

T390INT-Ecology and Theology: Nature, Community, Ministry, 1.0 credit, January 17-20, 2012,
Instructor: Rev. Dr. Clare Butterfield, Faith in Place, 70 E. Lake Street, Suite 920, Chicago, IL 60601 (312)
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Course Description

Exploring the interconnections between religious values, theology and a life of practice, this course focuses on congregational and personal practices of faith. Environmental practice is the occasion for learning a discipline and approach of practice of faith in a congregational context and other contexts. Topics include developing an attitude of practice, concrete examples of faith in practice at Faith in Place and other non-profits in Chicago, and practical skills such as organizing in the congregation, and writing grant proposals.

Goals

1. Using ecological practice as a model, to explore how any religious value and/or sacred scripture can be interpreted and applied in ongoing congregational practice and public witness.
2. To design infrastructures for the congregational contexts of course participants that put into practice the religious values of the congregation – and that insure an expectation of practice at all levels within the congregation.
3. To think liturgically about how moral ideas and practices can be integrated into the worship life of the congregation.
4. To review basic skills such as grantwriting and networking in communities that are an invaluable aspect of non-traditional ministries.

Reading List with posting schedule:

Read and post reflection by October 28, 2011 on:

Kathleen Deen Moore & Michael P. Nelson, Eds. *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*,
Trinity University Press 2010

Required sections:

- James Gustav Speth* The Limits of Growth, pg. 3
E.O. Wilson The Fate of Creation is the Fate of Humanity, pg. 21
Derrick Jensen You Choose, pg. 60
Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I To Commit a Crime Against the Natural World is a Sin, pg. 133
Bill McKibben Something Braver than Trying to Save the World, pg. 174
Thomas L. Friedman Who We Really Are, pg. 189
Sallie McFague A Manifesto to North American Middle-Class Christians, pg. 243
Marcus J. Borg God's Passion in the Bible: The World, pg. 250
Seyyed Hossein Nasr Our Obligation to Tomorrow, pg. 254
Tri Robinson The Biblical Mandate for Creation Care, pg. 260
Martin S. Kaplan Will Religions Guide Us on Our Dangerous Journey?, pg. 263
Wangari Maathai We Are Called To Help the Earth to Heal, pg. 271
J. Baird Callicott Changing Ethics for a Changing World, pg. 356

bell hooks Touching the Earth, pg. 363
Wendell Berry, A Promise Made in Love, Awe, and Fear, pg. 387
Kathleen Dean Moore The Call to Forgiveness at the End of the Day, pg. 390
Thomas Berry The Great Work, pg. 396
Curt Meine Spring's Hope Eternal
Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme The Universe Story and Planetary Civilization, pg. 410
Barbara Kingsolver How to be Hopeful, pg. 452
Plus 12 other sections of your choice

Read and post reflection by November 18:

Alan Weisman, *Gaviotas, A village to reinvent the world*, Chelsea Green Publishing Co. 1998

Steward Brand, *Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatist Manifesto*, Viking Press 2009

Read and post reflection by December 9:

Dorothy Bass, Ed., *Practicing our Faith, a Way of Life for a Searching People* Jossey-Bass 1997

Barbara Brown Taylor *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* Harper Collins 2009

Watch this TED video:

http://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_and_the_magic_washing_machine.html

Read: Derrick Jensen, "Forget Shorter Showers" (an article from Orion magazine)

Before class begins:

By October 21, 2011, post a one-page brief introduction of yourself and your learning goals for the course.

On-line reading and researching of examples of "green" liturgy – starting with www.webofcreation.org.
Review of Faith in Place website, www.faithinplace.org, prior to attending class.

Course Requirements:

1. Complete readings prior to intensive week. Prepare a 2-3-page reflection on each book. These will be shared via the on-line website prior to class (or by e-mail), on a schedule that runs through the fall prior to the intensive session, and each student will be asked to share comments with others on their reflections.
2. Bring some ideas for liturgy to the class – find one call to worship, one prayer, one sermon, and one benediction that reflect an active practice of care for the earth through on-line research, and include with them a one-page reflection for the start of class.

3. Attend each class session. Completion of ministry outline as product of week together followed by 12-15-page reflection paper outlining a specific plan for applied theology in given congregational context, due within 45 days of end of course.

January 17, morning:

Context – the Faith in Place story – entrepreneurial, community ministries, non-traditional models for ministry, and the parish as a related context. Introductions by students and instructor and time to reflect on what goals the students have for the course.

Discussion of theological texts and contexts: reflection on the various readings from *Moral Ground* (especially the ones selected by students themselves) text as an example of theological and ethical thinking that is tied to a deep level of praxis.

January 17, afternoon:

Plunging in to the two texts that illustrate very different solutions to very different problems (Weisman & Brand) but that both illustrate what a truly powerful witness looks like. Time for reflection and discussion by students.

January 18, morning:

Panel discussion by practitioners from Chicago are (possibly Faith in Place staff and others).

Begin conversation about liturgical exploration – what resources did the students find in their web research? Each student will share one liturgical element (not a sermon) and discuss with others why they found it particularly meaningful. Discussion will include thinking about the liturgical pieces in light of the context of the panel discussion by practitioners.

Also, discussion of Brown Taylor and Bass texts. How has everything we've done up to this point in the week contributed to your understanding of the practice of faith? Where is faith practiced? Discussion will take up each of the sections of each of the books and compare their approaches of practiced faith – how are they similar and how different?

January 18, afternoon:

The nuts and bolts of non-profit management in 1.5 easy hours. Basics of grant writing, simple examples, and overall explanation of how to research prospects and begin a conversation with them. Other management questions explored & answered – an afternoon spent in the entrepreneurial aspects of contextual ministry.

Discussion of the issues raised by the Hans Rosling video and *Forget Shorter Showers* – how are we *really* going to practice sustainability?

January 19, morning:

Trip to Growing Home urban farm site at 58th and Wood Streets, a year-round urban agriculture site in the Englewood section of Chicago. This site grows food in hoop houses, and sells to restaurants and

individual consumers, as an economic development, and job training effort in a low-income community.

January 19, afternoon:

Organizing within the students' own ministerial contexts. In this session, we'll take the time to frame how the ideas of ecology or other social issues could be translated into a well-rounded ministry (including liturgy, theological reflection, adult education, active congregational participation, and practice in the community) at the congregations where the students are currently serving/attending. Students will be expected to take their ideas home and attempt to implement them – and include reflection on that experience in the final paper.

January 20, morning:

This morning will be given to a final exercise in interpretation. Students will be assigned random scriptural passages by instructor (from various faith traditions) and given time to prepare a brief sermon (2-3 minutes) interpreting that scripture passage for benefit of class and applying it to the context of the week – how does this prayer/psalm/wisdom writing/gospel text/saying of the Buddha support a lived faith, and a lived faith that finds expression in care for the Earth.

January 20, afternoon:

Final conversation and closing liturgy. Students will have opportunity to discuss the learning of the entire week. What did they think was most important? How do we need to spend our final time together to make sure that the goals outlined at the beginning of the week were met for each student? Students and instructor will then prepare a final liturgy together, and celebrate it together.