

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Religion and Environmentalism - 49605

Last update 28-09-2023

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Advanced School for Environmental Studies

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: English

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Tanhum Yoreh

Coordinator Email: Tanhum.yoreh@utoronto.ca

Coordinator Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Staff:

Prof Tanhum Yoreh

Course/Module description:

Religion and environment are two areas that are often viewed as being at odds with each other. For instance, religious individuals have made claims that environmentalism is secular, leftist, and pagan. Secular environmentalists have pointed to religion as being anthropocentric, patriarchal, hierarchical, and an impediment to pro-environmental behavior. Yet, over the past decades we have witnessed the rise of the religious environmental movement. Proponents of this movement have stressed the integral engagement of religion with the natural world and the moral imperative to protect the environment that is motivated by a deep sense of responsibility.

Course/Module aims:

This course will introduce students to central ideas, thinkers, and theories in the field of religion and environment. We will look primary historical sources ranging from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Quran, Talmud, Hadith, church sermons, and ethical treatises, and complement them with contemporary writings by religious leaders and activists. Together, we will explore the opportunities and barriers, and the proponents and opponents to religious expressions of environmentalism. We will look at the unique language and values that set religious environmentalism apart from other expressions of environmentalism and explore common ground. When possible, we will hear from activists in the field who speak about the environmental initiatives they are undertaking in their communities

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Students will acquire basic knowledge about the intersection of religion with environmentalism. Students will learn about the major debates in the field. They will gain an understanding of environmentalism in the 3 major Abrahamic traditions and the inherent complexity of how ancient traditions encounter contemporary issues.

Attendance requirements(%):

70

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Classes delivered on Zoom

Course/Module Content:

Week 1 – An Introduction to religion and environment
Week 2 – Theory and practice in religion and environment

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.

Week 3 – The Lynn White Jr. Hypothesis

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

Week 4 – Journey of the Universe (film) – a new cosmology?

Jenkins, Willis. "Ethics in the Anthropocene." In *The Future of Environmental Ethics*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2013. pp. 1-15.

Week 5 – The Greening of Religion Hypothesis

Taylor, Bron, Gretel Van Wieren, and Bernard Zaleha. "Lynn White Jr and the Greening-of-Religion Hypothesis." *Conservation Biology* 30 no. 5 (2016):1000–1009.

Week 6 – Judaism and environmentalism

Yoreh, Tanhum. "Compassion and Self-Concern in Halakhic Environmental Decision-Making." *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* (published online ahead of print 2021). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685357-20210901>

Week 7 – Christianity and environmentalism

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

Week 8 – Islam and environmentalism

Koehrsen, Jens. "Muslims and Climate Change: How Islam, Muslim Organizations, and Religious Leaders Influence Climate Change Perceptions and Mitigation Activities." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* (2021) 12:e702. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.702>

Week 9 – Renewal (film) – different expressions of religious environmental activism

Week 10 – Religious environmental activism in the Israeli context

Week 11 – Typologies of Jewish religious activism in Israel

Week 12 –Moral tools to limiting consumption

"Consumption, Wastefulness, and Simplicity in Ultra-Orthodox Communities."

Studies in Judaism, Humanities and the Social Sciences 2, no. 2 (2019): 137-152.

Week 13 – Conclusions and review

Required Reading:

the list of articles and readings is specified at the course content scheduled per meeting

Additional Reading Material:

the list of articles and readings is specified at the course content scheduled per meeting

Grading Scheme:

Written / Oral / Practical Exam 100 %

Additional information: