TO CARE FOR THE EARTH: ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

E-4400
Spring Semester 2009   Mondays  8:30 – 11:15   Classroom:  # 304

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
“The foundational moral experience is reverence for the human person, and her/his environment.” For centuries, Christian moralists have focused almost exclusively on the first part of this statement—“the person”. The current environmental crisis extending from the later 20th Century to the present raises numerous challenges to that focus and other traditional approaches to Christian Ethics. This course will focus on the appropriate kind of reverence that Christians, who would be moral, need to give to the environment and the sort of behaviors that need to follow from that reverence. Since profound wonder is at the heart of reverence, the course begins by reviewing what various disciplines—ecology, astrophysics, quantum physics, geology, etc.—tell us about the Earth in all of its magnificent complexity. This wonder is jarred by the stark reality of the “state of the Earth.”

Later in the course, we explore various approaches to environmental ethics and begin to see the cause and effect relationship the proponents of these various methods hold as the trigger for the current environmental crisis. From an ecumenical perspective, Christian and Jewish sources will be reviewed for the moral wisdom they offer to Christians today. Special attention will be given to the various statements on the environment published by Roman Catholic magisterial bodies from around the globe and the Franciscan tradition.

Finally, several lectures will be devoted to providing the student with a basic “environmental science literacy.” We will place these sources of moral wisdom in dialogue with wisdom drawn from other disciplines and draw some conclusions: What kind of perceptual and attitudinal changes must we make regarding the environment? What changes must we make in our consumption patterns and lifestyle? How can we reconcile those elements of the Christian tradition that have seemingly contributed to the assault upon the earth? What forms of Christian spirituality assist in the formation of a moral life fitting for reverence of the environment? How must we rethink our relation to the Earth the human community, and future generations if we are not to destroy ourselves and our planet?

FORMAT:
The course will be a blend of lecture, small group study, and discussion.
REQUIRED TEXTS:
• Required assignments found on MOODLE.
• Required readings found on CTU Library Reserves.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Class Attendance, Discussion/ Participation & Required Readings
Careful and critical reading of the assigned texts prior to class is expected. For each assignment, write several questions and/or ideas and insights from the readings that strike you as interesting ideas to be discussed further in class. [M. Div. 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6; MAPS 2.1, 2.2; MA 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9]

Environmental Ethics Method Presentation:
Toward the end of the course, (March 16, 23, and 30 sessions) we will explore 6 different approaches to doing environmental ethics. Students will be asked to sign up to do a 20 – 30 minute presentation of one of the methods. This will be followed by the discussion of a case study using the methods presented in a given session. The professor will provide more specific guidelines prior to the March sessions.

Reflections on “Planet Earth”
The Discovery Channel has produced a set of 5 DVDs that contain some of the most phenomenal film footage of the various ecosystems, plant, and animal life on Earth. Students are to view the entirety of two (2) of the DVDs “Planet Earth.” [Example: Pole to Pole, Mountains, Deep Oceans]. After viewing each of the DVDs, prepare a prayerful reflection in response to what you saw. The set of DVDs are on Reserve at CTU’s Bechtold Library. You need to view the DVD in the room provided at the Library. Reflections are due on or before February 16 and on or before April 6.
Final Paper / Project
A research paper or ecotheological issue project of about 15-20 pages will be due on or before May 4, 2009. Please create a plan for your paper or project and then schedule a meeting with the professor before you begin this exercise. The purpose of the paper is to explore how Catholic Social Teaching concerning the environment provides direction for the resolution of a concrete environmental problem.

(a) Select a specific environmental problem that faces the people in your country.
(b) Explore the historical, social, political, economic, ecological dimensions of the problem. Use the knowledge gained from the environmental literacy segments of this course to bring concrete scientific understanding to bear on your analysis.
(c) Ground your analysis of the issue using Christian doctrinal sources, the Catholic magisterial teachings from your local Church, statements from the Roman Magisterium and other resources explored in this course, and show the critique this moral wisdom brings to bear on the problem.
(d) Draw conclusions and make a recommendation for the resolution of the problem.

MA Students need to be explicit about and focus on the advantages/disadvantages, strengths & weaknesses of the ethical method used to arrive at a potential resolution to the problem posed in the paper. [MA 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3]
M. Div. and MAPS Students need to focus on a pastoral project that brings the conclusions of the paper to bear concretely on preaching, catechesis, and social action in a parish setting. [M. Div. 2.1-2.6; MAPS 2.1, 2.2]

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:
Grading of Formal Written Work
A- 93-96 very good
B+ 89-92 good
B 85-88 solid
B- 81-84 adequate
C+ 77-80 sufficient
C 73- 76 borderline
D 70- 72 poor
F 69 or below failure

The "A" range:
These grades reflect superior work that is well above the average level of competency in writing. Work at this level reflects an ability to critically engage the material being discussed. This would include an ability to analyze texts and ideas in a way that interests and excites the reader and that assists the reader in viewing the issue in a new light. The work will be coherent and have a well-formulated argument or thesis that the reader will easily be able to grasp. This includes a logical progression of ideas between and within paragraphs giving the paper a sense of wholeness. Writing at this level will be fluid, clear, precise, and grammatically correct. It will not only make sense, the reader should find it compelling.

The "B" range:
These grades reflect work that is above average. It will be obvious to the reader that thought has been given to the topic. In general summary and narrative have been avoided in
favor of critical analysis. The writing contains a clearly stated thesis or argument that provides the shape of the work. In general, all parts of the paper support and strengthen the thesis. Ideas will be adequately developed and an effort to be clear and coherent will be apparent. On the whole the work will flow well and contain few, if any, grammatical errors.

The "C" range:
Work at this level indicates competence, but also exhibits problems. Sufficient thought may not have been given to the topic. There might be too heavy a reliance on summary or narrative rather than argument and critical analysis. The thesis may be uninteresting and not excite or engage the reader or the thesis may not be sufficiently developed. The work may lack unity with little logical progression or connection of thoughts between and within paragraphs. The relation of all parts of the work to the central argument or thesis may be unclear, and the style of writing may be too colloquial or obscure, thus, making it difficult for the reader to understand and follow your position. The lack of clarity or coherence may be directly related to poor grammar and weak writing skills.

Plagiarism: Any plagiarism will result in an "F" grade for the course. See CTU 2007-09 Catalog, p.24.

Incompletes: In those very few exceptional cases where it is necessary that a student requests an "Incomplete" in this course, the student must do the following: Prior to the last class (May 4th) she or he needs to obtain a Petition for Extension form from the Registrar and bring that form to the Professor and obtain her signature. Please do not assume that the professor will automatically sign the form. If you do not complete the work of the course and do not file the proper form, you will be given a Permanent Incomplete (PI) for the course.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

FEBRUARY
2 Introduction

9 Biblical Vision of Creation
Write and bring to class today: Using your experiences of relationship with the Earth, along with insights from other sources of learning, write a 3-page reflection in which you trace your attitudes, values, perceptions, behavior, and lifestyle - starting with your earliest awareness of the environment to the present. Response to these two fundamental questions: How ought a Christian to be in relationship to the Earth? What ought a Christian to do in relationship to the Earth? How consistent is your “doing” with what you know you “ought” to do? Why?
Toolan, At Home in the Cosmos
Chapt. 2 Nature Symbolic of Promise, 22-40.
Nothwehr, ed., Franciscan Theology of the Environment
Hayes, A New Reading of the Sources, 9-21.
Karris, Colossians 1:15-20 - Christ Jesus as Cosmic Lord and Peacemaker, 67-91.
Dempsey & Pazdan, eds. Earth, Wind, and Fire
In Class: B. Swimme, The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos, Part II, “Birthplace of the Universe.”
[28 min.]

16 Development of Scientific Materialism DVD Reflections are due today.
Toolan, At Home in the Cosmos-
Chapt. 3 Imperial Ecology and the Death of Nature
Chapt. 4 The Competitive Ethos Triumphant
Nothwehr, ed., Franciscan Theology of the Environment -
Nairn, Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of the Creatures as an Exercise of the Moral Imagination, 175-84.
Dempsey & Pazdan, Eds. Earth, Wind, and Fire
In Class: B. Swimme, The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos, Part III, “The All-Nourishing Abyss”
[26 min.]

23 State of the Earth
Research the endangered species of your homeland. Write a one page reflection providing a theological argument for why this matter should be of concern for Christians. Bring your reflection to class.

Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor
Ch. 1 The Ecological Era, 1-34
Ch 3 Ecological Crisis, 63-85
Ch 4 All Capital Sins Against Ecology, 86-103.
Toolan, At Home in the Cosmos-
Ch. 5 Is There an Environmental Crisis? 75-91.
Ch. 6 Pushing the Limits, 92-103.
Ch. 7 The Dynamics of Unsustainability, 104-125.
Dempsey & Pazdan, Eds. Earth, Wind, and Fire
B. Reid, “Sabbath, the Crown of Creation, 67-76.
In Class: “From the Heart of the World: The Elder Brother’s Warning”

MARCH
2 The New Cosmology & Christology
Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor
   Ch 2 An Ecological View of the Cosmos, 35-62
Toolan, At Home in the Cosmos-
   Ch. 8 Evolution and Theological Repair, 132-155.
Ch. 9 A Physics of Promise, 156-177.
   Ch.10 The Voice of the Hurricane, 178-191
Nothwehr, ed., Franciscan Theology of the Environment -
Hayes, An Excerpt from Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God, 201-246.
S. Rayan, “The Earth is the Lord’s,” 130-148.
Nothwehr, “Tree of Life.”
In Class: “The Earth is the Lord’s”

9 Earth Ethics – Cosmic Mutuality & Doing Justice To Creation
Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor
   Ch 6 Reclaiming the Dignity of the Earth, 115-139.
Nothwehr, ed., Franciscan Theology of the Environment
   Osborne, Incarnation, Individuality, and Diversity, 295-303.
   Mulhulland, Christ: The Haecceitas of God, 305-312.
Toolan, At Home in the Cosmos-
   Ch. 11 The Fallout for Spirituality, 195-219.
Ch. 12 Citizens of the Earth, 220- 240.
Dempsey & Pazdan, Eds. Earth, Wind, and Fire

16 Environmental Ethics Method -1

Prepare & Bring to Class: - Case study found on CTU Library Reserves - Gudorf &

Smith – Chapt 1 - Deep Ecology and its Radical Vision
   Chapt 2 - The Ethics of Ecofeminism

23 Environmental Ethics Method - 2


Smith – Chapt 3 -Animal “Rights” and the Questions of Human Behavior
Chapt 4 -The “Naturalists” and Leopoldian Ethics
A. Gunn, “Why Should We Care About Rare Species?” 17-37.
D. Marietta, “Environmental Holism,” 251-258.

30 Environmental Ethics Method - 3


Smith – Chapt 5 - Liberation Ecotheology
Chapt 7 - Eco-ethics of the Catholic Magisterium
Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor
Ch. 5 – Liberation Theology and Ecology, 104-114.
Catechism of the Catholic Church
C. Firer Hinze, “Catholic Social Teaching and Ecological Ethics,” 165-182.
APRIL
6 Catholic Environmental Tradition - 1 DVD Reflections are due today.
Hart – Chapt 1 – Creation, Creatures, and Community Consideration
   Chapt 2 Common Ground and Common Good
Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, Ch. 7 – All in God, God in All, 140-157.
Lucia A. Silecchia, “Discerning the Environmental Perspective of Pope Benedict XVI,”

13 NO CLASS – HOLY WEEK

20 EARTH WEEK Catholic Environmental Tradition -2

Bring to class today: a Pastoral Letter on the environment or/and ecological issues from the local
church of your country of origin. Be prepared to highlight contents of that document and discuss
the effectiveness of its implementation. Also, as part of the discussion you will take turns
listening to one another tell about local environmental pastors. As you listen to your
classmates present their pastors, notice the similarities & differences from your own document
and any ways in which their pastoral presents additional challenges to your local church.

Hart – Chapt 3 – Sacramental and Common Creation
   Chapt 4 – Transforming Tradition and Conserving Creation: Northern Visions
Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, Ch. 8 – The Spirit is Sleeping in the Rock,” 158-173.
G. Baum, M. Hellwig, W. Malcolm Byres, “Global Climate Change and Catholic Responsibility:

27 Catholic Environmental Tradition - 3

Bring to class today: a Pastoral Letter on the environment (See above)

Hart – Chapt 4 – Transforming Tradition and Conserving Creation: Southern Visions
   Chapt 6 – Creation Consciousness and Concern
Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, Ch. 9 – “Split a Piece of Wood and I am There,” 174-186.

MAY
4 Catholic Environmental Tradition - 4 LAST CLASS ALL PAPERS DUE

Hart – Chapt 7 - Care for Creation and Community
Nothwehr, ed., Franciscan Theology of the Environment
   Nothwehr, Benedictine Responsibility & Franciscan Mutuality, 403-431.
Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor
   Ch. 11 – “All the Cardinal Ecological Virtues,” 203-220.
Summation & Evaluation