College of Charleston, Spring, 2018
Department of Religious Studies/Environmental and Sustainability Studies

SF-RELS 298/ENVT 352: RELIGION, WATER, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Instructor: Dr. Todd LeVasseur
Office: ECTR 207 E (in the hallway of the African American studies program) [I may also be in my office at the Sustainability Literacy Institute.]
Office Hours: Thursday, 9am-10:30am, or by appointment
Email: levasseurtj@cofc.edu (I typically respond to emails within 24 hours, except on weekends. Emails sent on weekends will receive a response on Monday.)
***Any student may email me for a copy of my teaching philosophy.***

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 is designed to introduce students to thinking critically, holistically, and across disciplinary lines about human animal/water interactions where such interactions are mediated by religious cultural systems. The course will explore religious values, beliefs, institutional practices, and ritual activities as these relate to the human conception of, relation to, and management of water where sources of water are considered to be sacred. Students will study Hinduism and the contemporary pollution of the Yamuna river in India; indigenous/Buddhist/Hindu syncretism in managing water in traditional rice farming communities on the island of Bali; and water/religion/ethics interactions via the lens of the Buddhist bioregionalist Gary Snyder. These case studies will present an entryway into investigating the sustainable, or unsustainable, use of water as a resource where such use is mediated by religious systems. 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.” 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/water 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 water. Terms include but are not limited to religion, ritual, myth, sacred, ceremony, and ethics.
3. Students will be able to describe and identify regional bodies of water and understand local water hydrology and hydrological cycles.
4. Students will develop a group-based project that focuses on designing a solution to a water issue, where this solution features social, economic, and environmental components. (QEP SLO 6)
5. Students will describe how issues of race, gender, class, geographic location, and religious identity influence access to and quality of water.
6. 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
   1. Both will be assessed on a reading summary.

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; your performance on reading questions and summaries; and the self-evaluation and group-evaluation of your performance on a group project.
   b. Group project—20% of total grade. Students will be divided into groups and will design a water-based ritual and submit a co-authored and researched paper on this ritual. Students will confidentially evaluate the performance of others in the group.
   c. Course readings—70% of total grade. Students will print out and submit 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.
      iv. Total # of summaries required:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For an “A” on this aspect of the course:</th>
<th>41-44 (this is excellence; and 44 earns a 100%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B:</td>
<td>37-40</td>
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<tr>
<td>C:</td>
<td>33-36</td>
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<td>D:</td>
<td>30-32</td>
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<td>F:</td>
<td>Below 30</td>
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   d. 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); watching and reviewing movies that relate to course objectives and goals (.5 points each); or going on class field trips (1 point). For reviews, a 1-page summary of the event/film and how it related to the course is required. Each student may earn 2.5 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.

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.cof.cedu/~eds/index.htm](http://www.cof.cedu/~eds/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 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/.

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

1) Michael McGinnis, Science and Sensibility: Negotiating an Ecology of Place
2) Jason Wirth, Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth
3) David James Duncan, The River Why?

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 1/9: Get syllabus, make new friends and hang out with old friends

**UN Sustainable Development Goals; US Clean Water Act; on-line water calculator

Thrs 1/11: Key terms #1—sustainability, bioregion

**Read for class: McGinnis book, Chapter 1 (first summary due)

Tuesday 1/16: Key terms #2—religion, religious environmentalist paradigm

**Read for class: (1)UNC Chapel Hill on academic study of religion; (2) Ethical Issues in Water Use and Sustainability; (3) The Religious Environmentalist Paradigm

Thrs 1/18: Key terms #3—ritual, sacred, ceremony  [form research groups]

**(1) Water, from the Encyclopedia of Religion; (2) Rivers, Diana Eck from Ency. Of Religion and Nature; (3) Ronald Grimes, Ritual
Religion and Water

*Tuesday 1/23:* Water—guest lecture from Dr. Barbara Beckingham, GEOL; and “Where you at?” quiz in class

**Big Thirst, chapter 1 for class

*Thurs 1/25:* religion and water

**(1) Water, Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology; (2) John Snarey

*Tuesday 1/30:* Religion and Water in Islam

**(1) Water conservation through community management; (2) Islam and Water Management: An Overview

*Thurs 2/1:* Religion and Water in Buddhism (Indonesia)

**(1) Lansing Emergent Properties; (2) Water Goddess Rice Bali

*Tuesday 2/6:* Buddhism, continued (Ladakh)

**(1) Melting Himalayas; (2) Emergence of the Cryoscape; (3) selections from Fire and Ice
Thursday 2/8: Religion and Water in Hinduism

**(1) chapter 8 from The Big Thirst; (2) Narmada Bachao Andolan; (3) Water and Womanhood

Tuesday 2/13: Hinduism, continued (Ganges and Yamuna Rivers)

**(1) Taming a River (2) Hinduism and Pollution; (3) Yamuna Chapter 6 Haberman

Intersectionalities

Thrs 2/15: Ecowomanism and Ecofeminism

**(1) Ecowomanism

Tuesday 2/20: Indigenous Peoples, Water, and Intersectionalities

*Black Mesa, #NODAPL, Idle No More

**(1) Laurel Kearns; (2) Women Talking About Water
Thrs 2/22: Religion and Water in Christianity

**River Jordan; Fracking

**(1) Going to Meet the Man; (2) Jordan River

Sat 2/24: EXTRA CREDIT FIELD TRIP: CAW CAW

Bioregionalism and Restoration

Tuesday 2/27: McGinnis, chapters 2 and 3 [2 summaries]

Thrs 3/1: (1) Ecological Restoration—William Jordan III

Sat 3/3: EXTRA CREDIT FIELD TRIP—SPRINGBANK ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT CENTER

Tuesday 3/6: McGinnis, chapters 8 and 9 [2 summaries]

Thrs 3/8: McGinnis, chapter 10

**Water Justice Procession: March 8\textsuperscript{th} 2018 International Women’s Day**
In recognition of International Women’s Day and the College of Charleston’s Water Sustainability initiative, a Water Justice Procession will take place on campus March 8th, 2018. The Procession will highlight water governance and water rights struggles in the U.S. and globally, giving specific attention to how women have been leaders or experienced disproportionate impact of these struggles. The Procession will be organized by students and faculty participating in courses affiliated with the Sustainability Literacy Institute and the Gender and Sexuality Equity Center. The procession will take place during Gender Equity Week. The Procession will begin on the Cistern at 3:30 p.m. and culminate in a multimedia, poster-session style Teach-In open to the entire campus (Teach In location TBD).

NAHKO AND MEDICINE FOR THE PEOPLE @ THE MUSIC FARM Sat. 3/10 (“Interconnected in the wreckage of a paradigm on its way out…”)

Tuesday 3/13: River Why, chapters X-XX [1 summary]

Thrs 3/15: River Why, chapters X-XX [1 summary]

Saturday, March 17—Water Mission Walk for Water

March 17-25: Spring Break...finish The River Why?; play in and/or with water

Tuesday 3/27: Discuss The River Why? [final summary on rest of book]
Thrs, 3/29: (1) The Water Will Come

Tues, 4/3: 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 4/5: Wirth, chpt 2
Tues, 4/10: Wirth, chpt 3 and 5 [2 summaries]
Thrs 4/12: Wirth, chapter 6

Tues 4/17: work on group projects

Thrs 4/19—last class! Work on group projects. Water gun battle…?

Tuesday May 1st 12pm to 3pm FINAL EXAM…vegan/vegetarian pot-luck and share group projects (attendance is mandatory)