

BUDDHISM AND ECOLOGY

Course Number: ENVS 296

Institution: University of Vermont

Instructor: Dr. Stephanie Kaza, Assoc. Professor

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Course Description:

A survey of classical texts and modern commentaries relevant to a Buddhist perspective on ecology and the environment. This is a senior level seminar investigating Buddhist foundations for ecological thought, Buddhist ethical and doctrinal questions related to ecological problems, and current challenges in Buddhist thought as it intersects modern ecological science. We will consider classic principles evoked by Buddhist teachers, writers, and activists addressing the complex dilemmas facing the world in 2002. As a culminating exercise, student teams will investigate dimensions of specific environmental problems using formal dialogue methods exchanging scientific and religious perspectives.

Purpose of Course:

- 1) to explore in-depth the ideas emerging in Buddhism and Ecology;
- 2) to reflect on the relevance of this for current worldviews of science and religion;
- 3) to practice formal intersperspective dialogue modes of engagement;
- 4) to integrate scholarly and experiential modes of community learning.

Texts:

- 1) *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft, eds., Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000
- 2) *Buddhism and Ecology*, Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams, eds., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- 3) *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989. (excerpts)
- 4) *Ecology*, S. Dodson, T. Allen, S. Carpenter, A. Ives, R. Jeanne, J. Kitchell, N. Langston, and M. Turner, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

5) Selected essays from other sources

<u>Course Outline:</u>		<u>Assignments:</u>
JAN	15	Buddhist Ideas of Nature: India and Southeast Asia B&E
		RAIN 1-29, 91-108; Chapell 131-148
	22	Ideas of Nature: China & Tibet
		RAIN 30-53, 58-62 NATURE: 67-78, 213-229
	29	Ideas of Nature: Japan, Zen
		RAIN 54-57, 63-78, 125-150 NATURE: 153-162
FEB	5	Ideas of Nature:
		RAIN 79-91, 109-124, 150-160 modern commentaries
	12	Ecological Science and Buddhist principles: Pattern, Process, & Particles
		ECOLOGY chaps 1, 3 DUE: Paper #1
	15-16	Zen Mountain Monastery
		ZMM videos, journals field trip to Woodstock, NY
	19	Interdependence & Relationality
		ECOLOGY chaps 5, 6, pp 315-334, 380-382
	26	Worldviews & Agency: impacts on environmental action
		ECOLOGY chap 2; NATURE 51-64
MAR	5	Buddhist frames for env. ethics:
		B&E: Loori 177-186
		Four Noble Truths, precepts, bodhisattva vows
		RAIN: 239-252, 261-270
	12	Questions of Knowing and Not Knowing
		RAIN 271-277, 303-339; B&E Habito 165-176
		DUE: Paper #2
	19	Spring Break

26	Critiques: Green Buddhism & Ecological Science	RAIN 357-368; B&E: Eckel 327-350 Harris 377-402, Sponberg 351-376
APRIL 2	Dialogue Topics: Ecological Sustainability	RAIN 206-235, 369-392; B&E Barnhill 187-218, Kaza 219- 248; ECOLOGY chap 4, pp 268- 287, 297-301, 306-308
9	Dialogue topics: Nuclear Eco-Karma	RAIN 393-408; 163-169 B&E Kraft 269-290
16	no class	
23	Dialogue topics: Population & Consumption	RAIN 170-190, 409-422, 340-352
30	Dialogue topics: Genetic Engineering	reading TBA
MAY 6	Reflections on the dialogue process Closing Tea (4-6pm)	RAIN 423-438 DUE: Paper #3

Assignments:

Graded course work consists of oral class participation (40%) and written work (60%).

The **oral** participation grade will be based on:

10% facilitation of half of one class session (Feb 12-March 26)

15% dialogue seminar (April 2-30)

15% overall discussion contributions in seminar

40%

Facilitation will be done in pairs; for each class session, the facilitators should study the readings thoroughly and prepare 1) a brief summary introduction to the work and 2) a series of discussion questions or exercises to involve the group in exploring the material. You may want to supplement the readings with visual or oral materials to enhance understanding.

The **written** assignments will consist of three 7-8 (double-spaced) page papers:

20% #1 text commentary (due Feb 12th)

20% #2 major ideas of a key figure writing in this field (due March 12th)

20% #3 “applying Buddhist environmental thought to a current issue” (due May 6th)

60%

The scope of each paper will be discussed in class 2-3 weeks before the paper is due. Topics should be cleared with me before proceeding, to be sure enough resource materials are available. Papers are expected to be polished and thoughtful work, reflecting in-depth research and reflection appropriate to a senior level seminar. The last paper will be a final version of the paper you prepare for your dialogue session.

Note on Attendance:

You are expected to attend **every** class session, especially since the class meets only once a week. Only excused absences permitted; these should be cleared with me by phone or email, i.e. you should receive a specific response indicating I've approved the absence. Your final grade will drop one letter for each unexcused absence (please note: this includes the class on March 5th and on May 6th). These penalties are to reinforce the need for full commitment from each individual to creating and supporting the class learning community. Senior seminars are luxurious learning environments; your attendance should reflect your respect for the opportunity to engage in this material in an intimate and challenging way. Participation will be graded on a combination of attendance and contributions to class discussion.

Note on Assignments:

You are expected to have read the readings before class and to be prepared to discuss them in class. This is a seminar, not a lecture course. The caliber of our discussions will directly reflect your thoughtfulness in reading the works with an investigative and attentive mind. Papers and presentations are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated on the syllabus. Late work will lose one full grade per day late.

WRITTEN PAPERS

Dr. Stephanie Kaza, Assoc. Professor

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Due in class:

#1 Feb 12th

#2 March 12th

#3 May 6th (see next page)

Purpose:

- 1) to explain and discuss Buddhist perspectives as they apply to modern environmental issues;
- 2) to practice clarity and doctrinal accuracy in articulating aspects of Buddhist philosophy;
- 3) to develop skill in research, reflection, and articulation of key ideas.

Assignments:

Paper #1: Text Commentary

The focus of this paper will be your choice of a single Buddhist text, chosen from *Dharma Rain* or an alternate source if desired. The text should be long enough to contain several ideas which you can develop in depth. You will be preparing a modern commentary on a text much like the examples in Section 2 of *Dharma Rain*. You will need to spend time reflecting on the text and determining the important points from an ecological perspective. Then you need to support these points with examples and with thoughts from other Buddhist teachers and texts.

The style of the paper can range from poetic to philosophical; it need not be only rational and analytical. Think of the paper as a “teaching” paper, as if you wanted to show someone else how your chosen text could be used to illuminate a critical aspect of the environmental situation. Your examples could be personal, local, regional, or global; most importantly they should be vivid and appropriate. Review Section 2 of *Dharma Rain* for range of styles as inspiration. Do your best to speak in your own voice with authenticity and commitment.

Paper #2: Key Figure

The focus here is on the key ideas of one of the major thinkers in the realm of Buddhism and Ecology. You will need to browse through essays or books by these thinkers in enough depth that you can articulate some of their key contributions to the field. People you might work with include:

Gary Snyder	Wendy Johnson	Ruben Habito
Peter Matthiessen	H.H. Dalai Lama	Joanna Macy
John Daido Looi	Sulak Sivaraksa	Ken Kraft
Thich Nhat Hanh	John Seed	Donald Swearer

For your chosen thinker, identify 3-4 important themes and explain these in some detail. If you can, you might put these in the context of the writer's life and activities as well as their particular Buddhist lineage or practice. Again, use examples, quotes, and thoughtful interpretation to show the significance of the writer. Include a bibliography of literature cited.

Be sure to clear your choice with me in advance so I can provide you with additional materials from my extensive collection. It is unlikely that the internet will be a useful source for this paper. Because this is a small and emerging field, you will need to sleuth to find adequate materials.

BUDDHISM AND ECOLOGY DIALOGUE

(an inter-perspective dialogue between science and religion)

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Purpose:

- 1) to develop an informed capacity to discuss specific environmental issues in depth, engaging other points of view;
- 2) to practice inquiry, tolerance, and clarity in articulating serious questions and responses;
- 3) to formulate a personal view on an environmental challenge, drawing on the resources of both religion and science;
- 4) to develop skill in writing and preparing a paper for formal dialogue.

Assignment:

1) Organize your dialogue. You should hold a preliminary meeting with your team of four at least four weeks before your presentation date. This will allow enough time for all papers to be well developed. Lay out a detailed timeframe for completion of the various papers and make sure you are committed to your own piece of the process. Two people will write papers from a scientific viewpoint; two will write from a religious (Buddhist) view. The order will be:

Paper #1 scientific view

Paper #2 Buddhist response to the scientific view (i.e. to paper #1)

Paper #3 Buddhist view

Paper #4 scientific response to the Buddhist view (i.e. to paper #3)

As a team, you should confer on the main points you would like to bring out regarding your topic. You may draw extensively on the assigned readings or work in another direction. It is critical, however, that you have adequate resources to develop your points for consideration. Do not try to cover everything! Choose what you can spend some time on and give that in-depth attention. Look for conceptual and practical points that overlap or differ between the scientific and the religious perspective.

2) Writing the papers. Papers #1 and #3 should be completed two weeks before the dialogue, to give the other writers time to prepare their responses. For full readiness, papers #2 and #4 should be available to the other two team members at least 1-2 days before your presentation, so you are all familiar with the material you have prepared. These versions can be considered “drafts” which you will be able to improve on, based on class engagement. The final version of your paper is due during finals week on May 6th. All papers should be handed out or emailed to class members before the dialogue session, so all can participate in the discussion in an informed way.

3) Presenting the dialogue. We will follow a formal dialogue process as developed in Buddhist-Christian encounters. Your team is responsible for the entire class period of your topic (except the first ten minutes). The schedule of papers will be:

2:00	announcements and opening practice
2:10	introduction of topic and group members
2:15	scientific view (paper #1)
2:30	Buddhist response (paper #2)
2:45	group discussion
3:15	break
3:30	Buddhist view (paper #3)
3:45	scientific response (paper #4)
4:00	group discussion
4:30	reflection and evaluation

4) Final paper and group reflection. (Due May 6th.) When you turn in the final version of your dialogue paper, please include a 1-2 page reflection on the overall dialogue process for your group. Discuss what went well, what could have been improved, what you learned from this process.

BUDDHISM AND ECOLOGY

Selected Books

Aitken, Robert. *The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984).

Batchelor, Martine and Brown, Kerry, eds. *Buddhism and Ecology* (London: Cassell Publishers, 1992).

Callicot, J. Baird and Ames, Roger T., eds. *Nature in Asian Tradition of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

Chapple, Christopher Key. *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

Dogen, Eihei. "Mountains and Waters Sutra" in *Shobogenzo* collection, trans. Kaz Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985).

Habito, Ruben L.F. *Healing Breath: Zen Spirituality for a Wounded Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

Hunt-Badiner, Alan, ed. *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990).

Kapleau, Philip. *To Cherish All Life: A Buddhist Case for Becoming Vegetarian* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982).

Kaza, Stephanie. *The Attentive Heart: Conversations with Trees* (New York: Ballantine, 1993).

Kaza, Stephanie and Kraft, Kenneth, eds. *Dharma Rain: Sources for a Buddhist Environmentalism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000).

Macy, Joanna. *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

Sivaraksa, Sulak. *Seeds of Peace* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1992).

Snyder, Gary. *The Practice of the Wild* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990).

Snyder, Gary. *A Place in Space* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1995).

Tucker, Mary Evelyn and Williams, Duncan. *Buddhism and Ecology: the Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

SCIENCE AND RELIGION: General Bibliography

Barbour, Ian. *Issues in Science and Religion*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966).

_____. *Myths, Models and Paradigms*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1974).

_____. *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. Revised Edition. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997).

Birch, Charles, William Eakin and Jay B. McDaniel, eds. *The Liberation of Life*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990)

Brockelman, Paul. *Cosmology and Creation: The Spiritual Significance of Contemporary Cosmology*. (London: Oxford University, 1999).

Brooke, John Hedley. *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives*. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Brooke, John, and Cantor, Geoffrey. *Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

Peters, Ted, ed. *Cosmos as Creation: Theology and Science in Consonance*. (Abingdon, 1989).

Richardson, W. Mark, and Wildman, Wesley J., eds. *Religion and Science: History, Method, and Dialogue*. (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Rolston, Holmes, III. *Environmental Ethics*. (Temple University, 1989).

_____. *Science and Religion, a Critical Survey*. (Temple University, 1987).

_____, ed. *Biology, Ethics, and the Origins of Life*. (Boston: Jones and Bartlett, 1995).

Santmire, H. Paul. *The Travail of Nature*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress).

Wilson, E.O. *The Diversity of Life*. (New York: Norton, 1992).