

# TESP 84 Spirituality & Sustainability: Vocational challenge & the greening of religions

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**Spirituality** is (1) both how a person lives out his or her values (explicitly religious or otherwise) to find meaning; and (2) the academic study of how people and social groups express their religious experiences.

**Sustainability** means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. A complete definition must address issues of social equity and economic development as well as ecological indicators.



## Course description

The term “spirituality” has recently taken on remarkable prominence in American culture, but its varied use defies consistent definition. Spiritualities are rooted in religion and religious practice, but find specific expression in cultural and personal contexts. Spirituality may carry a deeply individualistic or even narcissistic meaning, or it may indicate the movement of one’s whole being toward a life of religious, social, and personal integrity. In the context of a Jesuit education, spirituality can be understood to responding to call, the needs others have for our gifts and talents, and for living a good life.

The term “sustainability” emerged during the 1980s to project a framework for addressing the scale and complexity of the ecological crises facing our planet. At a fundamental level, the term reminds us that we cannot continue depleting resources and generating hazardous wastes and greenhouse gasses indefinitely without serious consequences for future generations. The UN definition indicates that addressing our environmental crises requires the integration of social, economic, and ecological dimensions of sustainability. Environmental leaders have begun describing sustainability as an ecological and inter-generational definition of justice, and using the concept of “ecological footprints” as a way to make visible human impacts on the earth. A few visionary religious leaders propose a spiritual approach to sustainability as well, one based on global ethics and consciousness, a process known as “the greening of religion.” Since this is also a religious studies course, we will look at

the role of spirituality and consciousness in cultural transformation. This course will invite you to consider your own consciousness, and to take seriously the spiritual practices we will examine.

We will intensively examine the issue of global climate disruption since this is the most ominous threat to sustainability efforts. It will introduce the brand-new field of climate ethics. This course will tackle the “why” questions, such as: why should we consider future generations in our actions? Why should we re-think and re-design our energy economy?

This course uses the campus community as a part of its learning laboratory. We will learn about on-going campus initiatives, and participate in the intellectual life of the campus as it wrestles with sustainability and climate change issues.

### **Student learning objectives**

This class has 3 generic learning objectives as a *Religion, Theology and Culture 2* course (expressed in numbers 1-3, below), as well as objectives specific to an inter-disciplinary course addressing spirituality and sustainability issues (in letters a-c).

**As a result of this class, students will be able to:**

1. **analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena** (Complexity; Critical Thinking)
  - a. To understand the multiple meanings of spirituality, key elements of spirituality, and recent currents in the study of spirituality
  - b. To describe how and explain why religious leaders are articulating their traditions with concern for sustainability
  - c. To think critically about the Christian story and Buddhist practice in light of the challenge posed by the sustainability crises and new approaches to cosmology
2. **integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena** (Complexity of Content as well as of Method; Critical Thinking)
  - a. To integrate and compare religious and scientific ways of knowing and valuing nature and the natural world
  - b. To demonstrate knowledge of the complex, contested and contradictory meanings of sustainability, the global sustainability crisis
  - c. To learn the salient implications of the crisis of global climate disruption: the Carbon cycle, the sources of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and other climate changing gasses, the range of projected effects, mitigation and adaptation strategies, and the character of scientific uncertainty
3. **clarify and express beliefs in light of their critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence** (Reflection; Critical Thinking)
  - a. To articulate and reflect upon emerging elements of one’s own vocation, and to demonstrate the application of some practical tools for discerning this in light of global environmental disruption.
  - b. To reflect upon and articulate his or her own spirituality, and to consciously shape its trajectory, specifically as a student at Santa Clara.
  - c. To articulate the emerging field of climate ethics with their own moral beliefs, and to demonstrate comprehension of the ways in which people are using ethics to urge political action on climate changing gasses

## Student evaluation

There are two general types of assignments for this course: personal reflection essays, and outreach activities/materials. Religious studies courses require students to clarify and express their personal beliefs and values. Your instructor will not evaluate your personal reflections for their religious doctrine, but rather the quality of your critical thinking and intellectual rigor. This course integrates religious, scientific and social disciplinary perspectives, and you will be evaluated based on your demonstration of integrating these approaches. **Boldface dates** are confirmed; others are tentative.

Grade	Date	Description
10%	<b>April 14</b>	The vocation of Julia Butterfly Hill reflection (R)
10%	<b>April 23</b>	<i>via positiva</i> reflection (R)
10%	<b>April 30</b>	Show <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> to 2+ friends, calculate their carbon footprint, & describe its impact (O)
10%	<b>May 5</b>	<i>via negativa</i> reflection (R)
10%	May 19	Conduct a meditation activity in the spirit of <i>via transformativa</i> (O)
10%	May 26	Write recommendations for incorporating awareness of climate protection into a religious outreach project, drawing on Earth Charter lesson plans (O)
10%	June 2	Explain a major ethical implication of anthropogenic climate disruption (O)
15%	TBA	Final paper linking your ideas and those of Sandra Schneiders about spirituality & religion, and link these with sustainability, vocation & global climate disruption (O&R)
5%	Extra-class participation	
10%	<u>In-class participation</u>	
100%	Total	

**Short description of assignments** (more specific info to be posted on Keith's webpage), indicating the relationship of the assignments to the three learning objectives for Religion, Theology and Culture 2 core courses (1, 2 and 3, above).

1. Based on reading the "Legacy of Luna" and the first 4 chapters of *A Sacred Voice is Calling*, describe the vocation of Julia Butterfly Hill and how she discerned it. Be sure to include a discussion of some similarities and differences between your vocation and hers. >1000 words. This assignment asks you to demonstrate objective 1 by analyzing diverse meanings of vocation, and to demonstrate goal 3 by asking you to clarify and express your beliefs in response to them.
2. Write 2 reflection essays (>800 words each). They should respond to "Questions for Reflection" in Uhl, and should demonstrate understanding of vocation as presented in *A Sacred Voice is Calling*. They should follow the themes of:
  - a. *via positiva* (either question on Uhl p. 97) and
  - b. *via negativa* (either questions on Uhl p. 180 or 217). These ask you to demonstrate objective 2 by comparing and integrating religious and scientific perspectives on global sustainability issues, and to demonstrate objective 3.

3. Select one of the carbon calculators, linked on the class webpage. Then line up 2+ friends to show them *An Inconvenient Truth*, have them calculate their carbon footprint, and ask them three poignant questions, including one on the religious significance of climate disruption. Then write up what you did, what the scores were, how your friends responded, and what kind of impact you think it had in 800-1000 words. This fulfills objective 1 by asking you to analyze how others perceive the religious significance of nature (if they do), and objective 3 by integrating critical inquiry with reflection on beliefs.
4. With a partner, create and lead a meditation activity for friends, linking *via transformativa* with either *Care for Creation* by Ilia, Keith & Pam or *The Engaged Spiritual Life*. Explain what you did and why, and if relevant, what impact you think it had. Write up your plans, describe what you actually did (who did what) and what impact you think it had on your friends. You should each write this up, in 800-1000 words. This fulfills objective 1 by asking you to analyze how others perceive the religious significance of nature (if they do), and objective 3 by integrating critical inquiry with reflection on beliefs.
5. Write recommendations for incorporating awareness of climate protection into a religious outreach project, drawing on Earth Charter lesson plans. This asks you to demonstrate learning objectives 2 and 3.
6. Write an explanation of a major ethical implication of anthropogenic climate disruption. Write this as a contribution to one of the religious environmental websites. This should be 1000-1200 words. This fulfills objectives 1 and 2 by analyzing existing religious responses to global climate disruption, and integrating religious, ethical and social dimensions of this phenomena.
7. Respond to this question: "how do Sandra Schneiders' ideas shape your understanding of your vocation, in light of the sustainability crises?" Include a discussion of virtue and global ethics from the Earth Charter. You will provide a short outline of your thoughts on this, and show it to 1+ friends; include a reflection on this experience in your essay. See ESL 196-204, & 210. This will integrate and fulfill all 3 student learning objectives.

### Required Texts

Delio, Ilia, Keith Warner and Pam Wood. 2008. *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*. St. Anthony Messenger.

Hill, Julia Butterfly. 2000. *The Legacy of Luna*. San Francisco: Harper.

Neafsy, John. 2006. *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*. Orbis, New York

Rothberg, Donald. 2006. *The Engaged Spiritual Life: A Buddhist Approach to Transforming Ourselves and the World*. Beacon, Boston.

Uhl, Christopher. 2003. *Developing Ecological Consciousness: Path to a Sustainable World*. Rowman & Littlefield: New York.

Several readings from the WWW.

Several draft Environmental Ethics webpage essays, on my webpage.

**Extra class participation**

This course requires you to participate in activities outside of class. These are designed to be fun. Several of the options are movies. If you do not find them to be fun, consult with your instructor. To receive 5% of the grade, attend five of the events related to sustainability as listed on the course webpage.

**Attendance policy**

You may miss one class meeting without penalty. Each subsequent class absence (starting with the second) will result in lost points for course participation. If you are ill and unable to attend, please email me that information before class starts, which will result in an excused absence.

**Disability Accommodation Policy:** To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahn Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

**Academic integrity.** Consult [www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm](http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm). "The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, will receive a grade of "F" for the course." This course includes several assignments which require work with one partner and one assignment that requires coordination with a group. You are expected to work collaboratively with your partner(s) and be aware of what he or she is doing. For these assignments I expect that you will discuss the ideas from class, but that you will do your writing individually. This does not mean that you and your partner turn in the same text, or that you may copy each other's work. I encourage you to discuss the material from this class and its vocation implications with others from this class and other friends. I insist that your writing assignments be your own, original work.

**Technology in the classroom.** Please silence your cell phone when in class. Please do not use your laptop: in my experience too often this is used for activities unrelated to the class. Please use pen and paper, or see me in office hours for any exceptions.

**Course reading assignments and topical outline** (parentheses = week number) ASV=A Sacred Voice; ESL=Engaged Spiritual Life; CfC = Care for Creation; R= Reader; EE=env ethics draft chapters on Keith's webpage; W=the web

	Reading for next class	Topics
The earth is calling	Mar 31	Introductions, the course and each other Defining sustainability, religion & spirituality, vocation, climate & energy
	Apr 2	Hill: Prologue, p. 1-62 ASV: Preface, ch 1 Listening to the Earth calling Defining problems of ultimate meaning as spirituality
	A 7	Hill: p. 63-183 ASV: ch 2, 3 EE: "environmental virtue ethics" Where did sustainability come from? Where do vocational calls come from?
	A 7	<i>Tuesday 6:30 pm</i> <i>Visit a park with redwoods, and watch the sunset over the Pacific</i>
	A 9	Hill: p184-250 ASV: 4, 5 Passion and justice
Via positiva	A 14	Uhl: Preface, 1, The earth is alive, and has a vocational call
	A 14	<i>Tuesday 8pm</i> <i>Gandhi (movie): Xavier / Sanfilipo common room Note: 3 hour movie!!</i>
	A 16	Uhl 2, ESL forward, introduction A living planet? Measuring footprints; assessing our fair earth share Religious engagement with social issues
	A 21	Uhl 3, CFC: Intro, 1, 2, 3 W: any carbon calculator The role of ecology in sustainability Why I co-wrote that book Franciscan approaches
	A 23	Uhl 4 CFC: 4, 5 ESL 1 Family as metaphor Mediation as spiritual practice

Via negativa	A 28	Uhl: 5, 6 ASV: 7 W: Schneiders, Religion vs...	Gazing at suffering Sorting out religion and spirituality
	A 30	W: Our Changing Climate ESL 2 Uhl 7	It's much worse than you think Mindfulness
	May 5	ESL 4	Open to suffering, open to compassion Climate disruption as an ethical problem
	M 7	Uhl 8 CFC 9, 12, appendix A B	<i>Metanoia</i> , transformation, conversion? Sustainability revolution
Via transformativa	M 12	Uhl 9 ESL 5	Self-care as spiritual practice
	M14	EE: Climate Ethics W: Earth Charter	Intro to climate ethics Earth Charter as moral vision: how to link it to spirituality?
	M19	ASV: 8 W: Rock EC, White Paper on Ethical Dimension, 1-9	Doing climate ethics work Constructing a moral argument about climate ethics
Climate ethics	M21	ASV: 9 W: Rock EC, White Paper on Ethical Dimension, 10-28	Inter-religious environmental ethics dialogue
	M26	W: Rock EC, White Paper on Ethical Dimension, 29-38 W: US Bishops on Climate	Using science with humility
	M28	ESL 8	Catholic moral thought about climate
	Jne2	ESL 9	
	Jne4	ESL 10	Articulating a vision for our vocation
	J 9	<i>Final due by email</i>	