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Eco-Justice and Spirituality: Approaches to Pastoral Care in Pandemic Times
SP/PT514
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PURPOSE: One way to define spirituality is "*an exploration into what is involved in becoming human,*" describing "*becoming human*" as "*an attempt to grow in sensitivity to self, to others, to the non-human creation, and to God who is within and beyond this totality.*"¹ This course explores this understanding of how spirituality intersects with eco-justice in the context of the pandemic crisis and consider how this relates to the practice of ministry. Building from the theological perspective of Sallie McFague, this course will also consider Pope Francis's encyclical *Praise be to You: Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home* and survey literature from scholars from a variety of disciplines. Readings and discussion will be complemented with presentations from practitioners in pastoral care from a variety of settings.

PREREQUISITES: None

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

1. Be able to articulate how an eco-justice world informs personal and corporate spirituality.
2. Define core principles of an eco-justice spirituality
3. Create a series of autobiographical reflections that locate self within creation
4. Apply eco-justice principles to at least two area of pastoral care (congregational, prison, hospital, stewardship, liturgical, hospitality, educational ministries)
5. Be equipped to offer a congregational/community educational program on eco-justice spirituality.

¹ Taken from Sallie McFague's *Super, Natural Christians*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1977. She writes, "a 1977 definition by the Scottish Churches Council that is startlingly contemporary and relevant. It defines spirituality as "an exploration into what is involved in becoming human," and describes "becoming human" as "an attempt to grow in sensitivity to self, to others, to the non-human creation, and to God who is within and beyond this totality."⁷ The stress in this definition is on becoming human through relationships, with nature included as a central one. The way we become human is "to grow in sensitivity," to develop awareness of, feeling for, sympathy with, these others. Christian spirituality is not, then, principally a "religious" relationship. It is not mainly or only about a relationship with God: the individual alone with God, as some popular views of it would suggest. In these views, spirituality is the opposite of ethics, whereas it should actually be seen as the preparation or grounding for action. Spirituality is developing the attention to, awareness of, knowledge about, the other (whether another person, a lifeform or entity in nature, God, or even the self) so that one can respond to that other appropriately.

FORMAT AND CONTENT:

Course Expectations and Evaluation. Weekly meetings, 3 credit hours

1. Class attendance and preparation of all required reading before class.
2. Preparation of short assignments for class discussion and class participation. Evaluative criteria: comments and questions show a familiarity with assigned readings, clear and complete preparation of assignments, and a readiness to apply knowledge to interpretive questions and insights.
3. Two (2) book reports 500 words each or one (1) book report and lead one 45-minute class discussion on one of the assigned texts. Due as specified in calendar, additional guidelines to be distributed. Evaluative criteria: oral reports show ability to present information and interpretation in a clear and organized fashion, explicating a position in a concise and timely way; leadership of discussion shows ability to handle questions, raise new interpretive issues, and guide fellow students in a cooperative learning situation.
4. Writing a brief autobiographical reflection locating self within creation.
5. A final Critical integrating paper on the intersection of eco-justice, spirituality and pastoral care following assignment instructions to be handed out in class.

TEXTS:

Davis, Ellen F. *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Delio, Ilia, OSF. *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2015.

Fox, Matthew and Rupert Sheldrake. *Natural Grace: Dialogues on Creation, Darkness and the Soul in Spirituality and Science*. New York, Doubleday, 1996.

Lind, Christopher. *Rumours of a Moral Economy*. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2010.

McFague, Sallie. *Super, Natural Christians*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1977.

McFague, Sallie. *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

McFague, Sallie. *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

McFague, Sallie. *Blessed are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.

Myers, Ched (editor). *Watershed Discipleship: Reinhabiting Bioregional Faith and Practice*. Eugene Oregon: Cascade Books, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015.

Pope Francis. *Praise be to You: Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015.

Williams, Rowan. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018

Wirzba, Norman. *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*. New York; Oxford University Press, 2003.

Woodley, Randy S. *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*. Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012.

RESERVES:

All reserve articles will be available through the Canvas site for the course

COURSE POLICIES

1. Attendance For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For an intensive course, VST requires 100% attendance.
2. Reading and assignments Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. Academic honesty Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. Inclusive language in speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
5. Course Evaluation: For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.
6. Late assignments
Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.
7. Limitation on use of social media
Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment.

8. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

CALENDAR

- Class meets through the spring term, Wednesdays 9 a.m. to noon, January 20 through to April 7 (No class in Reading Week March 3)

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Certificate in Theological Studies Students

All reading in class as assigned by instructor

Class participation and group work

1 Book Reports--3-4 pages

1 Autobiography

1 5-7-page reflection paper integrating insights.

This writing is less academic than those doing the course for degree credit

No grade assigned – either approved or not approved

MDiv and MATS

Assigned reading: 75-100 pages/week

2 book reports (500-700 words each) OR 1 book report and lead one class discussion

1 autobiographical reflection of self in creation (500-700 words)

1 case study from ministry (500-700 words)

1 final integrating essay demonstrating competencies (1500-2000 words)

Total writing assigned: 3750-5000 words/15-20 pages

Research depth: 10 entries beyond course texts for final paper as applicable

Th.M program

Assigned reading: 110-125 pages/week

2 book reports (500-700 words each) OR 1 book report and lead one class discussion

2 autobiographical reflection of self in creation (500-700 words)

1 case study from ministry (500-700 words)

1 final integrating essay demonstrating competencies (3500-5000 words)

Total writing assigned: 5000-6250 words/20-25 pages

Research depth: 15-20 entries beyond course texts for final paper as applicable.

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology edited by Anne Loneragan and Caroline Richards. Mystic Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications 1987.

Berry, Thomas. *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988.

Bingman, Kirk A. *The Power of Neuroplasticity for Pastoral and Spiritual Care*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2014.

Davis, Ellen F. *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Delio, Ilia, OSF. *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2015.

Delio, Ilia, OSF. *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2013.

Fox, Matthew and Rupert Sheldrake. *Natural Grace: Dialogues on Creation, Darkness and the Soul in Spirituality and Science*. New York, Doubleday, 1996.

Kaufman, Gordon D. *In the beginning...Creativity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

Leech, Kenneth. *Spirituality and Pastoral Care*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1989.

Lind, Christopher. *Rumours of a Moral Economy*. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2010.

McFague, Sallie. *Super, Natural Christians*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1977.

McFague, Sallie. *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

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McFague, Sallie. *Blessed are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.

McFague, Sallie. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Myers, Ched (editor). *Watershed Discipleship: Reinhabiting Bioregional Faith and Practice*. Eugene Oregon: Cascade Books, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015.

O'Murchu, Diarmuid. *Quantum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics*. New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2004.

Pope Francis. *Praise be to You: Laudato Si: Onn Care for our Common Home*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015.

Rivera, Mayra. *Poetics of the Flesh*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015.

Rohr, Richard. *The Universal Christ: How a forgotten reality can change everything we see, hope for and believe*. New York: Convergent Books, 2019.

Savary, Louis M. *Teilhard de Chardin The Divine Milieu Explained: A Spirituality for the 21st Century*. New York: Paulist Press, 2007.

Schade, Leah D. and Margaret Bullit-Jones (editors) *Rooted & Rising: Voices of Change in a Time of Climate Crisis*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield., 2019.

Stairs, Jean. *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Snyder, Howard A. with Joel Scandrett. *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace. Overcoming the Divorce between Earth and Heaven*. Eugene Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011.

Teilhard, Pierre De Chardin. *Le Milieu Divin: An Essay on the Interior Life*. New York: Harper and Brothers 1962.

Williams, Rowan. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018

Wirzba, Norman. *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*. New York; Oxford University Press, 2003.

Woodley, Randy S. *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*. Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012.