X-817: Care for Creation and Pastoral Care

Christian Theological Seminary
Spring 2008
Thursdays 2:15-5pm

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Purpose:

In this seminar we will consider the many ways that environmental concerns are relevant in pastoral care contexts. Pastors may face individuals and families who are impacted by lead poisoning, exposure to known carcinogens in the work place, and other pollution related illnesses. On a broader scale, healthy young people may be fearful about the future based on reports of global warming.

If we believe that “perfect love cases out fear” (1 John 4:18) how can individuals and congregations lovingly counter the fear induced by present and potential future threats to the web of life we inhabit? Are ecological concerns relevant for communities of faith? How are such concerns currently being addressed by congregations and denominations?

We will begin by assessing the ways in which such questions may be relevant in seminar participants’ individual and community contexts. Research topics will be identified based on participants’ concerns. Texts for the course include readings that consider the existing dialogue between environmental ethics and religious faith.

Required Texts: (please purchase from CTS bookstore)

Johnston, Carol (1997). And the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations: Biblical and theological foundations for ecojustice.
Recommended texts (on three hour library reserve):


(Additional reserve texts can be added as needed)

**Process:** Three 45-50 minute sessions with two 10-15 minute breaks

1) 2:15-3:05 - This will normally consist of a lecture by the instructor providing an overview of the focus topics for that week.
2) 3:15-4:00 – Project presentations, book reviews, bibliographies
3) 4:10-5 - Experiential learning - Video, exercise or presentation by a guest speaker.
(The exact sequence of the above may vary from week to week).

**Requirements and Evaluation:**

1) *Faithful attendance, attention to readings, participation in class.*
   Come to class prepared to discuss the readings and listen receptively to your classmates’ views, especially when these may diverge from your own. Unexcused absences or more than two absences for the term will reflect negatively on this portion of your evaluation. Evidence of preparation, willingness to express one’s views and be curious and attentive in listening to others will reflect positively. (10%)

2) *One individual or group presentation*
   Each class member (or group) will sign up to give a presentation in the course of the semester. This assignment has three components:
   a) Indentify a personal, congregational, community or denominational concern you’d like to research and address. Examples include health effects of air quality in Indiana; regional effects of reliance on power from coal in terms of acid rain, global warming; water pollution concerns, locally, regionally, nationally or globally; Agribusiness versus sustainable organic farming; Nuclear power vs. solar and wind power; Biodiversity and species extinction; Forests and desertification, locally, nationally, internationally. The key here is to find a topic you and/or the community you serve really do, or could, care about.
b) Present information about a group that is already addressing this issue locally, regionally, nationally, denominationally or internationally. This would include web sites, hand-outs, etc. (see bibliography and book reviews, below).

c) Present a workshop outline, bible study or sermon outline you could use in a congregational or community setting to educate and generate interest and action in relation to this concern.

If you must be absent for any reason, it is your responsibility to arrange for another class member to present.

Research presentation (10%), Teaching presentation (10%) = 20%

Due dates to be arranged at first meeting

3) Paper 1: Five page reflection paper

This is an exercise in observed subjectivity in response to Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (and/or other course readings to date). Please record and reflect on thoughts and/or feeling that were stirred in your reading of this book. Do you feel hopeful, uncertain, discouraged or depressed about human/ecological concerns and our ability to address them now and in the future? You will be evaluated on attention to subjective detail (self-observation), critical thinking and clarity of expression. (15%)

Due date: 2/28

4) Book review: Choose a relevant 2007 publication addressing theological and/or ecological concerns. Be prepared to address related pastoral care concerns in the context of a 500-1500 word book review. Choose a publication to submit your book review and use the format of the publication. Bring an initial draft of your review on the date you sign up for with copies for the class. Class members will read and return your review the following week with comments. Your final draft of the review will be due the week after that. Be sure to let us know when and where your review has been submitted for publication. (15%)

Due dates to be arranged at first meeting

5) Annotated bibliography: Prepare a bibliography that is relevant to the topic you have chosen for your presentation. This should consist of at least 16 entries, as follows: 4 “classic” references relevant to the topic, 4 new books of related interest, 4 articles (preferably from journals), 4 substantive web sites. (15%)

Due dates to be arranged at first meeting

6) Final paper: 10-15 pages with references. As you reflect on what you have learned in this course, please relate this learning to your understanding of pastoral and prophetic roles in ministry as they relate to environmental and broader social concerns. Where do you see the personal and the cultural intersecting in your ministry and how to you plan to address the needs of individuals and communities at the intersection of these concerns? Be prepared to present both theological and social/ethical/psychological rationales for your perspective. Due 5/1. (25%)

Please note: All written assignments are to be typewritten, double-spaced, 12 point. Pick a consistent reference format and use it throughout your assignments.
Course Outline

Meeting One: 1/24 - Course overview
   Introductions
   Syllabus, course requirements,
   Overview of shared concerns
   Signing up for presentation dates

Meeting Two: 1/31 – Butler – first half (through chapter 13) and Gore part 1

Meeting Three: 2/7 – Butler second half (through end) and Gore part II

Meeting Four: 2/14 – Gore part III and Johnston
   Reading week – no class 2/21

Meeting Five: 2/28 – Lear chapters 1 & 2 and Edwards chapters 1-4
   Paper One due

Meeting Six: 3/6 – Lear chapter 3 and Edwards chapters 5-8

10th Spirituality and Psychotherapy lecture: What is radical hope? Jonathan Lear
   Friday 3/7, 7-9pm & Saturday 3/8, 9-3

Meeting Seven: 3/13 – Reuther part I (Latin American) and Hawken first three chapters
   (through page 48)
   3/17-21 - Easter Recess (no class 3/20)

Meeting eight: 3/27 – No class meeting – use this time to pursue research related to your presentation and/or paper

Meeting nine: 4/3 – Reuther part 2 (Asia) and Hawken chapters 4-6 (through page 114).

Meeting ten: 4/10 – Reuther part 3 (Africa) and Hawken chapters 7-9 (through page 190)

Meeting eleven: 4/17 – Hawken appendix and Rozak, et. al. through part I

Meeting twelve: 4/24 – Rozak, et. al. part II

Meeting thirteen: 5/1 – Rozak, et. al. part III
   Final paper due

Exam week: 5/8 – Meet to review class and receive papers, followed by end of course celebration.

Have a great summer!