Upon announcing the Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives (part of the State Department) at the White House in August, 2013, then Secretary of State John Kerry stated: “In fact, if I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion because that’s how integrated [religion] is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today.”

Course description: This course provides an overview of how religious studies scholars understand the phenomena of “sacred sites.” Students will be introduced to leading theorists and key terms related to the academic study of sacred sites. Students will then systematically explore case studies of sacred sites, including Native American, Hindu, Buddhist, neopagan, and bioregionalist conceptions of sacrality and sacred geographies/sacred places. The course will then use these explorations to evaluate the role religious adherents may play in supporting efforts for sustainability via the protection and management of sacred sites.

Students should note that this course is classified as a sustainability focused course as part of the College’s quality enhancement plan, “Sustainability Literacy as a Bridge to Addressing 21st century problems.” For 2018-2019 the CoC Sustains/Solves QEP theme is “social justice and fair distribution.” The course will analyze the triple bottom line through this lens, while also thinking about sacred places and sustainability. No prerequisites are required for this course.

The course is largely structured as a seminar; this means students are expected to have completed all readings for the day assigned and are expected to come ready to participate in discussions about religion and water.

Course goals:

1. Students will understand various theoretical approaches to understanding human animal/more-than-human world interactions, including but not limited to: comparative religious studies, religion and nature theory, environmental ethics, environmental humanities, and environmental and sustainability studies.
2. Students will define key religious studies concepts and describe how humans utilize these categories to interact with, relate to, conceive of, and manage sacred places. Terms include but are not limited to religion, sacred/sacrality, ritual, myth, ceremony, and ethics.

3. Students will understand how some religious groups are advocating for sustainability and/or environmental protection, and the “religious environmentalist” discourse that underpins this recent movement. This includes analyzing the inhabitants of Earthaven Ecovillage who reside in the Katuah bioregion of the Southern Appalachian mountains.

4. Students will define how some religious groups think about places, including sacred places.

5. Students will develop a group-based project that focuses on designing a solution to how to live more sustainably in a biocultural place, where this solution features social, economic, and environmental components. (QEP SLOs 1 and 6)

6. Students will describe how issues of race, gender, class, geographic location, and religious identity influence access to and understanding of places.

7. Students will cultivate skills related to reading comprehension, project management, and sustainability literacy.

Specific course objectives include:

1. To locate a vocation, practice a place, and find a place of practice, especially in advocating for resiliency and solutions to 21st century problems. (QEP SLO 7)
2. To become poets of the ordinary and cut through delusion.
3. To lose habit mind and enter Great Mind.
4. To be both a mountain and a river.
5. To not abstract out and instead awaken for the benefit of all.
6. To balance emptiness and form while dwelling in emptiness.
7. To see water in one’s self, and one’s self in and as water.
8. To locate compassion.
9. To be a vulnerable animal, embedded in place.
10. To love the Great Earth.

This course satisfies the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, or valued in various expressions of human culture.
2. Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments
   - Both will be assessed on a 2-page review of the Wirth book.

**Requirements, Expectations, and Resources:**

1) **Assignments:**
   a. Class participation—10% of total grade. This includes how often and how well you contribute to class discussions and small group discussions and performance on class presentations.
   b. Group project—20% of total grade. Students will be divided into groups and will design an ecovillage and submit a co-authored and researched paper and pptx presentation on this ecovillage. Students will confidentially evaluate the performance of others in the group.
   c. Mid-term exam-10% of grade. Students will complete a comprehensive mid-term exam that covers key vocabulary and key concepts.
   d. Gen Ed Assignment-5% of grade. Students will review the Wirth book based on a paper rubric.
   e. Course readings—55% of total grade. Students will **print out and submit** [emailed work will not be accepted, unless cleared in advance] a 1 to 2-page summary of each assigned reading (for days with multiple readings, 1-page per reading is enough). Summaries must include:
      i. Main argument—2 to 3 quotes from the reading that captures the main argument, and then a summary of the main argument in your own words.
      ii. Why this argument matters—a 2 to 3 sentence explanation of why this argument matters.
      iii. Brief summary in your words of the key evidence for the argument. This includes sharing key lists from the reading; key data points used by the author/s; and other key evidence.
      1. Key quotes may be provided as needed, as well.
      iv. Total # of summaries required (summaries must be of high quality to count):
         |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
         |---|---|---|---|---|---|
         | A | 26 | 100 | 25 | 95 |
         | B | 24 | 89 | 23 | 85 | 22 | 81 |
         | C | 21 | 77 | 20 | 74 | 19 | 71 |
         | D | 18 | 66 | 17 | 62 |
         | F | 16 or less | 60 or below |
   f. Extra Credit—There will be options for extra credit as the semester develops. Most likely these options will include attending guest lectures that relate to course objectives and goals (.5 points per lecture) or watching and reviewing movies that relate to course objectives and goals (.5 points each). For reviews, a 1-page summary of the event/film and how it related to the course is required. Each student may earn 2 possible extra credit points added onto their final grade. The final day to turn in extra credit work is the last
day of class. Each student who attends every class in its entirety automatically will earn .5 points on their final grade.

g. Please note that the Fall Break Earthaven trip is required. Unless there is a medical emergency/reason one cannot attend, it is expected each student will participate in the trip. Refunds will not be provided, even if a student is unable to attend. Unless cleared in advance due to medical reasons, then students who do not attend the trip will lose 10% of their final course grade.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 88-89; B: 83-87; B-: 80-82; C+: 78-79; C: 73-77; C-: 70-72; D+: 68-69; D: 63-67; D-: 61-62; F: 60.49 or below (all grades ending in .5 or higher are rounded up to the next point)

2) **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each lecture. If you are repeatedly more than 5 minutes late to class, you will begin to be counted as absent for that day, as tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. After 2 unexcused absences of any kind, your grade drops by 1/3 letter (i.e. A to A-, C- to D+, etc.) for each successive absence. After your 4th unexcused absence, you will receive a WA and be dropped from the course. An excused absence means that I receive an email from CoFC saying your excuse was “documented;” if I receive an email (or no notice at all) saying your absence was “undocumented,” then it is unexcused. It is up to you to contact the Office of Student Affairs in order to find out what counts as a documented excuse. Please observe the totality of this attendance policy.

**reading summaries/reading questions are not able to be made up or turned in late—you must be present, or must clear in advance with me that you will email your summary before class begins if you are unable to be in class.**

3) **Common Courtesy:** As stated by the Code of Conduct in the CoFC Student Handbook, cell phones, personal computers, and other electronic devices must be turned off during the whole class period. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (i.e. whispering, reading a newspaper, surfing the web, texting messages, etc.) to leave the class. Be aware that if the professor observes that a student is often, and more so, continuously texting or using their computer for activities not directly related to the course, then the student’s class participation component of the overall grade will automatically lose points. The more often this behavior occurs, then the more points will be deducted. Please stay focused and on task if you have your computer open!

4) **Honor Code:** On all work (this includes answers to reading questions I provide) submitted for credit by students at CoFC, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The legal code of the College specifically prohibits plagiarism, cheating, bribing, conspiracy, misrepresentation, and fabrication. If it is proven that any student has committed any of the above infractions of the honor code, then that student will automatically fail the course with an XF. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action. Students should be
aware that unauthorized collaboration (working together without permission) is a form of cheating, whereas if strong evidence appears that students collaborated, then all parties involved will automatically receive a “0” for that assignment.

5) **Accommodation for Disabilities:** To request classroom accommodation, you must first register with the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. This office will provide you with documentation that you will then provide to me when you request accommodation. For more information, please see [http://www.cofc.edu/~cds/index.htm](http://www.cofc.edu/~cds/index.htm).

6) Counseling Resources, a writing lab, and a career resource center are all available to CofC students and are staffed with trained professionals. I urge you to pay special attention to the Center for Student Learning, and I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at [http://csl.cofc.edu](http://csl.cofc.edu) or call 843.953.5635.

   a. **Writing Lab:** I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, please call 843.953.5635 or visit [http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/](http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/).

**Required Texts:** Available at CofC bookstore in Barnes & Noble (and most likely used copies on-line):

1) Wes Jackson, *Becoming Native to This Place*
2) Jason Wirth, *Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth*
A variety of course readings are on OAKS under the course tab. From there, click on the “content” tab and this will bring up .pdfs of assorted readings, all of which are required. Students should keep in mind that humanities-based classes at the College are reading-heavy compared to other classes, averaging 20 to 30 pages of reading per assignment/class meeting, even for 100 level classes. You should bring all assigned readings (book or on-line) to class for the day they are assigned, as this is when you should raise questions about any content you did not understand; all effort will be made to discuss readings for the day they are assigned, but students should expect to also cover readings in classes after when the readings were assigned, too.

**COURSE SCHEDULE (please read the assigned readings in the order listed, per day)**

**Introduction**

*Tuesday 8/21:* Get syllabus, make new friends and hang out with old friends--TEDX talk; “Devil’s Tower” discussion.

*Thursday 8/24:* Key terms #1—religion (geography of religion pg. 7-20—1 summary), sacred, ritual (2 encyclopedia readings for 1 summary)

*Tuesday 8/28:* Key terms #2—religious environmentalism, religious environmentalist paradigm (2 summaries) [form research groups]

*Thursday 8/30:* no reading; lecture; SustainFest at 6pm on the Cistern with Majora Carter!

**Sustainability, Social Justice, and Fair Distribution**

*Tuesday 9/4:* Social Justice—guest lecture; reading on Ecowomanism (summary due); weblinks (brief summary on each due, for 1 overall summary)
Thrs 9/6: Environmental leg lecture; reading from *Totem Salmon* (summary)

Theoretical Views of Sacred Places

*Tues 9/11*: Eliade (summary) and Durkheim (summary), selections

Thrs 9/13: class presentations on Eliade and Durkheim using CofC/Charleston as data; scenes from *Wheel of Time*

*Tues 9/18*: chapter from *Geography of Religion* (no summary due—know it for the midterm, though)

*Thrs 9/20*: Indigenous views #1—Stalking with Stories (summary)

*Tues 9/25*: Indigenous views #2—selections from *God is Red* (summary)
Thrs 9/27: Adrian Ivakhiv (summary)

10/2 and 10/4—**NO CLASS this week**—balance of hours with Earthaven trip

**Tues 10/9:** Edward Linenthal and David Chidester reading (summary)

Thrs 10/11: selections from *Dark Green Religion* (summary); receive study guide

**Tues 10/16:** mid-term

**Bioregionalism and Restoration**

Thrs 10/18: no reading

**Tues 10/23:** Wes Jackson—read Prologue, chapter 1, chapter 2, pg. 35-45, pg. 49-61 (1 3-page summary on all assigned pages)

**Thrs 10/25:** Wes Jackson—chapter 4 (summary)
Tues 10/30: Wes Jackson—chapters 5 and 6 (separate summary of each chapter due)

Thrs 11/1: LeVasseur and Warren chapter on Earthaven (summary)

FALL BREAK: PILGRIMAGE TO EARTHAVEN!

Thrs 11/8: no reading

Tues 11/13: Wirth, Preface and chpt 1 (2 summaries)

https://www.npr.org/2015/04/18/400573636/at-84-poet-gary-snyder-lives-in-this-present-moment

Thrs 11/15: Wirth, chpt 2 (summary)

Tues, 11/20: Wirth, chpt 3 and 5 (2 summaries)

TOFURKY BREAK

Tues 11/27: work on group projects

Thrs 11/29: David James Duncan for our last class (last summary!)
FINAL EXAM during scheduled exam time…vegan/vegetarian pot-luck and share group projects (attendance is mandatory)