

The Environment, Sustainability and the Sacred in American History  
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## **Texts**

Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape*, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press,) 2008

Kenneth H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscapes and Language Among the Western Apache*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press,) 1996

John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,) 1996

Sarah McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology*, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press,) 2007

Sam D. Gill, *Mother Earth*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,) 1987

Doris Janzen Longacre ed., *The More-with-Less Cookbook*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976)

These texts will be supplemented with articles/chapters from other sources. Anything listed below that is not in one of these books will be provided for you electronically.

## **Assignments:**

### **2 Take Home Exams (15% each for total of 30%)**

These will be take home exams consisting of a few essay questions that require you to synthesize and respond critically to the ideas, arguments, and history we have covered in class.

### **Question Cards (10%)**

These are meant to ensure you critically engage the readings. For each class you must bring a 5X7 note card with a question on it relating to the reading for that day. It may be a question about something that was unclear to you, a critical question in response to the reading, or a question about something the author failed to address. Besides ensuring you are thinking through the material, these cards will give me a chance to address anything that may be unclear and appear on numerous cards.

### **2 Critical/Analytical Essays (10% each for total of 20%)**

You must write a critical or analytical essay in response two of the readings marked with \*. These essays are due at the end of the week the book is assigned. In these essays you must make an argument based on the reading, NOT a summary of the reading. You can

offer an analysis of the reading that brings to light themes below the surface of the book, relate the book to other material we've covered, or respond critically.

### **Group Project (30%)**

You will work in groups to come up with a multi-media project focused on themes, movements, events, or people we have covered in class. The goal of this project is to be creative and find new ways of thinking through the role "the sacred" plays in sustainability, the environment, and religion. Your groups will meet with me about half way through the semester and check in often as the semester progresses. We will talk more about this as the semester continues.

## **Course Schedule**

### **I. Opening Definitions: Sustainability, Sacred, Environment**

#### **Week 1**

"An Introduction to Sustainability" <http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/Sustainability/>

Emile Durkheim, Chapter 1 of *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (21-44)

Roger S. Gottlieb, "Introduction: Religion and Ecology—What is the Connection and Why Does It Matter?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, Roger S. Gottlieb ed.

### **II. Sacred Creation: Protestant Views of the Earth**

#### **Week 2**

John Gatta, "The New World as New Creation", *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and the Environment in America From the Puritans to the Present*.

"Meditating on the Creatures in Early American Life and Letters", *Making Nature Sacred*

#### **Week 3**

Susan Friend Harding, "The Creation Museum," in *The Book of Jerry Falwell*

Calvin B. Dewitt, "The Scientist and the Shepherd: The Emergence of Evangelical Environmentalism"

### **III. Sacred Nature: The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Search for the Sacred**

#### **Week 4**

\*Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

#### **Week 5**

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature"

David Kinsely, "Ecological Spirituality in Thoreau, Muir, and Leopold," in *Ecology and Religion*

***DISTRIBUTE TAKE HOME MID-TERM***

**IV. Sacred Place: Case Studies in the Sacred**

**Week 6**

David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, "Introduction" in *American Sacred Space*

Rowland A. Sherrill, "America Sacred Space and the Contest of History," in *American Sacred Space*

***TAKE HOME MID-TERM DUE***

**Week 7**

\*Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape*

**Week 8**

\*Kenneth H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscapes and Language Among the Western Apache*

**Week 9**

\*John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*

**V. Sacred Action: Politics, Conflict, Engagement, and Activism**

**Week 10**

Doris Janzen Longacre ed., *The More-with-Less Cookbook* (read part I and glance through recipes in part II).

Richard Hughes Seger, "Socially Engaged Buddhism," *Buddhism in America*

**Week 11**

\*Sarah McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters*

**Week 12**

\*Sam D. Gill, *Mother Earth*

**Week 13**

Bron Taylor, "Religion and Environmentalism in America and Beyond," in *Oxford Handbook*

Bron Taylor "Resacralzing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island" in *American Sacred Space*

Jack Miles, "Global Requiem: The Apocalyptic Moment in Religion, Science, and Art,"  
in *Religion and Cultural Studies*

***DISTRIBUTE TAKE HOME FINAL***

**Week 14**

***FINAL GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATIONS***

**TAKE HOME FINAL DUE BY EXAM DATE**