

RELS 235: RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENT

Queen's University School of Religion

Taught by: Daniel Asante

People are deeply influenced by the environments in which they dwell. The human species has successfully colonized every biome on Earth, and in responding to each new environmental circumstance has created diverse cultural lifeways and perceptions of nature, reality, and the sacred. A huge variety of religious beliefs have arisen from these diverse human-environment relations, and religious texts and traditions have long grappled with the implications of different conceptions of humanity's place within its environment. Likewise, religious beliefs form part of the basis for cultural perceptions of what constitutes "environment" in the first place, while defining the scope of humanity's roles and responsibilities within it. This course introduces students to the ways religious practices and beliefs shape our ideas about "the environment" and vice versa. Questions to be investigated will include: How do people in different cultural and ecological contexts understand the human place in nature? Specifically, how do Judeo-Christian traditions contemplate "nature" differently than Asian (ie. Buddhist) and Indigenous (ie. Anishinaabe) spiritual traditions? How is environmental change confronted within religious frameworks of understanding and practice in everyday life? How do non-human others (animals, spirits, Gods) enter into and influence religious and environmental knowledges, practices and behaviours? Perhaps most importantly, the course explores the possibility that religious and spiritual worldviews can offer tools for coming to terms with the pressing crises (ecological, medical) of our times.

Weekly Schedule

The course is asynchronous, online, and lecture (pre-recorded) based. There will be a weekly discussion/reflection post requirement as well as monthly online check-ins with the instructor. The weekly discussion posts will count towards a significant percentage of students' marks, with the remainder coming from a final project which can take the form of a traditional essay or a video/web-based project. Students will have opportunities for writing practice through the course with two short essays which will prepare for and build towards their final project.

Time Commitment per Week

10 hours

Prerequisite

Level 2

Required Textbook/Materials

No