

**(THEO-820) ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY:
GOD AND CREATION IN TRAVAIL**
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Instructor: Timothy R. Eberhart
Email: timothy.eberhart@garrett.edu
Prerequisites: None

Office Hours: By Email Appointment
Class Location: Main Building, 301
Class Time: Friday, 9:00am-Noon

Course Description

This course is a survey of major figures and approaches in the field of Christian ecological theology over the past half century in the context of the environmental crises facing human societies worldwide and the need for widespread conversion to ecologically regenerative beliefs, lifestyles, and systems. Students will examine the development of theological reflection on the promises, dynamics, and labors of God and the creation by reading primary texts from a diversity of perspectives, including from Lutheran/Reformed, Trinitarian, Eco-Feminist, Indigenous, Catholic, Liberation, Evangelical, Process, and Womanist theologies.

Course Objectives

Knowing - To gain familiarity with key figures, questions, and approaches in Christian ecological theology, deepen awareness of the major philosophical, theological, and ideological frameworks contributing to environmental degradation, and understand the critical and constructive roles of doctrine in supporting an ecological worldview and regenerative praxes.

Being - To account for the depth and breadth of ecological destruction, process the existential and spiritual implications, and nurture energies of faith in God, hope for the creation, resistance against evil, and renewal for the earth.

Doing - To increase proficiency engaging in theological analysis, construction, and communication for the sake of empowering individuals and communities to participate in ecological conversion, healing, and justice.

Required Texts

Lynn White, Jr., "The Historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science*, 155, 1203 (1967)

Joseph Sittler, *Evocations of Grace: The Writings of Joseph Sittler on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics*, Eerdmans, 2000 (ISBN-13:9780802846778, Price \$20.54 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Thomas Berry, *Thomas Berry: Selected Writings on the Earth Community*, Orbis Books, 2014 (ISBN-13:9781626980952, Price \$22.00 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Vine Deloria Jr., *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr. Reader*, Fulcrum Publishing, 1999 (ISBN-13: 9781555914301, Price \$18.55 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, Fortress Press, 1993 (ISBN-13: 9780800627355, Price \$22.74 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, Fortress Press, 1993 (ISBN-13:9780800628239, Price \$25.37 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit: Womanist Wordings on God and Creation*, Fortress Press, 1998 (ISBN-13:9780800630775, Price \$13.68 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care 2nd Edition*, Baker Academic, 2010 (ISBN-13:9780801036958, Price \$18.72 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process*, Fortress Press, 2008 (ISBN-13: 9780800662769, Price \$18.00 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Mark I. Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River: Christianity, Spirit, Nature*, Augsburg Fortress, 2005 (ISBN-13:9780800637262, Price \$15.96 at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Pope Francis, *LAUDATO SI'*, www.laudatosi.com, 2015

Kim, Grace Ji-Sun and Hilda P. Koster, *Planetary Solidarity: Global Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice*, Fortress Press, 2017 (ISBN-13:9781506432625, Price \$46.16 used at www.barnesandnoble.com)

Course Requirements

- 1) Read all assigned texts before class and participate actively in class discussions. Because this course will be run as a seminar, your close reading of the texts and class engagement is crucial to its success – **30%**.
- 2) Submit a background paper (5 pages) on one of the authors, providing biographical information, a summary of her key contributions to the field of ecological theology, and a critical assessment of her ideas in light of your present and/or future context of ministry (**due by Noon on the Thursday before class**). Based on your background paper, present an introduction of the author to class (20 min) – **20%**.
- 3) Submit a final paper (15 pages) in which you articulate your constructive contribution to the field of ecological theology by focusing upon a doctrinal area of reflection (e.g. Christology, Anthropology,

Soteriology, Pneumatology, etc.) in response to a particular environmental crisis (due by Noon on Dec. 17) – **50%**.

Note: Background and final papers should be submitted in Microsoft Word format, double-spaced, Times Roman font, 12pt type, 1 inch margins.

Grading Criteria

Class Participation

1. You attend every class period and are on time.
2. You demonstrate intimate familiarity with the assigned readings for the day.
3. You listen carefully to the instructor and to your classmates.
4. You are an active participant in the class discussions.
5. Your participation is edifying to others and contributes to the seminar as a whole.

Background and Final Papers

1. You accomplish what the assignment asks of you.
2. Your paper offers a clear thesis statement, follows a logical organization, is well developed, and is free of grammatical and spelling errors.
3. You enter into intelligent, critical conversation with the course texts and conversations.
4. You demonstrate a depth and creativity of theological and contextual insight.

Presentation

1. Your presentation is clear, substantive, and engaging.

Grading Scale

97-100	A+	77-79	C+
93-96	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	<62	F

Academic Policies and Support Services

Attendance: The seminary expects that students will attend all classes, but students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions should not expect to pass the class (*Academic Handbook*, p. 17).

Academic Accommodations: Garrett-Evangelical offers academic accommodations for disability or health conditions. Students must meet with Ms. Krista McNeil, director of academic studies and registrar, and file appropriate documentation of their condition(s) for accommodations to be considered. She can be reached at krista.mcneil@garrett.edu. Accommodations cannot be retroactive to work

previously attempted or completed. Once approved for accommodations, the student should meet with each course instructor to discuss if/how the accommodations will be implemented in the class.

Writing Support: Garrett-Evangelical offers two types of writing support: content editing and proofreading. Content editing is handled through the Writing Center, under the direction of Dr. Diane Capitani. Contact Dr. Capitani at dianecapitani@aol.com to make an appointment. The student proofreading program is supervised by Ms. Krista McNeil, director of academic studies and registrar. Papers can be sent electronically to garrett-proofreaders@googlegroups.com and proofread using Microsoft Track Changes. Please allow at least 24 hours for documents that are 10 pages or less.

Plagiarism: Garrett-Evangelical takes the question of academic integrity and plagiarism very seriously. All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Students are expected to understand and abide by the plagiarism policy (see *Academic Handbook*, p. 69-75).

Course Schedule

September 7

Lynn White, Jr.,
(www.jstor-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/stable/1720120?seq=4#page_scan_tab_contents)

September 14

Joseph Sittler, 87-190

September 21

Thomas Berry, 11-144

September 28

Vine Deloria, Jr., 3-16, 32-60, 129-136, 323-368

October 5

Sallie McFague, 1-25, 99-195

October 12

Jürgen Moltmann, 1-19, 72-103, 158-184, 244-275

October 26

Karen Baker-Fletcher, v-131

November 2

Steven Bouma-Prediger, 57-173

November 9

Catherine Keller, 1-25, 45-131

November 16

Mark Wallace, 1-96, 121-136

November 30

*Pope Francis, Intro (1-16), Chapter Two (62-100), Chapter Four (137-162), Chapter Six (202-246)
(laudatosi.com)*

December 7

Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Hilda P. Koster, 47-96, 119-175, 311-347

December 12

Final Paper Presentations