

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Course Profile

Course # and Title B/I/T-400 (I/B/T, T/B/I): Sr. Interdisciplinary Sem: The Future of Creation

Instructor: Gayle Woloschak and Barbara Rossing Semester/Year: Spring 2014

Course Rationale and Description

(Why do we offer this course? Which of LSTC's degree program learning outcomes does it address?):

This interdisciplinary course, taught in collaboration with LSTC's Zygon Center for Religion and Science, will prepare seminary students to offer informed and engaged leadership in response to environmental challenges for the future. The course includes a strong scientific component, with guest lecturers from the science faculties of Chicago-area universities and research centers. It also integrates theological responses to science—particularly climate change science-- presented by theology and biblical professors from local seminaries, in order to help students make connections between the knowledge of science and faith traditions. Class discussions will prepare students to preach and teach on theology, ethics and ministry related to environmental issues, and to counsel parishioners. Community organizations will orient students to the collaborative network that will facilitate congregational action for environmental ministry.

This course addresses M.Div. Learning Outcomes 4, 5 and 6 related to Public Ministry and Public Leadership; for students taking the course for Advanced Exegesis Biblical credit it also addresses Learning Outcome 2, Religious Heritage (Scripture).

For MATS students the course addresses Learning Outcomes 4, the "ability to evaluate, interpret, and integrate that heritage in light of contemporary knowledge and experience; for the sake of transformational ministries of teaching and scholarship in the church and beyond.

For MAM students the course addresses Learning Outcomes 4 & 5, Cultural Contexts and "leadership skills for service in the ministry practice for which student is preparing."

ThM and PhD students may also take the course, which addresses Learning Outcomes #1, 2, 3, 6 for ThM; and PhD #1, 2, 4, and 5.

Course Learning Outcomes):

(What *difference* will this course make to students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?)

Learners will be able to:

1. Demonstrate scientific literacy at a level sufficient to articulate a basic understanding of the science grounding ecological science, particularly global climate change and related issues.
2. Be able to address some of the principal objections of those who deny the reality of climate change and other environmental problems, drawing on science as well as biblical, theological, ethical, policy frameworks.
3. Draw on theological traditions and resources for thinking about ecology, including biblical and classical theological sources, spirituality of place, food justice, liturgy and lectionary, environmental racism, eco-feminism, and other topics.
4. Develop paradigms for religious and ethical responses to environmental problems, from a local perspective (the urban setting of Chicago) and various global perspectives.
5. Model community-based, interdisciplinary collaboration to approach eco-justice issues in parish ministry.
6. Be able to speak about complex, science-related issues in their ministry, including in preaching and Bible study.
7. Develop and articulate faithful leadership, modeling hope-filled witness and praxis in the face of the challenges of environmental degradation.

Strategies for Learning:

In order to achieve these outcomes we will:

1. Dialog with leading scholars about the science of climate change, food sustainability, environmental sustainability, loss of species habitats and diversity, population processes and extinctions, environmental racism; as well as biblical, liturgical, confessional and ethical frameworks for addressing these topics, from a range of perspectives;
2. Participate in a Field Trip to Prof. Woloschak's lab, Northwestern University, to study "Radiation and the Environment,"
3. Engage organizations and practitioners active in the field of environmental ministries (Faith in Place, Green Faith, Lutherans Restoring Creation, Center for Neighborhood Technologies, others)
4. Participate in an interfaith Earth Day program; engage eco-justice issues from interfaith perspectives.

Students will:

1. Engage in active, constructive participation in all class sessions and activities.
2. Complete assigned readings (TBA, approximately 100 pages per week).
3. Write a short paper on the science and other aspects of climate change, due Week 4.
4. Write a book review. (Instructions will follow, with a list of selections.)
5. Develop one final project or research paper, topic chosen in consultation with instructors. Project must involve significant original research. It will be due in stages throughout the semester (proposals and abstract due late Feb.) and will ideally include both a theological component (biblical, ethical) as well as scientific and policy dimensions.
6. Students taking the course for the Advanced Exegesis requirement will also do weekly Greek translations (prepared in advance; meet from 6:00-6:30 pm before class) and will write a biblical exegesis paper for their final project.

Assessment:

(How shall we know if we—students and instructors—have been successful in achieving the outcomes?)

1. Attendance and Class participation—10% of grade
2. Climate Change Science paper (4-6 pages, single spaced)—25% of grade
3. Book Review (3-5 pages, single spaced)—20% of grade
4. Research paper (15-20 pages) and in-class presentation of final project/paper—45% of grade

Bibliography:

Required Reading:

Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge)

David Rhoads, ed., *Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet* (Continuum)

One book on climate change: **either:** *A Climate for Change* by Katherine Hayhoe or *Storms of My Grandchildren* by James Hansen; or others TBA

Lester Brown, *World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse*. Earth Policy

Institute, downloadable pdf: http://www.earth-policy.org/images/uploads/book_files/wotebook.pdf

Other articles and readings to be assigned by speakers

Highly Recommended Reading:

Maathai, Wangari, *Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World*. Doubleday, N.Y. 2010

Wirzba, Norman, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

The Green Bible. New York: HarperCollins. 2008 (includes introductory essays by Ellen Davis, N.T. Wright, and many others)

There will be a large list of other reading suggestions for follow-up research, as well as weekly readings as assigned in advance for each week's speakers.