

Spirituality & Sustainability

Global Consciousness for Earth's Future

(Br.) Keith Douglass Warner OFM
(kwarner@scu.edu)

Spirituality is (1) both how a person lives out his or her values (explicitly religious or otherwise) to find meaning; and (2) the academic study of how people and social groups express their religious experiences.

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. A comprehensive definition must address issues of social equity and economic development as well as ecological indicators.



Course description

The term “spirituality” has recently taken on remarkable prominence in American culture, but its varied use defies consistent definition. Spiritualities are rooted in religion and religious practice, but find specific expression in cultural and personal contexts. Spirituality may carry a deeply individualistic or even narcissistic meaning, or it may indicate the movement of one’s whole being toward a life of religious, social, and personal integrity.

The term “sustainability” emerged during the 1980s to project a framework for addressing the scale and complexity of the ecological crises facing our planet. At a fundamental level, the term reminds us that we cannot continue depleting resources and generating hazardous wastes indefinitely without serious consequences for future generations. Leading scholars suggest that to addressing our environmental crises requires an approach integrating social, economic, and ecological dimensions of sustainability. Environmental leaders have begun describing sustainability as an ecological and inter-generational definition of justice, and using the concept of “ecological footprints” as a way to make visible human impacts on the earth. A few visionary religious leaders propose a spiritual dimension for sustainability as well, one based on global consciousness.

This course will explore the sustainability crises facing human society, its implications for human consciousness and the practice of our spiritualities. Students will assess their own ecological footprint, and then engage friends and the campus

community in learning more about how we can respond, and how to develop spiritualities that will nourish us for this difficult task.

We will proceed along two tracks, guided by two books: Johnston's *"Arise My Love...": Mysticism for a New Era*, and Uhl's *Developing Ecological Consciousness: Path to a Sustainable World*. Johnston explains the relationship between religion, spirituality and mysticism in the 21st Century, and the transformative potential of drawing East and West, religion and science, into dialogue. He draws from Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu spiritual traditions to investigate the potential of consciousness to facilitate social transformation. In class we will examine core principles of spirituality, informed by the emerging awareness of the global expressions of Christianity: personal prayer, the practice of justice, compassion, and community. We will explore the implications of the Incarnation for the practice of spiritualities engaged with social justice and environmental leadership activities.

Concurrently, Uhl will lead us to a deeper understanding of human dependence on earth's ecosystems, and into what he calls "ecological consciousness." What are the implications of humans being just one member of the Earth's ecosystems? How does our dependence on a living planet affect the practice of spirituality? What does the human destruction of the web of life tell us about the nature of human beings in the 21st Century? And most importantly, how can we articulate a vision of spiritual practices that can facilitate the transition to a more sustainable society? Uhl will lead us through a process of probing our planet's web of life, of understanding the causes of our ecosystems' breakdown, and of developing spiritual resources to heal our relationship with the earth. These will provide a fresh perspective on a contemporary practice of Christian faith.

As an introductory course, we will spend time building a shared vocabulary of keywords and concepts in spirituality and sustainability, drawing from Johnston and Uhl. The SCU mission and its "comprehensive policy on sustainability" be a learning lab for our investigation into the relationship between spirituality and sustainability in our own specific campus context.

Our spiritualities shape our vocations. Martin-Schramm and Stivers offer a method for making personal and professional environmental ethical decisions informed by Christian values. They propose an ethic of ecological justice comprised of the following values: justice sustainability, sufficiency, participation and solidarity. These norms provide helpful guidelines for decision-making at three key scales: individual, institutional and international. Case studies at each of these scales will provide concrete examples of the kinds of alternative trajectories human society – especially its institutions -- could take to become more sustainable, using our campus and the United Nations as examples.

This class fulfills the university core curriculum requirement for the second level religious studies, in the area of Theology, Ethics, and Spirituality. Students should have taken the first level introductory religious studies requirement prior to this course. The following classes would provide helpful background, but are not required:

- TESP 4 Christian Traditions
- TESP 5 Catholic Theology: Foundations
- TESP 6 Catholic Theology: Spirituality
- ENVS 1 Intro to Environmental Studies

- any introductory ethics courses in the Philosophy Department

Preference will be given to students from the Cypress and Unity Residential Learning Communities.

Student learning goals

1. To understand the meanings of spirituality, elements of spirituality, and recent currents in the study of spirituality, informed by global cultural processes.
2. To reflect on the formation of his or her own spirituality, and to consciously shape its trajectory.
3. To grasp the essential elements of our collective ecological footprint, the global sustainability crisis, and the key issues society must address to transition toward a more sustainable world.
4. To think critically about the Christian story in light of the sustainability crises and the role of American cultural myths (progress, success, economic growth).
5. To become acquainted with the essential elements of experiential learning.
6. To articulate a vision of one's own vocation in light of the global crises in sustainability.
7. To develop ethical and spiritual leadership capacity for engaging institutions in the transition toward a more sustainable society.

Amy's dictum

All students must abide by this dictum at all times in this class:

“If it's not fun, it's not sustainable.”

If you are experiencing difficulty with this component of the course, consult your instructor.

Required assignments

I will not accept hand written assignments. Please print them on a computer printer.

1. Assess your ecological footprint; then work two other friends to assess theirs; then write a short reflection essay on the spiritual questions that emerged from this. Use the web-based “Ecological Footprint Quiz” for this. Try to work with one friend who lives in an RLC and one who does not. The purpose of this exercise is not to report the specific score, but rather to reflect critically on how this knowledge affects people, their self-understanding, and how they make meaning of the sustainability crises. Spend about two pages describing the spiritual themes that emerge in your conversations with your friends, and about two pages reflecting on the process of doing this yourself and discussing it with friends. If you have done the intensive footprint analysis in ENVS 1, spend the first half describing the shifts in your own awareness since you did this, and the second half reflecting on your conversations with friends. Worth 10% of your grade (1000 words), and due **April 7**.

2. Write three 3-page reflection essays. They should respond to “Questions for Reflection” in Uhl, and draw from material in Johnston. Feel free to include a discussion of virtues you seek more of in your life. They will follow the tripartite themes of
 - a. *via positiva* (either question on Uhl p. 97). This answer should demonstrate knowledge of Johnston part I; due **April 19** (750 words). Worth 10% of grade.
 - b. *via negativa* (either questions on Uhl p. 180 or 217). It should be informed by Johnston part II; due **May 3** (570 words). Worth 10% of the grade.
 - c. *via transformativa* (either questions on Uhl p. 315 or 326). This answer should be informed by Johnston ch. 16; it is due **May 17** (750 words). Worth 10% of the grade.
3. Gather data on spirituality and sustainability at Catholic universities, from on-line information, and put it into an Excel sheet. This will allow us to compare SCU’s efforts in sustainability with those of others. Details forthcoming.
4. Five minute role play in class. Select a case study from Martin-Schramm and Stivers (chapters 4, 5, 9, or 11), and plan with some classmates how to conduct a role play exercise describing what you would do, drawing from key course concepts. Worth 10% of the grade, and during the last 3 class sections. Details forthcoming.
5. The institutional spirituality & sustainability group projects are designed to learn about how sustainability leadership has and could be brought to spiritual and religious institutions. It will analyze how the SCU campus sustainability statement (<http://www.scu.edu/envs/campus/campus-sustainability-statement.html>) is impacting the campus community. Teams will gather data from departments and work units on the SCU campus, and provide an analysis of how they are connecting their work to the sustainability plan on campus. You will create a poster representing these efforts (15%), and write a summary reflection (10%). These posters will be displayed at the ESI Fiesta in May. Worth 25% of the grade, and due the day before the ESI Fiesta.

Course evaluation

10%	Ecological footprint reflection (1000 words)
10%	<i>via positiva</i> reflection (750 words)
10%	<i>via negativa</i> reflection (750 words)
10%	<i>via transformativa</i> reflection (750 words)
10%	Data gathered on institutional spirituality & sustainability (in excel file)
5%	Environmental ethics role play
25%	SCU study: institutional spirituality & sustainability group projects: poster & reflection (1000 words)
10%	Extra-class participation
10%	<u>In-class participation</u>
100%	Total

Extra class participation

This course requires you to participate in activities outside of class. These are designed to be fun. If you do not find them to be fun, consult with your instructor. To receive 10% of the grade, attend five of the following events.

- Tuesday April 12, 6:30 pm departure for evening picnic under the **stars at Castle Rock**. Carpool.
- Tuesday April 19, 8 pm movie night: "**Gandhi**" Swig Sky Lounge (this is a 3 hour movie)
- Thursday April 21, all day workshop on "**Crossing the Digital Divide**." On campus all day. Details at <http://www.scu.edu/sts/2005-International-Conference.cfm>
- Wednesday April 27, 8 pm movie night: "**Romero**" Swig Sky Lounge
- Friday April 29, noon, ESI **Seminar on Global Climate Change and the Media**, Casa Commons
- Wednesday May 4, evening field trip **to witness sustainability and EJ issues in East Palo Alto**. Caltrain.
- Thursday May 12, 8 pm movie night: "**Burning Season**" Swig Sky Lounge
- Thursday May 19, walk to **Ulistac** after class for evening picnic (<http://www.scu.edu/envs/ulistac/>).

Plagiarism Policy

All students will perform their assignments honestly and assignments will be original work. Any plagiarism will result in immediate and appropriate disciplinary action not limited to failing the course and possible expulsion from the University (see "Student Handbook"). Some assignments will involve collaboration with a fellow student, which will require negotiation and equitable exercise of responsibilities. This too is a part of our collective learning experience. If you do not understand this policy please consult the instructor.

Attendance policy

You may miss two class meetings without penalty. Each subsequent class absence (starting with the third) will result in lost points for course participation.

Required Texts

The Gospel of John

How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb, U2

Martin-Schramm, James B., and Robert L. Stivers. 2003. *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case Method Approach*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Johnston, William. 2000. "*Arise My Love...*": *Mysticism for a New Era*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis.

Uhl, Christopher. 2003. *Developing Ecological Consciousness: Path to a Sustainable World*. Rowman & Littlefield: New York.

Wackernagel, Mathis, and William Rees. 1996. *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Appendix 1: ERES reader: password “ss”

Assisi Declarations. 1996. (pages 136-139)

Diamond, Jared, The Ends of the World as We Know Them, *New York Times*, January 1, 2005.

Kaza, Stephanie. 2000. To Save All Beings: Buddhist Environmental Activism. In *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, edited by C. S. Queen. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Tucker, Trileigh. 2004. Ecology and the Spiritual Exercises. *The Way* 43 (1):7-18

Vitousek, Peter M., Harold A. Mooney, Jane Lubchenco, and Jerry M. Melillo. 1997. Human Domination of Earth's Ecosystems. *Science* 277:494-499.

Appendix 2: Web-based readings

Ecological Footprint Quiz, <http://www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp>

Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Joint Declaration on Articulating a Code of Environmental Ethics, <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/ejp/jtortca.htm>

Schneiders, Sandra M. 2000. “Religion vs. Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?” Bannan Lecture, available at: <http://www.scu.edu/bannancenter/eventsandconferences/lectures/archives/schneiders.cfm>

SCU Campus sustainability statement, <http://www.scu.edu/envs/campus/campus-sustainability-statement.html>

Short, William J. Recovering Lost Traditions in Spirituality: Franciscans, Camaldolese and the Hermitage. *Spiritus* 3:2; available at: <http://muse.uq.edu.au/journals/spiritus/toc/scs3.2.html>

UC Atlas of Global Inequality, <http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/>

Rosales, Antonio. 1997. The Day Assisi Became the 'Peace Capital' of the World, *St. Anthony Messenger*, <http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/Assisi/PeaceCapital.asp>

Appendix 3: Other web resources

SCU's sustainability project: <http://www.scu.edu/envs/campus/fev/fev-courses.html#envs160>

Franciscans International, an NGO at the UN, <http://www.franciscansinternational.org/>

UN Millennium Development Goals, <http://www.undp.org/mdg/abcs.html> and

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>, and UN CSD, <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/>

Course reading assignments and topical outline (E = ERES reader; W=Web-based reading)

	Reading for next class	Topics	
	Mar 29	W: Ecological footprint quiz	Introductions, the course and each other Defining sustainability, religion, spirituality, contemplation, consciousness, mysticism
	Mar 31	E: Diamond, the ends of ... Wackernagel Intro, 1 Johnston, Intro	Measuring footprints; assessing our fair earth share Where did sustainability come from? What do we mean by religion and spirituality? What are their constitutive parts?
<i>Via positiva</i>	Apr 5	John 1 Wackernagel 2, 3 Johnston, 1, 2, 3 W: Schneiders, Religion vs...	The ecological footprint: the environmental consequences of life choices Reconciling the great splits: science & religion; East & West; religion & spirituality How does one go about inter-religious dialogue?
	7	John 2, 3 Uhl Preface, 1 Wackernagel 4 Johnston 4	The relationships between religion & spirituality Origins of the universe, and the interdependence of life Cosmic splits: East/West, Science/Religion, economics/ecology
	12	John 4 Wackernagel 5 Uhl 2, 3	A living planet? Recognizing the web of life: interdependence
	14	Uhl 4 Johnston 5, 6, 7	Cultivating an intimacy with nature Some recent history of the Catholic Church, and East/West mixing
	19	John 5 E: Assisi Conference	Inter-religious dialogue
<i>Via negativa</i>	21	Uhl 5, Johnston 8, 9	Listening to the Earth Prophetic tradition and works of justice; justice in an ecological age
	26	John 6 Uhl 6 E: Vitousek et al. Human... Johnston 10, 11	Signs of trouble: ecological indicators Environmental collapse as a symptom of crises in human community Learning to discern troubling messages: scientists as prophets The vocation of stewardship: ecological and social dimensions
	28	Uhl 7 Johnston 12, 13	The Incarnation in Christian spirituality; the Christian vocation and ecological crises Implications of dis-embodied living Cultivating the courage to confront global collapsing ecosystems, and the broad-scale failure of human institutions
	May 3	John 7 Johnston 14, 15	Incarnation and divinization, and the search for the "historical" Jesus

Via transformatio	5	John 8 Uhl 8 Johnston 16 W: Short, Recovering	<i>Metanoia</i> , transformation, conversion? New or old? The role of tradition
	10	Uhl 9 Johnston 17 E: Tucker, Ecology and the Spiritual Exercises	Environmental ethics from Christian perspectives Core Christian values for environmental ethics Sustainability as a criteria for Christian spirituality
	12	John 10, 11, 12 Uhl 10	A zero-waste world, designing with nature
	17	John 13-17 W: Pope and Patriarch Martin-Schram Intro, 1	Tensions between religious values and economic systems Implications for individual lifestyle choices
Ethics for leaders	19	Martin-Schram 2, 3	Environmental leadership, ethics, and vocations
	24	John 18-21 Martin-Schram 5	Sustainable communities Sustainable development paradigms at the UN
	26	Martin-Schram 9 or 11	
	31	Martin-Schram 4	Linking the personal, institutional, and global scales of sustainable spiritualities
	June 2		

Disability Accommodation Policy:

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmman Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

Deadline extensions>late papers

I routinely grant extensions of deadlines. Late papers will be marked off. You choose.