



# TESP 26 | Sustainable Theologies: From Religion to Renewal?

**Class Time:** M/W/F 1:00-2:05 PM  
**Instructor:** Paul J. Schutz  
**Email:** pjschutz@scu.edu  
**Office Hours:** M: 10:45 AM-12 PM,  
W: 2:15-3:15, R: 12:30-2, by appt.  
**SCU | Fall Quarter 2017**



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

In his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis names the Earth “our common home.” Yet now more than ever before, ecological degradation threatens our Earth as a radically destructive and pervasive global phenomenon wrought by human hands. In light of this threat, people of all ways of life—religious and nonreligious alike—are seeking new, sustainable ways of living in harmony with Earth and its creatures. This course takes up Earth and sustainability as matters of religious concern. Integrating religious texts and traditions with scientific discussions of ecology and sustainability, this course critically evaluates the potential and limitations of religious traditions for promoting the flourishing of life and fostering sustainable living on a planet in peril.

This course aims to equip students with the conceptual tools and critical skills necessary to assess and address the ecological realities of “our common home” in light of scientific, socioeconomic, ethical, and moral claims. **In keeping with the goals of SCU’s RTC 2 Core Requirement**, we will work intensively to engage religion through multidisciplinary and interreligious approaches to the complex phenomenon that is the ecological crisis. By providing multiple, integrated perspectives on this issue from the standpoint of various religious traditions, this course aims to enrich students’ appreciation for the diversity of human religious expression.

### **Religion, Theology, & Culture 2 Goals: Critical Thinking, Reflection, Complexity of Content and Method | Objectives:**

- 2.1** Analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena (such as architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, and other cultural expressions of religious belief).
- 2.2** Integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena.
- 2.3** Clarify and express beliefs through critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence.

To achieve this end, we will cultivate writing and presentation skills in an atmosphere of mutual, constructive engagement and discuss strategies for contributing responsibly to the flourishing of all life through intelligent engagement with the natural world.

Last, while we often speak of “taking” courses, I imagine that we are running this course together. Imagine that we are at the beginning of a cross-country course, facing terrain both smooth and rough, looking to reach a finish together at the end, sometime in the future. Sometimes it will be exciting; other times we’ll just grind along hoping to get to a ‘good part’ soon. That’s how I envision a “course.”

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

### **What do we aim to achieve? By the end of this course, students will be able to:**

- Articulate the meaning and significance of the Anthropocene epoch; **Corresponds with Core Learning Objective (LO) 2.2.**
- Critically discuss 1) the concept of sustainability and 2) concrete practices of sustainability, with attention to the way in which sustainable living is couched within socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and political structures. **Corresponds with LOs 2.2, 2.3.**
- Critically discuss ecological degradation and sustainable living through the lens of various religious traditions, with special attention to ways in which religions have 1) contributed to the ecological crisis and 2) might contribute to rehabilitating Earth; **Corresponds with LOs 2.1, 2.3.**
- Acquire skills and best practices for living responsibly in the contemporary ecological context; **Corresponds with LO 2.2.**
- Think, speak, and write critically about the challenges and possibilities offered by theology in the midst of contemporary ecological degradation in and beyond the Anthropocene (there will be a beyond!). **Corresponds with LOs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3.**

## EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS (FOR YOU AND FOR ME)

1. **Be Respectful:** We will discuss numerous viewpoints, some or many of which may conflict with your own. While you can and should disagree with one another (and with me!), please do so with a spirit of generosity and understanding.
  2. **Be Responsible:** There are **no excuses** for late work, frequent absences, or anything else. Readings must be read; papers and projects must be turned in on the date indicated. In the age of laptops and THE CLOUD, and on a campus with numerous computer labs, computer failure is typically **not** a valid excuse for an incomplete assignment. Yes, sickness, emergencies, and other bad things happen, and I hope they don't happen to you! **But if they do, speak to me immediately.** The basic rule doesn't change: **There are no excuses.** Late assignments will receive no credit.
  3. In general, my policy is simple: **If something comes up, speak to me in advance.**
  4. **There are three BP's in my class:**
    - a. **Be Prompt:** Arrive on time. Lateness will be noted and may result in penalties.
    - b. **Be Present:** Come to class. Be present mentally **and** physically. Learning is a full-body workout.
    - c. **Be Prepared:** Complete all readings and assignments on time. Come with what you need to get to work.
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## REQUIRED TEXTS (AVAILABLE IN THE BOOKSTORE OR FROM AMAZON)

### **E-books are not permitted for this course.**

1. Richard Heinberg and Daniel Lerch, eds. *The Post Carbon Reader: Managing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's Sustainability Crises*. Post Carbon Institute, 2010. 978-0970950062
  2. Pope Francis, with Sean McDonagh. *On Care For Our Common Home—Laudato Si': The Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Environment*, with commentary by Sean McDonagh. Orbis Books, 2016. 978-1626981737
  3. Norman Wirzba. *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*. Oxford Univ. Press, 2007. 978-0334041894
  4. **All other texts will be available online.**
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## ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Burning Questions:** This course intends to equip you with the skills necessary to be excellent critical readers of texts and traditions. But texts—even religious texts—aren't just sources of information; they're carefully constructed arguments, with which you might agree or disagree. To get the most out of such texts, you must "think with the text" as you read. **To practice this skill, when indicated on the syllabus please write or type out 2-3 questions/comments you have about the indicated text or texts. These questions might ask for greater clarity or depth on particular passages or discuss ideas that struck you as you read.** They should demonstrate your critical engagement with the text.  
**This assignment fulfills Core Learning Objectives (LO) 2.1 and 2.3**
2. **Study Guides:** Study guides guide your thinking as you read a text. **When indicated on the syllabus, please complete study guides (distributed and due in class) as a basis for class discussion.** **This assignment fulfills LOs 2.1 and 2.2.**
3. **Exploratory Projects:** You will complete two exploratory projects over the course of the semester. Exploratory projects invite you to engage concretely with sustainability in Silicon Valley. For each exploratory project, you will bring to class an 'artifact,' picture, or memento representative of the topic. Along with your artifact, you will provide a 1-page synopsis/reflection or other form of written expression of your artifact and its significance (i.e. a poem, song, equations, diagrams, etc.).
  - a. **EP 1 (9/25):** Bring an artifact representative of the Anthropocene.
  - b. **EP 2 (10/11):** Bring an artifact representative of sustainability in Silicon Valley. **This assignment fulfills LOs 2.1 and 2.2.**
4. **Microthemes:** Over the course of the semester, you will complete **three one-page Microthemes.** These papers are opportunities to demonstrate **critical engagement** with the texts we study. They are short essays, with a **thesis and supporting examples.** Headings should include your **name and the assignment number.** **There is no need for a title.** The body **may be double- or 1.5-line spaced.** There isn't space for introduction in this type of paper, so jump right in with your thesis. Make sure your paper is clear and well-structured and supported by **specific examples** from the text. Please use **parenthetical citations**, i.e. (Mk 8:13) or (Ehrman 85) for any sources you use. Papers **must be proofread for grammatical and spelling errors** prior to submission. The instructor reserves the right to reject papers or penalize students for shoddy work. Please use one-inch margins, standards fonts, 12-pt. type.

### The topics and due dates for the Microthemes are as follows:

1. **Due 10/4:** Based on what we have read about sustainability and whatever you know about religion, make a prediction about whether a single religious tradition, or religion more generally, will offer positive resources for cultivating sustainable living. [This assignment fulfills LOs 2.1 and 2.3.](#)
  2. **Due 10/27:** Which of Wirzba's image(s) or source(s) do you find most compelling for addressing the contemporary ecological crisis and/or for fostering practices of sustainability? [This assignment fulfills LOs 2.1 and 2.2.](#)
  3. **Due 11/3, 11/8, 11/13, or 11/17:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of this religious tradition for addressing ecological distress and promoting practices of sustainability? [This assignment fulfills LOs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3.](#)
5. **Synthesis Paper (4-5 p., due 12/1)**  
Reflecting on all we've done this semester, and drawing explicitly on the texts we've read, offer a final proposal for or critique of how the teachings and practices of a religious tradition or traditions might be implemented to promote a transformed ecological consciousness and the practice of sustainability on small and/or large scales.

[This assignment fulfills LOs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3.](#)

### Style & Citation Guidelines for Synthesis Paper:

1. One-inch margins, standard fonts, 12-pt, double-spaced.
2. Material taken **verbatim** from another source must be **enclosed in quotation marks** (i.e. "Generally speaking, the Roman Empire had little time to worry over the particularities of the Jewish faith.") and should be followed by a **footnote reference** to the source of the material. **Cite sources using this format:**  
[http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)
3. Material **paraphrased** from another source should be introduced as belonging to another author (i.e. Here, Ehrman explains that the Roman Empire was quite tolerant of the Jewish religion, as long as it did not pose a threat to their rule).

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### Grading Scheme

10%	<b>Constructive Participation</b> in discussions, activities, completion of readings;
10%	<b>Burning Questions and Study Guides</b>
35%	<b>Papers</b> (5% per microtheme, 5% per Exploratory Project; 10% Synthesis Paper)
20%	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
25%	<b>Final Exam</b>

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### Grading Scale

94-100	A	Honors level work.
90-93	A-	Excellent work.
89-87	B+	Very good work; near excellence, but has minor problems.
83-86	B	Good work; solid performance; above average.
80-82	B-	Good work, but lacking some completeness, or accuracy.
77-79	C+	Acceptable work.
73-76	C	Acceptable work, but lacking in completeness, critical thinking or accuracy.
69-72	C-	Perfunctory work; may be simply rehashing sources.
60-68	D	Unsatisfactory work; shows minimal grasp of concepts or sloppy analysis.
0-59	F	Failure.

Essays graded with **letter grades will be translated into a numerical grade** at the instructor's discretion. Letter grades will typically receive the numerical average of the range of any grade. However, **the instructor reserves the right to raise or lower numerical averages** where circumstances dictate.

## **Technology Policy**

Laptops and other electronic devices may be used **when indicated by the instructor.**

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## **Attendance Policies and Procedures**

**Attending class is indispensable to 1) learning the subject matter and 2) mastering the critical skills this course intends to cultivate.** Students will be allowed **two** unquestioned, excused absences. Unexcused absences of **three or more** may result in one whole letter-grade deduction each (i.e. B to C). **For unavoidable absences, please speak to me in advance.** Accommodations will rarely be made if you speak to me after a class meeting.

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## **Academic Integrity**

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of – and commitment to – a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

*I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.*

Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. Violations include plagiarism, cheating, outsourcing, and destruction of library or other materials needed for a course. Students found to have engaged in any form of academic dishonesty will, at the least, receive zero points for the piece of work concerned. For more information about Santa Clara University's academic integrity pledge and resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see [www.scu.edu/academic-integrity](http://www.scu.edu/academic-integrity).

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## **Disabilities Resources**

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, <http://www.scu.edu/disabilities> as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy may also be eligible for accommodations.

While I am here to assist you in any way I can, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks.

**For more information, you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.**

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## **Accommodations for Pregnancy and Parenting**

In alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and with the California Education Code, Section 66281.7, Santa Clara University provides reasonable accommodations to students who are pregnant, have recently experienced childbirth, and/or have medically related needs. Pregnant and parenting students can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Alternatively, a pregnant or parenting student experiencing related medical conditions may request accommodations through Disability Resources.

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## **Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)**

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, or stalking, tell someone immediately. For more information, please consult the University's Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy at <http://bit.ly/2ce1hBb> or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie, at [408-554-3043](tel:408-554-3043), [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through <https://www.scu.edu/osl/report/> or anonymously through Ethicspoint <https://www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethicspoint/>

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

DATE & TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENT(S)	CLASS PLAN
Week 1: 9/18 (M) Introducing the Anthropocene	1. <b>Read</b> Syllabus 2. <i>The Economist</i> , “Welcome to the Anthropocene”		1. Course Introduction & Syllabus 2. What is the New Anthropocene?
Week 1: 9/20 (W) The Anthropocene, Part 2	Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, “Defining the Anthropocene”	Study Guide	Discussion: Dating Geological Ages & Mapping Human Impact
Week 1: 9/22 (F) The Anthropocene, Part 3	1. James Syvitzki, “Anthropocene: An Epoch of Our Making” 2. Potts, “The Moral Dilemma We Face in the Age of Humans”	Burning Questions	Discussion: From Age to Action: What can/should we do?
Week 2: 9/25 (M) ‘Slamming’ the Anthropocene	1. Libby Robin and Cameron Muir, “Slamming the Anthropocene” 2. Exploratory Project Discussion: In-Class “Slam”	1-Page Report on Exploratory Project #1	In-Class Anthropocene “Slam”
Week 2: 9/27 (W) Introducing the Climate Crisis	1. Bill McKibben, “A New World,” in <i>Post-Carbon Reader</i> (PCR) 2. Douthwaite, “The International Response to Climate Change”		Discussion: Living on Planet “Eearth” & How Earth Responds to “Eearth”
Week 2: 9/29 (F) Sustainability & Economy	1. Richard Heinberg, “Beyond the Limits to Growth” (PCR) 2. David Orr, “The Ecological Deficit” (PCR)	Study Guide	Discussion: The Challenge of Growth and the Value of the “Small”
Week 3: 10/2 (M) Sustainability, Part 2	1. Richard Heinberg, “What is Sustainability?” (PCR) 2. Eric Zencey, “Theses on Sustainability”	Burning Questions	Discussion: Defining Sustainability
Week 3: 10/4 (W) Sustainability, Part 3	William Rees, “Thinking ‘Resilience’” (PCR)	Microtheme #1	Discussion: Planetary Peril and the Resilience of “Gaia”
Week 3: 10/6 (F) Issues in Sustainability, Part 1	Water, Population, and Food (PCR Ch. 7, 9, 10, 11, 12; divided in class)	Group Presentations	Group Discussion
Week 4: 10/9 (M) Issues in Sustainability, Part 2	Biodiversity and Human Culture (PCR Ch. 8, 13, 14, 15)	Group Presentations	Group Discussion
Week 4: 10/11 (W) Sustaining Silicon Valley	1. Rob Hopkins, “What Can Communities Do?” (PCR) 2. Exploratory Project Discussion: Sustainability in Silicon Valley	1-Page Report on Exploratory Project #2	Discussion: Is Silicon Valley Sustainable?
Week 4: 10/13 (F)	<b>MIDTERM EXAMINATION</b>	<b>STUDY!</b>	
Week 5: 10/16 (M) Enter Religion and Theology	Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis”	1-Page Response to White	Discussion: Defining the Terms Religion, Faith, & Theology
Week 5: 10/18 (W) Religion: Promise or Problem?	1. <a href="http://fore.yale.edu/religion/">http://fore.yale.edu/religion/</a> (overview) 2. Elizabeth Johnson, “Turn to the Heavens and the Earth”	Burning Questions	Group Discussion: Christianity as a Test Case for Sustainable Theology
Week 5: 10/20 (F) Promise or Problem? Part 2	<a href="http://fore.yale.edu/religion/">http://fore.yale.edu/religion/</a> (Baha’i, Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam)	Study Guide	Group Discussion: Earth’s Religions & Earth’s Crisis
Week 6: 10/23 (M) Religious Foundations, Part 1	Norman Wirzba, <i>The Paradise of God</i> (1-22, 90-100)	Burning Questions	Guided Discussion: From Culture to Religion to God
Week 6: 10/25 (W) Religious Foundations, Part 2	Norman Wirzba, <i>The Paradise of God</i> (105-122, 149-157)	Burning Questions	Guided Discussion: Reimagining Earth
Week 6: 10/27 (F) Religious Foundations, Part 3	Norman Wirzba, <i>The Paradise of God</i> (158-201)	Microtheme #2	Guided Discussion: Toward a “Sabbath Economy”?

Week 7: 10/30 (M) Christian Engagement, Part 1	1. Pope Francis, <i>Laudato SI'</i> , Ch. 1-2 2. Christiana Z. Peppard, "A Planetary Pope"	Burning Questions	Guided Discussion: Christian Foundations
Week 7: 11/1 (W) Christian Engagement, Part 2	Pope Francis, <i>Laudato SI'</i> , Ch. 3-4	Burning Questions	Guided Discussion: Integral Ecology
Week 7: 11/3 (F) Christian Engagement, Part 3	1. Pope Francis, <i>Laudato SI'</i> , Ch. 5-6 2. Anthony Annett, "The Next Step"	Microtheme #3 (Option A)	Guided Discussion: From Earth to all the World?
Week 8: 11/6 (M) Buddhist Engagement, Part 1	1. Dalai Lama, "A Tibetan Perspective on Spirit in Nature" 2. Darlington, "Buddhism and Ecology and the Implication of Practice"	Burning Questions	Guided Discussion: Buddhist Foundations
Week 8: 11/8 (W) Buddhist Engagement, Part 2	1. Darlington, "Buddhist Environmental Imaginaries" 2. TBD from Yale Forum on Religion & Ecology	Microtheme #3 (Option B)	Guided Discussion: Buddhist Cosmology & Sustainability
Week 8: 11/10 (F) Islamic Engagement, Part 1	1. Excerpts from <i>The Holy Qur'an</i> and Writings of Abu Bakr 2. Zabarlah Haji Matali, "Sustainability in Islam"	Burning Questions	Guided Discussion: Islamic Foundations
Week 9: 11/13 (M) Islamic Engagement, Part 2	TBD from Yale Forum on Religion & Ecology	Microtheme #3 (Option C)	Guided Discussion: Islam & Sustainability
Week 9: 11/15 (W) Hindu Engagement, Part 1	Chris Deegan, "The Narmada: Circumambulation of a Sacred Landscape"	Burning Questions	Guided Discussion: Hindu Foundations
Week 9: 11/17 (F) Hindu Engagement, Part 2	TBD from Yale Forum on Religion & Ecology	Microtheme #3 (Option D)	Guided Discussion: Hinduism & Sustainability
<b>November 20-24</b>	<b>No CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>	<b>Eat and rest!</b>	
Week 10: 11/27 (M) Coming Full Circle, Part 1	Sheehan and Spiegelman, "Climate Change, Peak Oil, and the End of Waste" (PCR)	N/A	Guided Discussion: What do to now?
Week 10: 11/29 (W) Coming Full Circle, Part 1	1. Chris Martenson, "Personal Preparation" (PCR) 2. Rob Hopkins, "What Can Communities Do?" (PCR)	N/A	Guided Discussion: What can religion do?
Week 10: 12/1 (F) Loving Nature	James Nash, <i>Loving Nature</i> (excerpts assigned in class)	Synthesis Paper: Sustainable Theologies	
<b>TBA</b>	<b>FINAL EXAMINATION</b>	<b>STUDY!</b>	