This course introduces the philosophical foundations, fundamental concepts, and distinctive features of the field of Christian environmental ethics. It describes how these have evolved through time, with attention to the influence of Catholic social teaching and the retrieval of the Franciscan intellectual tradition. The first third of the course introduces theological foundations of, and the role of philosophical assumptions in, Christian environmental ethics, such as the moral significance of nature and the relative authority of Scripture and science. The second third explores ethical concepts, and methods, in Christian environmental ethics, such as the exercise of moral imagination and the retrieval of traditional ways of valuing nature. The third section applies these learnings to contemporary topics in environmental ethics, including biodiversity conservation, environmental justice, the water cycle and climate justice.

**Student learning goals.** As a result of this class, students will be able to…

1. identify and describe key philosophical and theological concepts that serve as the foundation for Christian environmental ethics.
2. describe and explain the challenge that modern environmental problems pose to communities of faith, and the challenge that religious thought poses to modern environmental thought.
3. distinguish and interpret the patterns of similarity and difference in approaches to Christian environmental ethics.
4. reflect upon their own religious experiences in creation and articulate these with their own theological vision.

**Required texts**


A reader. (R)

**Student performance:** GTU students are diverse and your instructor aspires to make this course responsive to your individual interests and academic journey. There are two different paths to completing this course: a practical theology path, and a research in comparative Christian (or inter-religious) environmental ethics path. The practical theology path is the default path for students. Those who wish to conduct comparative research must petition to do so with a brief research plan and annotated bibliography (due by email 15 March) and a meeting with your instructor (11 or 18 March) to demonstrate research readiness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practical theology path</th>
<th>Due on Friday of</th>
<th>Percent age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on your relationship with nature</td>
<td>week 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative analysis of 2 Scriptures and their environmental implications</td>
<td>week 5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative analysis of 2 ethical/philosophical resources for Christian environmental ethics OR of 2 contemporary teachings within a tradition</td>
<td>week 8</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A written homily</td>
<td>week 10</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical plan (and justification) for a (youth or adult) religious education program (can be multiple events or tied to an outdoor event)</td>
<td>week 12</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection upon the environmental dimension of your own vocation</td>
<td>week 14</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation and informal presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research in comparative ethics path</th>
<th>Due on Friday of</th>
<th>Percent age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on your relationship with nature</td>
<td>week 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative analysis of 2 Scriptures and their environmental implications</td>
<td>week 5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief plan and annotated bibliography to support research in comparative Christian ethics</td>
<td>week 6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper in comparative ethics</td>
<td>week 13</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten minute oral presentation summarizing your findings</td>
<td>On May 6</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection upon the environmental dimension of your own vocation</td>
<td>week 14</td>
<td>10%</td>
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The following are short descriptions of the assignments for the practical theology path. Specific and detailed prompts will be provided by your instructor. (LO= learning objective)

1. Reflection on your relationship with nature. Describe a significant religious experience you have had in nature, and reflect on how you interpreted this. (LO 4)

2. Comparative analysis of 2 Scriptures and their environmental implications. Select 2 Scriptures (other than Genesis 1-2), and analyze them for their potential to contribute (or not) to the praxis of a contemporary environmental ethic. (LO 1)
3. Comparative analysis of 2 different ethical/philosophical resources for Christian environmental ethics OR of 2 contemporary teachings in two different Christian traditions. Examples of ethical/philosophical resources include: philosophical schools of thought (cosmology) or ethical methods (moral reasoning, moral imagination, community discernment, virtue ethics). Examples of contemporary teachings include papal encyclicals, denominational statements, or statements by regional religious bodies. (LO 1, 3)

4. A written homily. Write or ghost write a homily (sermon) on an environmental theme as though you were on staff in a local faith community. (LO 2)

5. Practical plan (and justification) for a (youth or adult) religious education program (can be multiple events or tied to an outdoor event). This plan should draw on resources from this class to be a creative and engaging faith formation initiative. (LO 2)

6. Reflection upon the environmental dimension of your own vocation. Describe the most memorable or valuable lessons you have learned in this course and explain how you anticipate applying these to your own vocation. (LO 4)

For those pursuing research in comparative Christian (or inter-religious) ethics path: consult with your instructor for how to craft a brief research plan and sample annotated bibliography that can support research in comparative ethics. The research paper in comparative ethics should be functionally equivalent to a first draft for a chapter in a MTS thesis project.

Course schedule

Theological foundations and philosophical assumptions
4 February. GD introduction, 3, 6
   Introduction to the environment and Christian ethics
   Catholic social teaching and spirituality
   Is this field novel? or traditional?

11 February. GD 1, 2, 4, 5
   Scripture, philosophy, science, experience, American values and other authorities

18 February. Presidents day--no class

25 February. GD 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14
   Contributions from Christian theology
   Environmental virtue ethics, prudence and precaution
   Cosmology
Report on one of 9 article responses to Nash’s argument. In the instructor’s cloud library.

**Ethical concepts and methods**

4 March. GD 13. EG 1

(R) Ingham, M.B. In press. Moral goodness and beauty.
   - Social ethics: moral discourse and the moral community, moral imagination
   - Moral reasoning: decision making ethics.
   - Ethics of care

11 March. GD 15, 16, 17. EG 2.


   - Comparing Christian thought
   - Retrieval method
   - Ethics and social behavior

18 March. EG 3, 4, 5. FB 1, 2, 3

   - The pesky problem of human behavior
   - Team presentations on the relationship of EG 3, 4 or 5 to chapter 2.

25 March. Reading week -- no class.
1 April. Easter Monday -- no class.

8 April. EG 6, 7. FB 4-8
   - Presentation on EG 6, 7

**Contemporary applications**

15 April. GD 18. EG 8, 9. FB 9
   - Environmental Justice
   - Justice and sustainability
   - Presentation on EG 8, 9

22 April. EG 10, 11. FB 10
   - Biodiversity ethics
   - Presentation on EG 10, 11.

29 April. GD 19. FB 11, 12.
Water and climate justice

6 May. EG 12. FB 13, 14.
Research presentations