

Ecotheology and the Spirit

People, Animals, and Earth



Instructor: Jay McDaniel

Meeting Time: 9:00 – 12:00 pm

Office Hours: By appointment, glad to visit.

This course introduces you to an intellectual, practical, and spiritual movement found throughout the world called *Ecotheology*. I like to think of Ecotheology as How Jane Goodall looks at the world. It emphasizes living with respect and care for the community of life, attentive to the needs of people, animals, and the earth; and finding spiritual resonance in the more than human world: hills and rivers, trees and stars. The overall nature of the movement is described in an essay I have written which you can find in PDF form at the bottom of this webpage: [What is Ecotheology? It's how Jane Goodall looks at the World.](#)

The various subjects listed below – Five Foundations for a New Civilization, Our Kin the Animals, Wisdom from Buddhism, The Vision of Pope Francis, The Vision of John Cobb, The Vision of Thomas Berry -- form the learning goals of this course. By the time you complete the course, you will be able to present and discuss these subjects with friends, family members, teachers, colleagues, and workers. You will also be able to integrate them into your life calling, whatever it happens to be. You do not need to be religious to enjoy this course. But it probably helps if you have a sense of beauty.

Assignments prior to class

Please have read my “Ecotheology and the World’s Religions” prior to class.

Please have perused: *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home (Encyclical Letter, 2015)*

Assignments during our week in class

Day One. Introduction to Ecotheology

Primary Online Reading (required reading prior to class time): 1, 2, 3, 4

Laudato Si: Chapters One and Two

1. Foundations for a New Civilization (Cobb): www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/foundations-for-a-new-civilization.html
2. Spiritual Side of Sustainability (McDaniel): <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/spiritual-side-of-sustainability.html>
3. Spirituality and Daily Life (McDaniel): <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/trust-in-beauty.html>
4. Small But Included in the Milky Way: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/the-milky-way.html>

Day Two. Animals

Primary Online Reading (required reading prior to class time): 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Secondary Online Reading (as time allows): 11, 12

Laudato Si: Chapters Three and Four

5. The Practice of Religion in Animals: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/the-practice-of-religion-in-animals.html>
6. Becoming the Person my Dog Thinks I Am: Ten Ideas for Saving the Planet (Cobb): <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/ten-ideas-for-saving-the-planet.html>
7. Ordaining Horses as Priests: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/ordaining-horses-as-priests-learning-from-carter-heyward.html>
8. Oceanic Theology: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/oceanic-theology.html>
9. Cats as Spiritual Teachers: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/cats-as-spiritual-teachers.html>
10. Turtles and Whales (Rabbi Bradley Artson): <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/turtles-and-whales.html>
11. The Science of Animal Consciousness: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/animals-have-consciousness.html>
12. Spirituality as Embodied Cognition: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/spirituality-as-embodied-cognition-living-from-the-depths.html>
13. Job's Embrace of Vagueness: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/jobs-embrace-of-vagueness-spiritual-wisdom-as-living-with-bewilderment.html>

Day Three. Wisdom from Buddhism

Primary Reading (required reading prior to class time): 14, 15, 16

Secondary Reading (as time allows): 17

Laudato Si: Chapters Four, Five, Six

14. Thich Nhat Hanh and Process Theology: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/jobs-embrace-of-vagueness-spiritual-wisdom-as-living-with-bewilderment.html>
15. Panentheism: The Universe as God's Body: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/panentheism-the-universe-as-gods-body.html>

16. Why are Christians Turning to Buddhism? <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/why-are-christians-turning-to-buddhism.html>

17. Can a Christian be a Buddhist, Too? <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/can-a-christian-be-a-buddhist-too.html>

Day Four: Wisdom from John Cobb and Pope Francis

Primary Online Reading (required reading prior to class time): 18, 19, 20, 21, 22

Thomas Berry: Selected Writings on the Earth Community: Introduction, Chapters 1-3

18. Loving Abba: Reclaiming a Personal God without all the Baggage:
<http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/loving-abba-reclaiming-a-personal-god-without-all-the-baggage.html>

19. John Cobb: Ten Ideas for Saving the Planet: Ten Ideas for Saving the Planet (Cobb):
<http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/ten-ideas-for-saving-the-planet.html>

20. Loving Abba: Reclaiming a Personal God without All the Baggage:
<http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/loving-abba-reclaiming-a-personal-god-without-all-the-baggage.html>

21. God and the Sendai Earthquake: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/god-and-the-sendai-earthquake.html>

22. One more Thing Before I Go: The Largest Transdisciplinary Conference Ever Held:
<<http://www.processphilosophy.org/one-thing-before-i-go-the-largest-transdisciplinary-conference-ever-held.html>>

Day Five: Thomas Berry

Primary online reading: 23

Thomas Berry: Selected Writings of the Earth Community: Chapters 6, 8, 9

23. Small but included in the Milky Way: <http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/the-milky-way.html>

Requirements.

For Certificate Students.

A 5-7 page paper reflecting on the learning to define the context of your personal leadership strategy is due August 31, 2016.

For MA/MDiv/ThM students registered for academic credit.

Two assignments: (1) A three-to-five page reflection paper on Ecotheology, due August 10, 2016; (2) a final paper defining on a topic of interest in Ecotheology, established in consultation with the professor, due August 31, 2016.

Bibliography

Berry, Wendell. *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural*. San Francisco: North Point Press.

Cobb, John B. Jr. *Is It Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*. Beverley Hills, Calif.: Bruce, 1972.

Kaza, Stephanie and Kraft, Kenneth. *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*. Shambala Press.

McFague, Sallie. *Super Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature*, Fortress Press,

McDaniel, Jay and Farmer, Patricia. *Replanting Ourselves in Beauty: Toward an Ecological Civilization*. Process Century Press. 2015.

Cobb, John B. and Castuera, Ignacio (editors.) *For Our Common Home: Process Relational Responses to Laudato Si*. Process Century Press, 2015.

Nash, James A. *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.

Pinches, Charles and Jay B. McDaniel, eds. *Good News for Animals?* Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Press, 1993.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home, Encyclical Letter, @2015, Vatican City

Rasmussen, Larry. Earth Community/Earth Ethics. Orbis Press.

Swimme, Brian and Thomas Berry. The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992.