together with contemporary texts such as Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si – On Care for Our Common Home*, and other faith-based environmental statements calling for environmental action. What are the values emphasized in such teachings? How similar are they to general environmentalism? In what ways are they unique? And perhaps most importantly, how do they manifest themselves in the behaviour of adherents? Students are given a window into the complexities and heterogeneity of Toronto's environmentally engaged religious communities. Readings about the barriers, motivations, and values that inform environmental behaviour are complemented with fieldtrips to places of worship where they will hear religious leaders speak

about the environmental initiatives undertaken in their communities, see sacred spaces and be exposed to the work of faith-based environmental organizations.

## **Quercus**

In consideration of the environment, all assignments must be submitted via Quercus. Weekly readings will be available online.

## **Schedule and Readings**

**\*Please note that additional readings may be assigned**

### **January 8 – Introduction – Three different introductions to Religion and Environment**

Readings: White Jr., Lynn. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

Hartman, Laura. “Consumption.” *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, edited by W. Jenkins, M. E. Tucker and J. Grim, 316-325. New York: Routledge, 2017.

### **January 15 – Religion and Environment from theory to practice**

Readings: Veldman, Robin Globus, Andrew Szasz and Randolph Haluza-DeLay. “Introduction: Climate Change and Religion – A Review of Existing Research.” *Journal for the Study of Religion Nature and Culture* 6, no. 3 (2012): 255-275.

Kennedy, Emily Huddart *et al.* “Why we don’t “walk the talk”: Understanding the environmental values/behaviour gap in Canada.” *Human Ecology Review* 16. no. 2 (2009): 151-160.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home*. (May 24, 2015).

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

### **January 22 – Guest Lecture: Dr. Simon Appolloni, Christianity and Environment**

### **January 29 – 1<sup>st</sup> Fieldtrip: St. Gabriel’s Passionist Parish (We will meet at St. Gabriel’s)**

### **February 5 – Islamic approaches to wastefulness (Assignment 1 due)**

Readings: Dien, Mawil Y. Izzi. “Islam and Environment: Theory and Practice.” *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 18, no. 1 (1997): 47-58.

Kamali, Mohammad Hashim. “Environmental Care in Islam: A Qur’anic Perspective.” *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 3, no. 2 (2012): 261-283.

### **February 12 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Fieldtrip: Jaffari Community Centre (We will meet at the JCC)**

## **February 19 – Reading Week (no class)**

## **February 26 – Jewish approaches to wastefulness (Assignment 2 due)**

Readings: Yoreh, Tanhum. “Conclusions.” In *Waste Not: A Jewish Environmental Ethic*, 235-257. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019.

## **March 4 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Fieldtrip: The First Narayever Congregation (We will meet at 187 Brunswick Ave.)**

## **March 11 – Movie Day – *Renewal* – We will meet in the Media Commons at Robarts Library (Assignment 3 due)**

## **March 18 – Voluntary Simplicity and Involuntary Simplicity**

Readings: Yoreh, Tanhum. “Consumption, Wastefulness, and Simplicity in Ultra-Orthodox Communities.” *Studies in Judaism, Humanities and the Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2019): 137-152.

Schulmann, Bernard. “Simplicity and Falling Incomes: *Involuntary Simplicity*.” *The Canadian Friend* 100:5 (December, 2004) 4-5.

Gregg, Richard B. “The Value of Voluntary Simplicity.” *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (August-October, 1936): 27-46.

## **March 25 – Sumptuary Laws: Moralizing Consumption, Limiting Wastefulness**

Petcu, Marian. “The Church as a Prescripitor of Consumption – An Outline for a Sociology of Luxury.” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 13, no. 38 (Summer 2014): 172-194.

## **April 1 – Conclusion (Final paper due)**

### **Fieldtrips**

There are a total of 3 fieldtrips scheduled for this course. The fieldtrips are meant to enhance your learning experience and are important part of how the course is conceptualized. Attending fieldtrips, however, is **not mandatory**.

### **Evaluation**

There has been a proliferation of faith-based statements/declarations on the state of the environment and on climate change in particular over the past decade. These declarations offer insight into the way their authors perceive the relationship between their faith and environmental responsibility. The fieldtrips are an opportunity for you to observe how communities/organizations use faith-based values as a launching pad for environmental engagement.

There are two different types of short assignments in this course, one for those who attend the fieldtrips and one for those who do not.

**Bonus: Those who attend all 3 fieldtrips will have their lowest mark (of the three shorter assignments) not counted towards their final grade.**

**Fieldtrip Reports (1000 words) – 20% x 3 = 60% (Due Feb. 5, Feb. 26, Mar. 11)**

For these assignments you will 1) give a summary of the fieldtrip 2) read a faith-based statement on environmental responsibility (Jewish, Christian, or Muslim depending on the week – **use one from the list provided**) 3) summarize the declaration, highlighting the values it emphasizes and 4) analyze the extent of its applicability (who wrote the statement? for whom did they write it? who do they speak for?) 5) relate your experience to the faith-based environmental statement (with a particular focus on values).

**If you miss a fieldtrip, you are not eligible to submit a fieldtrip report and instead must submit an organizational report.**

**Organizational Reports (1000 words) – 20% x 3 = 60% (Due Feb. 5, Feb. 26, Mar. 11)**

For these assignments you will 1) read a faith-based statement on environmental responsibility (Jewish, Christian, or Muslim depending on the week – **use one from the list provided**) 2) summarize the declaration, highlighting the values it emphasizes and 3) analyze the extent of its applicability (who wrote the statement? for whom did they write it? who do they speak for?) 4) find an active faith-based environmental organization 5) discuss the relationship between the environmental statement, the faith-based values listed in the mission statement of the environmental organization and the environmental activism in which that organization is engaged.

**Final Paper (2000 words) – 40% - Due April 1**

Write an argumentative essay on the central theme of the course, Abrahamic approaches to consumption/simplicity/wastefulness. You may choose one of two approaches:

- 1) Write a critical analysis of approaches to consumption/simplicity/wastefulness in any of the Abrahamic traditions discussed in class (theory).
- 2) Write a critical analysis of how communities from any of the Abrahamic traditions discussed in class are addressing issues of consumption/simplicity/wastefulness (in practice).

Whichever option you choose, your paper must include a thesis statement, a clear introduction providing a brief overview of your paper, and a conclusion. You should clearly connect your paper to key course ideas, lectures, experiences, and readings with proper references. **You are required to have your topic approved by the instructor.**

**TURNITIN**

**Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their**

essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

### **Late Penalties**

Unless you are granted an extension, all late assignments will be docked 1% per day (not including weekends). Extensions will only be granted under extenuating circumstances.

### **Useful resources**

The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale

<http://fore.yale.edu>

The International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (See journal)

<https://www.issrnc.org>

Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology

<http://www.brill.com/worldviews-global-religions-culture-and-ecology>

### **Recommended reading**

Jenkins, W., M. E. Tucker and J. Grim (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*. New York: Routledge (2017). (available online)

Oxtoby, W., R. Amore, A. Hussain, and A. Segal (eds.) *A Concise Introduction to World Religion*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press (2015). (course reserves)

Veldman, Robin Globus, Andrew Szasz, and Randolph Haluza-DeLay (eds.) *How the World's Religions Are Responding to Climate Change: Social Scientific Investigations*. New York: Routledge, 2014. (available online)

### **Academic Integrity**

At this point in your studies you are well aware of the guidelines regarding academic integrity. Nevertheless, I urge you to review the contents of the University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*, as you are responsible for upholding the contents therein.

See: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

Seek further guidance on academic integrity at: <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students>

See also: <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/>

Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement

- Copying material word-for-word from a source (including lecture and study group notes) and not placing the words within quotation marks
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor
- Making up sources or facts
- Including references to sources that you did not use
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including:
  - o working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work
  - o having someone rewrite or add material to your work while “editing”
- Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission

***Accessibility Needs:*** *The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible:*  
<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>

***Writing Assistance:*** If you find that you need some additional assistance with your writing, see this excellent resource that offers advice on academic writing: <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/>