

## Religion and Environmentalism

**Instructor:** Dr. Tanhum Yoreh

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**Course hours:** Thursdays, 16:00-17:30

**Office hours:** by appointment

### Course description:

Religion and environment are two areas that are often viewed as being at odds with each other. For instance, religious individuals have made claims that environmentalism is secular, leftist, and pagan. Secular environmentalists have pointed to religion as being anthropocentric, patriarchal, hierarchical, and an impediment to pro-environmental behavior. Yet, over the past decades we have witnessed the rise of the religious environmental movement. Proponents of this movement have stressed the integral engagement of religion with the natural world and the moral imperative to protect the environment that is motivated by a deep sense of responsibility.

This course will introduce students to central ideas, thinkers, and theories in the field of religion and environment. We will look primary historical sources ranging from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Quran, Talmud, Hadith, church sermons, and ethical treatises, and complement them with contemporary writings by religious leaders and activists. Together, we will explore the opportunities and barriers, and the proponents and opponents to religious expressions of environmentalism. We will look at the unique language and values that set religious environmentalism apart from other expressions of environmentalism and explore common ground. When possible, we will hear from activists in the field who speak about the environmental initiatives they are undertaking in their communities.

**Evaluation:** There will be a multiple-choice test worth 100% of the final grade at the end of the course.

**Delivery:** The course will be delivered synchronously online in English on Zoom according to the weekly schedule. The order of the lectures may be changed. Students will be informed of these changes in advance. Students are free to converse in Hebrew in discussions.

### Schedule:

**Week 1** – An Introduction to religion and environment

**Week 2** – Theory and practice in religion and environment

Veldman, Robin Globus, Andrew Szasz and Randolph Haluza-DeLay. “Introduction: Climate Change and Religion – A Review of Existing Research.” *Journal for the Study of Religion Nature and Culture* 6, no. 3 (2012): 255-275.

**Week 3** – The Lynn White Jr. Hypothesis

White Jr., Lynn. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

**Week 4** – Journey of the Universe (film) – a new cosmology?

Jenkins, Willis. “Ethics in the Anthropocene.” In *The Future of Environmental Ethics*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2013. pp. 1-15.

**Week 5** – The Greening of Religion Hypothesis

Taylor, Bron, Gretel Van Wieren, and Bernard Zaleha. “Lynn White Jr and the Greening-of-Religion Hypothesis.” *Conservation Biology* 30 no. 5 (2016):1000–1009.

**Week 6** – Judaism and environmentalism

Yoreh, Tanhum. “Compassion and Self-Concern in Halakhic Environmental Decision-Making.” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* (published online ahead of print 2021). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685357-20210901>

**Week 7** – Christianity and environmentalism

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home*. (May 24, 2015). [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

**Week 8** – Islam and environmentalism

Koehrsen, Jens. “Muslims and Climate Change: How Islam, Muslim Organizations, and Religious Leaders Influence Climate Change Perceptions and Mitigation Activities.” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* (2021) 12:e702. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.702>

**Week 9** – Renewal (film) – different expressions of religious environmental activism

**Week 10** – Religious environmental activism in the Israeli context

**Week 11** – Typologies of Jewish religious activism in Israel

**Week 12** –Moral tools to limiting consumption

“Consumption, Wastefulness, and Simplicity in Ultra-Orthodox Communities.” *Studies in Judaism, Humanities and the Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2019): 137-152.

**Week 13** – Conclusions and review