

# Nature, Spirituality & Popular Culture

## The University of Florida

### COURSE NUMBER, TIME & PLACE

Interdisciplinary Studies: IDS 2935

Lecture: Wednesday, all students, period 10-11 (5:10 p.m. - 7:05 p.m) TUR L011

Discussion Sections, Friday: Section 1, *period 2 (8:30 a.m) TUR 2306; Section 2, period 3 (9:35 a.m.) MAT 002; Section 3, period 4 (10:40 a.m.) MAT 16.*

### INSTRUCTORS

Professor Bron Taylor (Ph.D.)

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Office hours: Wed 1:00-2:00 p.m; Friday 12:30-1:30

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Beginning with the period since Walt Disney began making animal-focused documentaries and animated films in the 1930s, continuing up through the blockbuster motion picture Avatar (2009) and the Animal Kingdom theme park further expressing its themes, this course takes a global tour examining the religious, spiritual, ethical, and political dimensions of artistic productions, scientific representations in museums, and other cultural inventions, in which nature takes center stage. We will explore the international cultural tributaries, influences, and controversies such productions engender, for they constitute important ways that environmental ethics, and quests for environmentally sustainable livelihoods and lifeways, are expressed and promoted. The course will enhance students' abilities to interpret these cultural productions and their evocative power, explore their own reactions to these social phenomena, whilst learning to think more deeply about their own places in, and obligations to, the natural world.

The course will also help students to recognize how different worldviews — the philosophical, religious, and scientific understandings of the universe and biosphere — are expressed and promoted in popular culture. This will also enhance students' international sophistication as they learn from where and when the world's predominant religions emerged — for example Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and Hinduism in Asia, Judaism, Christianity and Islam from the Near East — while also learning about the worldviews and ethical orientations typical of indigenous traditions, among contemporary Pagans and devotees New Age and science-inspired nature spiritualities. Analytic tools from the Humanities and humanistic social sciences will also be provided in order to enhance student understanding of important trend at the intersection of nature, spirituality, and popular culture.

### GENERAL EDUCATION | HUMANITIES/INTERNATIONAL | WRITING REQUIREMENT | QUEST "NATURE & CULTURE" FOCUS

This course has been approved for UF'S General Education credit in the Humanities and International Studies areas. It has been approved under (H), International (N) and Quest 1 "Nature and Culture" theme. It also meets the University Writing Requirement (2000 words).

*Pages 2-5 explains the purpose and student learning outcomes for these credits. Specific information about the course, such as readings, assignments and grading, begins on page 6.*

## **GENERAL EDUCATION | HUMANITIES & INTERNATIONAL FOCI**

### **Humanities (H)**

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

### **International (N)**

This designation is always in conjunction with another program area.

International courses promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.

### **General Education Subject Areas will be met through:**

Regular lectures and near-weekly writing assignments, in-class discussions, and feedback on their assigned research paper, will help students to analyze the geographically diverse and international social contexts, and worldviews, leading to and undergirding the various religious, spiritual, scientific, and ethical understandings that are being expressed in popular culture, which they have encountered through readings and diverse media in the course. Every student will also be expected – and pushed – during the discussion to articulate their understandings and emerging views orally during discussion sections. The weekly topics identified course schedule provides more detail on specific phenomena we will be analyzing and the General Education – relevant issues students will be engaging.

## **GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**The general education student learning outcomes (SLOs)** describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are expected to acquire while completing a general education course at the University of Florida. They fall in three main areas:

- 1. Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the subject area.
- 2. Critical Thinking:** Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the subject area.
- 3. Communication:** Students clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning in written or oral forms appropriate to the subject area.

### **General Education / Humanities specific SLOs.**

**Through exams, written work, and class discussions students will demonstrate that they understand, can think critically, and communicate effectively about the role religion, spirituality, and popular culture often plays in contemporary life. Specifically:**

- 1. Content:** 1) Students will show they understand critical course terms such as religion, spirituality, nature, and popular culture, as well as theories scholars use to understand the religious dimension of human life, and specific methodological tools they deploy when analyzing beliefs, perceptions, and practices related to what people variously construe as religion or spirituality; (2) Students will show they can explain the above mentioned terms, theories, and approaches to the study of religion, nature and popular culture.

2. **Critical Thinking:** (1) Students will show they understand the major, often competing and incompatible knowledge systems around the world and how these are related theories of environmental ethics, and the assumptions, religious, philosophical, and scientific, upon which they are based; (2) Students will show they can discern differences between differing knowledge systems and understand their origins and the diverse ways they engage the religious/spiritual, affective, ethical, and political dimensions of life; and (3) Student will demonstrate an ability to think reflexively and critically about their own spiritual views and values, how they arrived at them, and whether and if so why any of the many perspectives they are encountering in the course they find emotionally and intellectually compelling.
3. **Communication:** (1) Nearly every week, students will provide a written response paper showing they understand the week's assignments and they illuminate the ways nature-related spiritualities and values are constructed, expressed, promoted, and contested in popular culture (2) Students will demonstrate they understand the process of writing research paper by submitting a draft research paper, and after receiving feedback on it, revising it and then submitting a final, properly formatted and referenced original research paper, including a literature review that draws on refereed scholarly research. (3) On their final exam students will demonstrate an ability to write a coherent and well-reasoned essay expressing how, given what they have encountered in this course, their minds have changed or remained the same about their place in the world and responsibilities to it.

### **General Education / International studies specific SLOs**

**Through exams, written work, and class discussions students will demonstrate that they understand, can think critically, and communicate effectively about the role religion, spirituality, and popular culture often plays in contemporary life. Specifically:**

1. **Content:** (1) Students will show that they understand the major differences between religious perceptions and practices around the world, including the ways indigenous traditions typically differ from the world's predominant religions. (2) Students will show that they understand how in the contemporary world popular culture expresses and promotes, in a host of ways, diverse perspectives on the human place in the world and their responsibilities to it and one another, and the stakes involved given the increasingly interconnected nature of Earth's biocultural systems.
2. **Critical Thinking:** (1) Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze and think critically about the strengths and weaknesses of competing and incompatible knowledge systems around the world, including those with implicit or explicit environmental ethics. (2) Students will show they can recognize the cultural and international sources of these differing perspectives in a wide variety of cultural productions that engage religious/spiritual, affective, ethical, and political dimensions of life.
3. **Communication:** (1) Through exams, reading responses, and oral responses during classroom discussions, students will show that they understand how nature-related spiritualities and values are constructed, expressed, promoted, and contested in popular culture, and these are increasingly globalized processes leading to new hybrid religious forms, which variously both hinder and promote pro-pro-environmental behavior and thereby affect biocultural systems. (2) Students will demonstrate through their exams and written work that they can identify popular culture productions, their international and cultural sources, as well as divergent scholarly perspectives on their impacts upon biocultural systems today and in the future.

### **WRITING REQUIREMENT**

The University Writing Requirement is designed to promote student fluency in writing. Course instructors will assess student's written assignments with respect to content, grammar, punctuation, usage of standard written English, clarity, coherence, organization, style, and mechanics. To help students improve their writing I have provided a [writing well guide](#). Students who study this guide and avoid the problems identified in it typically improve and do well with their writing assignments. I have also prepared a writing assessment rubric to explain how course instructors will evaluate written work.

## Professor Taylor's Writing Assessment Rubric

	Satisfactory (Y)	Unsatisfactory (N)
Content	Good writing demonstrates an ability to understand and critically evaluate facts, different perspectives, and fault lines among the perspectives you are analyzing in course materials.	Unsatisfactory writing has minimal if any relevant discussion or citation of content relevant to the assignment.
Organization	Often neglected, one's writing must be work in a coherent manner that clearly states a thesis and musters evidence in support of it, provides transitions where needed (while avoiding tautology, in other words, needless repetition). Good organization provides readers what they need to follow the discussion.	Unsatisfactory writing is difficult if not impossible to follow because there is no coherent organization (or flow) to the writing. It typically has abrupt shifts and material that appears 'out of the blue.'
Argument	Good writing judiciously assembles and evaluates evidence both for and against one's argument while providing reasons for why the balance of evidence favors one's findings, conclusions, and arguments.	Unsatisfactory writing provides no or an obtuse arguments, little if any well-sourced evidence, and/or no fair-minded analysis of competing perspectives.
Style	Good style involves using word choices that reflect an accurate understanding of their meanings, terminology fitting the critical perspectives introduced in the course, and grammar at an appropriate level of sophistication for college-level analysis.	Unsatisfactory writing often if not entirely incoherent – due to failures in organization, word choice, sentence structure, and poor grammar.
Mechanics & Summary	Excellent written work will consistently reflect the above-mentioned virtues. Satisfactory work may have flaws but will, nevertheless, demonstrate that the student has mastered key concepts and has been able to make some good points relevant to the specific assignment.	Unsatisfactory written work fails to communicate. It typically reveals a lack of student effort. When written work is ill-informed or confusing due to poor writing, or both, it will be judged unsatisfactory.
The Art of Writing	Writing is an art. It is hard work. It requires many revisions. It often requires starting over and radical reorganization. It benefits from criticism from more advanced writers. Welcome Criticism. Work the craft. It's the only way to be become a good writer.	To avoid an unsatisfactory evaluation, work the craft, and consult my writing well guide, which will help you avoid some of the most common writing mistakes.

*\*\* Important note: To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher in the course, and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.*

## THE QUEST ~ “NATURE & CULTURE” FOCUS

This course has been created for Quest program’s “Nature and Culture” theme by examining nature-related global processes and the religious, spiritual, political dimensions of artistic productions and scientific representations in ‘popular culture.’ It illuminates the global and international tributaries, hybridities, reciprocal influences, and controversies that flow from these processes in the ongoing struggle of humankind to understand its place in and responsibilities toward one another and the rest of the living world.

By looking at these processes and the contentions related to them students will encounter and wrestle with a variety of religion-related perceptions and claims about non-human organisms and environmental systems, such as: Are any of them sacred and worthy of reverence, or conversely, are any of them spiritually or politically dangerous? Is there some sort of divine agency that has given rise to the world and who enjoins responsibilities to it? Do religious worldviews, which emerged in diverse regions around the world, lead to indifference or hostility to earthly organisms or environmental systems, viewing them as profane, or illusory, or of penultimate value, compared to some extra-worldly sacred place of greater, or exclusive, moral and spiritual value? In short, this course poses longstanding questions regarding the nature of the universe, the biosphere, and the ways humans construct meaning and values as they seek to understand their place in both. The course also intersects with other “essential questions” the Quest program poses: including who are we (identities)? What meaning and values should we uphold (through an examined life)? How ought we to live with one another and the wider community of life? And, how we ought to pursue or defend those ecological and social systems we conclude are just and good (justice and power, and war and peace)?

## COURSE OBJECTIVES AND QUEST-RELATED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The quest program has its own Student Learning Objectives, which include the following text:  
*During this class, through exams, written assignments, and orally, students will . . .*

- 1) be able to identify, describe and explain the major types and differences in the world’s religions/ spiritualities and how these are typically related to environment-related perceptions and behaviors
- 2) be able to identify, describe and explain a wide variety of course-related terms including religion, spirituality, nature, hybridity, globalization, anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism, as well as the “family resemblances” approach to the study of religion-resembling social phenomena
- 3) be able to explain how social contexts and processes of socialization shape nature-related worldviews, beliefs, values, and practices
- 4) be able to identify, describe and explain the theories and methods, grounded in the Arts and Humanities, that analysts introduced in the course use to illuminate the role that artistic productions in popular culture play expressing, promoting, and shaping nature-related perceptions, spiritualities, values, and behaviors, and how these processes are increasingly globalized, lead to cross-cultural influences, new, hybridized religious forms, and influence social and environmental systems.
- 5) demonstrate they can be self-reflexive and evaluate the knowledge systems and ethical perspectives advanced by individuals and groups very different from their own, while connecting the personal quest to arrive at a compelling worldview with their own intellectual, professional, and even (perhaps) spiritual development.

## READINGS

The required books can be found inexpensively from online and other used booksellers, as well as at the University of Florida bookstore. Additional articles will be available via online links.

### Required Texts

Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010). Several copies will be available on reserve. In addition to this book, at your leisure during this course, view and listen to some of the ‘dark green’ [nature-venerating video](#) and [nature-venerating music](#), and other [supplementary materials](#), at the book’s website.

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B* (Bantam, 1997)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993)

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (Heyday/Banyan Tree 2004) (or any other edition)

## REQUIREMENTS

### Movies and Documentaries

Students will view motion pictures pertinent to the course foci. Most of the assigned films will be viewed outside of class. In some cases I will make the film available after class for any who wish to watch it together. Alternatively, students may opt to see these films using streaming or other methods. *Students must see required films no later than they are assigned.*

### Reading responses

Nearly every week students will respond to questions provided by the professor. Answers will be brief (typically between 250 and 500 words) and will address the week’s readings, films, or other required materials. Each week’s responses must be sent by no later than Tuesday night at 11:59 p.m. during the week for which they are assigned. No exceptions.

### Field Trips (fieldwork)

Students will participate in at least one, course-relevant cultural production in Gainesville or the wider region during the semester, and write up an analysis of the course-relevant themes encountered at it or during it. UF’s own art and natural history museums provide many opportunities for such experiences as does the Observatory at Santa Fe College. Many other examples of such possibilities are found in this syllabus and will be discussed in class or shared via Canvas. Except for opportunities announced in class, students must have their field trip projects pre-approved by instructors. For due dates see the “Schedule” section and for more information see “Fieldwork & Research Paper Guidelines”, below.

### Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam, with diverse questions to respond to, including essay sections. The exams will be comprehensive, with questions drawing on any classroom experience or assignment that occurred previously.

### Research Paper and optional Slideshow Presentation

Students will prepare a 2,000 word research paper that adheres to the University of Florida's Level-Two Writing Requirement. *After submitting a proposal for approval, students will submit a draft of these papers and receive feedback on them. They will then be expected to revise them in the light of the instructor's suggestions and criticisms (see course schedule for related due dates for the proposal, draft, and revised, final paper).* In addition to this research paper, students may submit a related slideshow illuminating the social phenomena analyzed in the written paper. Slideshows will receive up to 40 bonus points (40 if judged outstanding: if excellent, 30; if good, 20; if course relevant but not particularly good, 10). With student permission, excellent and outstanding slideshows may be shared with course colleagues and/or added to the course syllabus as examples and resources for future classes. Slideshows will be prepared with PowerPoint, Keynote, or other slideshow presentation programs. For more information see the section "Fieldwork & Research Paper Guidelines" (page 18 & 19).

**Discussions.** There will be opportunities for students to express confusions and ask questions about all course materials and presentations, both in class, and through Canvas. Students themselves will often be able to answer questions or clarify things for one another before course instructors do, but course instructors shall seek to answer all questions within a week.

### EVALUATION

#### Points & Percentages for Required Assignments

Assignment	Proportion of Course Grade
Reading Responses (10%) (10 at 10 points each) Fieldwork (5%) (50 points)	15%
Research Paper (200 points; up to 240 if optional slide show also provided.)	20%
Midterm (300 points)	30%
Final (350 points)	35%

**Evaluation of Writing Assignments:** See the explanations on page 3 & 4 about UF's Writing Requirement, the Evaluation Rubric, and Professor Taylor's writing guide.

## Calculating Grades

At the end of the semester, the total number of points earned by each student will be divided by the total number earned by the highest-scoring student. The resulting percentage will be used to calculate each student's grade for the course. Put in a formula, it looks like this:

$$\frac{\text{the score of each individual student (your score)}}{\text{(divided by) the highest score earned by a student}}$$

The percentage arrived at by means of this formula will be evaluated according to the following scale:

A	≥95
A-	90
B+	87
B	83
B-	80
C+	77
C	73
C-	70
D+	67
D	63
D-	60
F	≤59.99

This kind of scoring is fairer than many other forms of grading because: (1) It is based on what students actually achieve rather than some preconceived standard held by the professor; (2) Each student can receive a high grade; (3) Hard-working students will not be penalized for staying in a demanding course full of equally industrious students. With a traditional curve, demanding courses that “weed out” less industrious students, leaving hard-working ones, can unintentionally harm good students putting them in competition with each other. This will not occur in this course.

## Extra credit

Extra credit can be earned in a number of ways. Exams may include extra credit questions. If so, any extra credit points will be added to the individual student's score but *only after the highest score earned by a student has been established*. This ensures that the extra credit earned will not increase the difficulty of the grading scale. Students who contribute significantly to classroom discussions—by pointing instructors to course-related phenomena (including events in Gainesville or nearby that could provide extra credit opportunities for the entire class); or who attend and submit 300-500 word reports from events approved by instructors as extra credit



opportunities—will receive extra credit. Apart from extra credit points earned on exams such points will be awarded at the end of the semester after the grading scales have been finalized.

### **Late or Missing Assignments**

Students who do not make discussion posts on time will not receive credit for them. Students who cannot take an exam on time for medical reasons, or deaths in their families, must inform the course instructors before the exam of the reason for their impending absence and provide evidence verifying the reason. No accommodation will be made after the fact apart from a contemporaneous accident immediately prior to the exam.

**Academic Dishonesty.** Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the Student Discipline Code, will be subject to other disciplinary measures. *Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism and to understand and avoid inadvertent forms of it that can occur by cutting and pasting quotations from various texts on the World Wide Web and elsewhere.* See UF’s Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>

**Reviewing exams.** Academic dishonesty is so pronounced that faculty need to take precautions to ensure the integrity of exam processes. For this reason, in some classes, exams or parts of them will not be returned, but students may review them during office hours. At the end of the semester, work that was available for student pickup will be available in the Religion Department office in Anderson 107 for 30 days after the official date that grades are posted by the registrar. After this time, they will be shredded & recycled.

### **Student Evaluations of this Course**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

**Courtesy to fellow students and instructors.** *Cell phones, laptops, and note taking:* Cell phones must be turned off during class. I strongly discourage the use of laptops in class because they tend to distract the user and their neighbors from what is transpiring in class. Those who feel they learn better when using a laptop should discuss this and get approval from course instructors. Students with approval to use laptops will sit in a designated place where they will be less distracting to other students. Be prepared to take written notes. Students are not to engage in disruptive behavior such as whispering during the class. *Communicating with instructors:* Your instructors pride themselves on being responsive to students and will usually respond within 48 hours. This is not always possible, however, and such rapidity should not be expected.

**Accommodation for Disabilities:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

## SCHEDULE

Note: All readings are to be completed before the class date/week under which they are listed. Readings average about 55 pages per week. *This schedule is subject to change: use the online version, which will reflect any changes, rather than printing it.*

### (Week 1; 21 & 23 August) ~ Cosmogony and Ethical Order

#### Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Selections from [Genesis 1-12](#) (which includes commentary from Professor Taylor).

Andrew Fiala's and Matt Wiebe's articles about '[Creation Myths in the Ancient World](#)' and the '[Creation Story in the Hebrew Bible](#).'

Daniel Quinn, [Animism: Humanities Original Worldview](#)

[Popular Culture](#) itself is defined in different ways so we begin by looking at a discussion of the term in Wikipedia, an online source that some would and others would not consider to be an expression of popular culture

William French, [Rousseau](#)

#### Presentations (by course instructors)

Lecture: Worldviews & Cosmovisions; Cosmogonies and Ethical Order (part I). The lecture will include excerpts from the motion picture *Noah* (2014); students are encouraged to enjoy the entire movie through a streaming service. Note: for those adding the course after it has begun, or for student review, here is Dr. Taylor's [Introductory Lecture](#).

*Note: Every week there will be opportunities for students to discuss and ask questions about assignments and class materials; there will also be opportunities for questions and discussions through online venues.*

### (Week 2; 28 & 30 August) ~ Competing Cosmogonies (Paganism focus)

#### Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Bron Taylor's [Overview of Daniel Quinn's Ishmael](#). This book was the inspiration for the motion picture "Instinct", and it precedes chronologically *The Story of B*

Lynn White Jr., [The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crises](#)

William French, [Francis of Assisi](#)

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B*, Bantam, 1997

View the the motion picture *Bambi* (1942), 79 minutes (Dr. Taylor will make available.)

#### Presentations

Lecture: Worldviews & Cosmovisions (part II).

Lecture: introduce St. Francis of Assisi & begin movie about him: *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* (1972) (1:53)

## **(Week 3; 4 & 6 September) ~ Battle of the Cosmogonies (Animism & Evolution focus)**

### **Assignments/Readings & Viewing**

Graham Harvey, [Contemporary Paganism](#)

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B*, Bantam, 1997 (the “Epilogue” & “Public Teachings appendices are optional.”)

### **Presentations**

Conclude Movie: Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1972) (1:53)

Lecture: Worldviews & Cosmovisions (part III), *Ishmael, The Story of B*, and the Revival of Animism, and some classical lenses for analyzing and explaining religion, including the Sacred/Profane binary.

## **(Week 4; 11 & 13 September) ~ Dark Green Nature Religions ~ and the Disney Empire**

### **Assignments/Readings & Viewing**

*Dark Green Religion*, Preface, Readers Guide and Introductory Chapter (ix-12), Chapter 2, Dark Green Religion (pp. 13-41)

Bron Taylor, “Ideology, spirituality, popular culture and the human domination of the world within the Disney Empire”

Movie: *The Wicker Man* (1993) [1:27] (watch this or next week, at your convenience)

### **Presentations**

Lecture: The Evolution of Disney’s Nature-Related Spirituality and Ideology; including video of Disney’s “Rivers of Life” at its Animal Kingdom Theme Park. This presentation draws on the “Disney Empire” reading, above, and includes video excerpts including from *Fantasia* (1940); *The Lion King* (1994); *Pocahontas* (1995) images & video from Disney Theme Parks.

## **(Week 5; 18 & 20 September) ~ Religion and Nature in North America; Paganism & New Age Spirituality**

### **Assignments/Readings & Viewing**

*Dark Green Religion* in North America (Ch 3., 42-70)

Jo Pearson and Sarah Pike, [Wicca](#)

Michael York, [New Age](#)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993) (read the first 50 pages)

### **Presentations**

Lecture: Paganism and New Age Nature Religions, includes discussion of and a few excerpts from the just-viewed *Wicker Man*, and excerpts from recommended film, *The Mists of Avalon* (2001)

Lecture: Lenses for Analysis (part II), including from *Nature Religion in America* by C. Albanese

**Prepare a proposal for your research paper idea  
this or next week and submit it for approval.**

**(Week 6; 25 & 27 September) ~ New Age Nature Spirituality**

**Assignments/Readings & Viewing**

Bron Taylor, [Celestine Prophecy](#)

Jose Arguelles, [Harmonic Convergence](#)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993) [read first 100 pages]

**Presentations**

Lecture: Lenses for Analysis (part III)

Documentaries (excerpts & discussion): In the Light of Reverence (2001) (segment on Wintu Mt. Shasta & Hopi/Four Corners); and I Am (2010, dir Tom Shadyac)

**September 27 is the deadline for submitting for approval  
of your research paper proposal.**

**(Week 7; 2 October, homecoming - no class 4 October) ~ Mid Term Week**

**Assignments/Readings & Viewing**

- Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy*, conclude reading
- Ernest Callenbach's, *Ecotopia*, read first

**Presentation**

Lecture: Green Utopianism & New Age Spiritualities

**Mid-term exam (in class this week)**  
(No responses to weekly readings due this week)

**(Week 8; 9 & 11 October) ~ Radical Environmental Nature Spirituality**

**Assignments/Readings & Viewing**

*Dark Green Religion*, Ch 4. Radical Environmentalism (71-102).

John Seed, [Re-Earthing](#)

Ernest Callenbach's, *Ecotopia*, read next

Movie (every student will watch one; we'll divide them so each one is well covered so be prepared to explain the film and its relevance to the course to your student-colleagues in class: FernGully; The Last Rainforest (1992), Hoot (2006); The East (2013).

**Presentations**

Lecture: the Art, Music, and Radical Environmental Nature Spirituality, including Daoism and Buddhism as tributaries, including movie excerpts from Butterfly (2000), If a Tree Falls, and [Pickaxe](#) (1999).

Lecture & discussion: students on the assigned films.

## **(Week 9; 16 & 18 October) ~ Surfing Spirituality and Outdoor Nature Spiritualities**

### **Assignments/Readings & Viewing**

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (conclude, if necessary)  
*Dark Green Religion*, Ch 5. Surfing Spirituality (103-126)

### **Presentations**

Surfing Spirituality lecture with images, music, and motion picture excerpts from Point Break (1991), Five Summer Stories (1972), Intentio (2012), and Whale Rider (2002) and Step into Liquid (2003)  
Mountaineering lecture with excerpts from In the Light of Reverence (2001); 1-26 & 1:12-1:15. (Lakota/Blackfeet/Rock Climber-‘Devil’s Tower segments); excerpts.

## **(Week 10; 23 & 25 October) ~ Pantheism and Gaian Naturalism**

### **Assignments/Readings & Viewing**

*Dark Green Religion*, Ch 6. Globalization with Predators & Moving Pictures (127-154)  
Jack Loeffler, [Edward Abbey](#), “Either everything is divine, or nothing is”  
Bernard Zaleha, [Pantheism in American Popular Culture](#) (82-101; the rest is optional)

### **Presentations**

Lecture on popular expression of evolutionary spiritualities & Gaian Naturalism, with excerpts from the two Cosmos series narrated by Carl Sagan (1980), Neil de Grassie Tyson (2014), and documentaries about or by Jane Goodall and David Attenborough. The lecture includes excerpts from [A Walk Through Time](#) (an online version of museum-like exhibition on cosmological and biological evolution produced by the Hewlett Packard company).  
Lecture with excerpts on the motion picture Stigmata and Christian Pantheism (1999, 98 minutes).

## **(Week 11; 30 October & 1 November) ~ Museums, Theme Parks, Photographic Art & Comic Books**

### **Assignments/Readings & Viewings**

Ch 7. Globalization in Arts, Sciences, and Letters (155-179)  
Get started on the Avatar readings (listed under week12):B. Taylor, Prologue: *Avatar* as Rorschach; and, Introduction: The Religion and Politics of *Avatar*  
Britt Istoft, *Avatar* Fandom, Environmentalism, and Nature Religion  
Movie: *Avatar* (2009) (Watch this or next week; there will be a collective viewing opportunity with popcorn after class this or next week.)

**Visit to UF Natural History and Art Museums (details to come)**

## Presentations

Lecture on Nature Spirituality at the Tourist Attractions, and Museums around the world, including the Hayden Planetarium and Natural History Museum in NY City, the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, and the Two Oceans Aquarium and Cradle of Humanity Museums in South Africa

Lecture on comic book and games with excerpts including from Captain Planet (1990) and the Last Airbender (2010)

**Recommended due date for Field Trip reports is by 11:59 3 November.  
More time is provided because some such experiences may be after this date.**

## (Week 12; 6 & 8 November) ~ Cultural Battle over Religion (and Nature) in Contact and Avatar

**The first draft of your research paper is due 6 November.**

**Note: it will be returned to you evaluated as indicated  
previously with suggestions no later than 20 November.**

**(No responses to weekly readings due this week)**

## Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Chapters from *Avatar and Nature Spirituality* (available gratis through Professor Taylor):

- Chris Klassen, Becoming the 'Noble Savage': Nature Religion and the 'Other' in Avatar
- Lisa H. Sideris, I See You: Interspecies Empathy and Avatar
- B. Taylor, Truth and Fiction in Avatar's Cosmogony and Nature Religion

Video online: Amazon Watch, [Defending the Rivers of the Amazon](#) with Sigourney Weaver (2010, 10:39); [Avatar: A Message from Pandora](#) (James Cameron on protecting the Amazon; optional, 20:00); and from indigenous rights websites: [Indigenous Environmental Network](#); [Amazon Watch](#)

## Presentations

Lecture: Avatar (2009) and indigenous peoples, nature, and popular culture: exploring changes from vilification to (sometimes romantic) vindication, with more popular culture exemplars, including excerpts from Dances with Wolves (1990).

## (Week 13; 13 & 15 November) ~ Religion, Nature and the Environmental Future

**The optional slide show, which goes with the research paper, must be turned in before class on 13 November. The draft research paper will be returned, evaluated and with comments and suggestions for improvement on or before 15 November.**

## Assignments/Readings and Research

Ch 8. Terrapolitan Earth Religion (aka Global, Civil Earth Religion) (180-199)

Ch 9. Conclusion: Dark Green Religion and the Planetary Future (200-222)

## Presentations

Lecture on Civil and Terrapolitan Earth Religion, from Abraham Lincoln to Robert Bellah and Daniel Deudney (H|N)

Lecture on the patriotism, environmentalism, and the consecration of The National Parks: America's Best Idea (2009), with excerpts from this PBS documentary series.

Many things are introduced during the 12 hour series on the National Parks that are not included in the assigned excerpts, so here is some important background to have in mind when viewing them, as well as a few things to think about while doing so:

- 1) The establishment of America's National Parks, in most cases, depended upon the violent subjugation and displacement of the indigenous populations already living there.
- 2) Their establishment would not have happened, or at least to the extent and within the specific time frames, were it not for both commercial interests (railroads and tourism, for example) and nationalism, including its ideology of 'manifest destiny.'
- 3) The Parks also include historical and cultural sites, and examples in many places in America including Florida.
- 4) Episode 2 has more historical information about John Muir's battle against the Hetch Hetchy dam in Yosemite National Park. Before the 1906 earthquake in California, which led to most of San Francisco being burnt to the ground, it looked as though he would win that battle, but afterward, the public switched to supporting it, being misled into believing that the water from it was needed to safeguard the city. Brokenhearted, Muir died soon afterward. But historians say for the most part his loss solidified the notion that National Parks should be off limits to commercial incursions.
- 5) Wallace Stegner is one of the countries greatest western writers. He is often quoted in the documentary but the excerpts shown do not introduce him.
- 6) Many of the cultural sites promote and reinforce patriotism and civil religion, which are in turn often linked to the exceptional natural landscapes and used to foster both we feeling and place feeling, and sometimes even superiority, over other people and places. Is a 'civil earth religion,' or a 'terrapolitan earth religion' expressed and promoted in the parks, or a narrower nationalistic civil religion, or neither?
- 7) Notice how different the reactions of people are to nature, that these reactions are at least some extent 'socially constructed', namely, a reflection of the preexisting cognitive and cultural frames people bring to the experience. This was seen in the history chapter in the *Dark Green Religion* book; What examples of it to you see in this film?
- 8) Notice how different the reactions of people are to nature, that these reactions are at least some extent 'socially constructed', namely, a reflection of the preexisting cognitive and cultural frames people bring to the experience. This was seen in the history chapter in the *Dark Green Religion* book; What examples of it to you see in this film? E.g., some people were and are horrified and by wild, sometimes geothermal nature, others find the

sublime in the continent's wild places, others find evidence for the grandeur and goodness of God.

- 9) In a section not excerpted, the National Park Ranger Sheldon Jacobs discussed how he had no connections with wild places growing up in Detroit, but was immediately moved and captured by them on his first visit to Yellowstone National Park. At the time of the filming he was an interpretive ranger in Yosemite National Park. A good question when considering his mystical experiences with the Bison in Yellowstone is whether for him, that was a socially constructed experience, or a more personal one grounded in an experience, and a felt relationship, with the beings and place where Bison still are allowed to live.
- 10) Are there examples of animistic or Gaian spiritualities depicted in, and even expressed by the filmmakers, in this documentary? If so, where/when?
- 11) What role did photographers and landscape painters play in expressing and promoting nature spirituality and the establishment and protection of National Parks?
- 12) What role did the nature writer Terry Tempest Williams play; and what if anything did it have to do with nature religion and environmental ethics?

### **(Week 14; 20 & 22 November) ~ Religion, Science and the Future of Religion and Nature**

**The final version of your research paper is due by 11:59 p.m. 1 December, no exceptions unless for a documented medical or family emergency. It will be evaluated and returned on or before 7 December 2019.**  
(No responses to weekly readings due this week)

#### **Assignments/Viewings**

No readings assigned this week. Complete revision of research papers and media presentations.  
Movie: The Fountain (2006, dir. Darren Aronofsky), 96 minutes

#### **Presentations**

Lecture: Darwinian Nature Spirituality, Evolutionary Ethics, and The future of Religion and Nature, including "Symphony of Science" music videos & Cosmos video excerpts; includes discussion and excerpts from The Fountain.

### **THANKSGIVING WEEK (no class)**

#### **Assignments/Viewing:**

Movie: Contact (1997); 2 hours, 21 minutes



**(Week 15; 4 December) (last day of class) ~ Nature's Call**

**Any previously un-submitted Field Trip reports are due by 5:00 p.m. 4 December**

**Assignments**

No readings assigned this week. Complete if necessary and review previous assignments in preparation for the Final Exam.

**Presentations**

Lecture (short) on Cosmology and Nature Spirituality; including discussion of Cosmos. Excerpts and discussion of the documentary, Call of Life, and of the course in general.

**FINAL EXAM: TWO HOURS**  
*(During finals week: time/place to be determined)*

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The rest of this syllabus provides guidelines for the fieldwork assignment and the research paper; followed by a more extensive bibliography of scholarly books and novels, and lists of documentaries, feature films, websites, and other exemplars of the entanglement of religion, nature and popular culture; followed by additional, recommended readings and other resources paralleling the weekly course schedule. These materials can be especially helpful to students when out comes to considering research topics. Links to yet more resources, such podcasts, music, slideshows, video, music, and websites, will be made available during the course. Students are encouraged to send to course instructors their own ideas for additional resources.

## FIELDWORK & RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

Both the fieldwork and research papers will focus on one or more aspects of popular culture, examining the ways in which it (or they) seek to evoke or reinforce spiritual perceptions and beliefs related to the environments that we inhabit. (These environments can be either what we normally consider to be natural and pristine or dramatically modified by our species.)

In both of these, use the theoretical lenses presented in the class to make *an argument* about the social phenomenon under investigation, or draw on other analytic perspectives you have learned elsewhere, or develop your own analytic approach as you make your argument. Build your argument on evidence you bring forward and consider carefully views and evidence contrary to your own perspective (if any such is extant); done well, considering competing points of view will make our argument stronger.

Fieldwork papers require no research other than the fieldwork experience itself; simply draw on the analytic tools provide during the course itself.

Research Papers will often if not usually also draw on scholarly articles or books that you find in the library that illuminate your subject matter. This is not absolutely necessary because there may not be scholarly resources for some things you may wish to focus with the kind of focus we are taking in this class. You may, therefore, be plunging into a completely novel area, using lenses learned in or beyond this class as heuristic (interpretive) devices.

Consider what the artists themselves are trying to convince you about, or evoke some emotion in you, or call you to some action. Alternatively, you may elect to focus on the audiences who experience these productions. Consider also whether the social phenomena in question are advancing not only a spiritual approach to nature but also a political ideology, namely, ideas, aims and assertions that constitute a socio-economic-political program. Doing so will also bring into focus the perspectives with which your subject matter is in contention. Good questions to ask include: What do the producers of what you are examining think is at stake? With whom are they in contention? Can their means of artistic expression be considered ‘technologies of the sacred’ and if so, how? If there is a view of where humanity went wrong spiritually and with regard to nature, what is it? And if they are explicitly or implicitly envisioning or advocating a certain kind of future (e.g., a utopian or ‘ecotopian hope), what would it be?

To decide on a research project it would be a good idea to carefully review the entire class schedule to see what is coming up, as well as the “Additional Resources” section at the end of this syllabus.

Hints: In some cases, the theoretical approach and arguments found in *Dark Green Religion* will be helpful as you work up your own paper. Do you find these arguments and the evidence mustered for them compelling? Does your own focus evidence such arguments? Or, does your research cast into question those findings? Alternatively or additionally, *Avatar and Nature Spirituality* might be helpful to you analytically because it exemplifies the sorts of analyses I am looking for in your own papers. You may, therefore, find it helpful to read ahead to find the range of issues it explores that may also be ripe for analysis in your own research.

You are by no means restricted to the many possibilities to be found in the syllabus but being familiar with it may trigger ideas about things you know about that would be fitting. I especially like learning about things I had no idea even existed!

Finally, do not assume that you must focus on social phenomena in popular culture that promotes environmental concern and action. Much of popular culture is indifferent to and a distraction from any environmentalist agenda, and some is in direct opposition to such an agenda, including due to religious, political, and moral beliefs that view environmentalist worldviews as religiously, politically, and ethically misguided or even dangerous.

The more innovative and creative your research paper is, the better argued and evidenced, the better your grade for it will be; the same applies to your slide show presentation if you elect to do one to complement your research paper. If your paper is exceptional, I may encourage you to develop it further in order to submit to a scholarly journal, including the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, which I edit.

## SCHOLARLY BOOKS AND ARTICLES

### \* most course relevant

- \* David Ingram, *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).
  - \* Adrian Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature* (WLU Press 2013) (N)
  - \* John C. Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (New York University Press, 2003) (N)
  - \* Jeffrey Kripal, *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- Verlyn Flieger, "Taking the Part of Trees: Eco-Conflict in Middle-Earth," in *J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-Earth*, (Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press, 2000. 147-58).

Lee Gilmore, *Theatre in a crowded fire: ritual and spirituality at Burning Man* (University of California Press, 2010)

Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000)

John May, ed, *New Image of Religious Film* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997).

Eric Mazur, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Film* (ABC-CLIO, 2011)

Margaret Miles, *Seeing and believing: religion and values in the movies* (Beacon: 1996).

Joel Martin & Conrad Ostwalt, eds, *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

Jolyon Mitchell and S. Brent Plate, eds., *The Religion and Film Reader* (Routledge, 2007).

S. Brent Plate, *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World* (2009).

Graham St. John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance* (Equinox Press, 2012). (engages trance and psychedelic, nature-related shamanism)

Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

Gregory J. Watkins, *Teaching Religion and Film* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

## NOVELS

Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood: A Novel* (Bloomsbury, 2009. London: Virago Press, 2010).

Dan Brown, *Origin* (New York: Doubleday 2017).

Robert A. Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (New York: Putnam, 1961).

Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (New York: Harper, 2012).

Michael Murphy, *Golf in the Kingdom* (New York: Viking, 1972).

Starhawk, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple: A Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

## DOCUMENTARIES

### *Nature-venerating (and/or conservationist)*

American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation (1999)	I Am (III) (2010), Tom Shadyac
Greenfire: Aldo Leopold (2011)	In the Light of Reverence (2001)
Journey of The Universe (2001)	RamDass Fierce Grace (2001)
The National Parks: America's Best Idea (2009f)	
The Sacred Balance (2002); based on David Suzuki's book by this title, narrated by him.	
Excerpts are sometimes available for free on youtube; if these links do not work, search for them or use a paid video service: <a href="#">part 1</a> ; <a href="#">part 2</a> ; <a href="#">part 3</a> ; <a href="#">part 4</a> ; <a href="#">Astronaut's View of Earth: Science and Spirituality</a> .	
The Vanishing Prairie (1954)	Thinking Like A Watershed (1998)
What the Bleep do we Know? (2011)	

## THEATRICAL MOTION PICTURES

### *Nature-venerating/mystical, pantheist, etc.*

American Beauty (1999)	Beasts of the Southern Wild (2012)
Evan Almighty (2007)	Fern Gully (1992)
Golfing in the Kingdom (2010)	On the Road (2012)
Tree of Life (2011)	The Fountain (2006)

### ***Pagan, Wiccan, Druidic***

The Secret of Kells (2009); animated  
The Mists of Avalon (2001) (links above)  
The Wicker Man (1973)  
Dancing at Lughnsana (1998)

### ***Animistic*** (many are available online)

[Dumbo](#) (1941)  
Bambi (1942)  
Fern Gully (1992)  
The Lion King (1994)  
Moana (2016)  
Pochahontas (1995)  
Spirited Away (2001)

### ***Nature Religion & Dark Green Religion***

Avatar (2009)  
Epic (2013)  
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002). Peter Jackson (Director).  
Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings. (2001) Peter Jackson (Director).  
Spirit Bear (2005)  
Grizzly Man (2005)

### ***New Science/New Age***

I Am (2011)  
Mindwalk (1990)  
The Butterfly Effect (2004)  
What the Bleep Do We Know? (2011)  
The Fountain (2006)

### ***Apocalyptic and Dystopian (cf. Ecotopian/Utopian, and also Apocalyptic and Dystopian, and Natural Disasters / Phenomena)***

Alive (1993)  
Planet of the Apes (2001)  
12 Monkeys (1995)  
Fight Club (1999)  
Hunger Games (2012)  
Left Behind: The Movie (2001), and sequels  
The Perfect Storm (2000)  
This is the End (2013)  
Twister (1996)  
Volcano (1997)  
Wall-E (2008); animated.

### ***Outdoor recreation & adventure (Surfing, climbing, fishing)***

Way of the Ocean (2011), 62 minutes, ‘explores the connection between man and sea through a visual feast of poetic motion’

Salmon Fishing in Yemen (2011)

Step into Liquid (2003)

Minds in the Water (2011)

### ***Science Fiction***

Dune (1984), also a book and 2000f TV series.

2001, A Space Odyssey (1968)

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

### ***Paranormal phenomena (including near death, reincarnation, extra-terrestrials, ghosts, etc).***

Afterlife (2011)

DMT: The Spirit Molecule (2010)

Signs (2002)

12 Monkeys (1995)

### ***Asian Nature Spiritualities***

Princess Mononoke (1997)

The Matrix (1999)

Star Wars (1977)

## **VIDEO GAMES, COMPUTER APPLICATIONS**

Captain Planet

Game of Thrones Companion

DMD (or [Shadows of the Damned](#))

## **COMIC BOOKS**

*Some are relevant*

## **PERFORMANCES & FESTIVALS**

Burning Man

Raves

Welcome Ceremony, World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)

## **THEME PARKS**

*Many are relevant: Disney, Bush Gardens, Sea World, etc.*

## **WEBSITES**

Professor Leslie Sponsel’s [spiritual ecology](#) website has many resources pertinent to this class and its projects.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS AND RESOURCES BY COURSE SCHEDULE

### (Week 1) ~ Cosmogony and Ethical Order

#### Assignments/Personal Viewing (recommended)

Excerpts on the sources and formation of the Hebrew Bible from [Zeitgeist the Movie](#) (view Part I, 13:21-40:10; more if you wish) [The Bible's Buried Secrets](#) (1:44)

### (Week 2) ~ Competing Cosmogonies (Paganism focus)

*Further / recommended reading:*

Recommended: [Lynn White biography](#) and article about the [Lynn White Thesis](#)

Robert Heinland, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1981)

Starhawk, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) (compare with Ecotopia; a motion picture is in the works).

*Recommended movies:* Dumbo (1941) (available widely online); The Color Purple (1985), 2 hours, 34 minutes.

### (Week 3) ~ Battle of the Cosmogonies (Animism & Evolution focus)

*Further / recommended reading:*

Graham Harvey, [Animism Today](#)

Dana Lyons, [Tree Music](#), and the related song, [The Tree mp3](#)

*Recommended movies:* Any of the Disney movies excerpted in class, many others are relevant as well, as are these documentaries: Disney True Life Adventures (1950s), The Vanishing Prairie (1954) excerpts; Oceans (DisneyNature) 'extra features interviews'; Gates of Heaven (1978, Dir. Errol Morris)

### (Week 4) ~ Dark Green Nature Religions

*Recommended movie:* The Mists of Avalon (2001); also strongly recommended are Fantasia (1940); The Lion King (1994); Pocahontas (1995)

### (Week 5) ~ Religion and Nature in North America; and New Age Spirituality

*Recommended readings:*

[Rachel Carson's nature religion](#), selected readings

John Muir, [Cedar Keys](#) (written from the Florida Gulf town by this name)

*Recommended viewings:*

RamDass | Fierce Grace (2001); Afterlife (2011) (promotes reincarnation based on supposedly scientific approach to near-death experiences). Note: the motion picture version of The Celestine Prophecy (2006) was a critical and commercial failure (for good reason), but it is interesting, nevertheless and you may find and watch it if you wish

### (Week 6) ~ New Age Nature Spirituality

*Recommended readings & viewings:*

Bron Taylor, [The Hundredth Monkey](#)

Movies: The Butterfly Effect (2004) and [Mindwalk](#) (1990)

Documentary: [What the Bleep Do We Know?](#) (2004).

Documentaries related to the Mayan calendar and the New Age interest in it:

“2012: Science or Superstition” (2009) [see especially the first 41 and last 15 minutes, which exemplifies New Age visions for an enlightened partnership society].

[Cracking the Maya Code](#) (Nova/PBS, 2008), 78 minutes [A far more scientific examination of the Mayan calendar and supposed prophecies.]

[The Mayan Word](#) (2012) online documentary, 64 minutes. [Provides contemporary Mayan perspectives about the end of the world, especially, that we are destroying our planet and need to work together to create a new beginning. Critically engages New Age views.]

## **(Week 7) ~ Mid Term Week**

## **(Week 8) ~ Radical Environmental Nature Spirituality**

*Recommended documentaries:*

Documentaries related to the Mayan calendar and the New Age interest in it:

If a Tree Falls (2011): about the Earth Liberation Front activist Daniel McGowan, who worked with Bill Rogers (Avalon), who is discussed in *DGR chapter 4*.

[Pickaxe](#) (1999): activist produced documentary

*Movies about resisting deforestation and species extinctions:*

FernGully; The Last Rainforest (1992), 76 minutes; Hoot (2006); The Big Trees (1952): The East (2013).

*Recommended readings*

Bron Taylor, [Resacralizing Earth: Environmental Paganism and the Restoration of Turtle Island](#), in *American Sacred Space* (1995), 97-151.

Bron Taylor, [Earthen Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?: Radical Environmentalism's Appropriation of Native American Spirituality](#), *Religion* 27(2):183-215, April 1997.

## **(Week 9) ~ Surfing Spirituality and other Outdoor Nature Spiritualities**

*Recommended readings:*

Optional, surfing-related, [supplemental materials](#).

Samuel Snyder, [Fly Fishing as Nature Religion](#)

Greg Johnson, [Rock Climbing](#)

Kocku von Stuckrad, [Mountaineering](#)

*Recommended movies & sounds*

Music and Video: See the [DGR surfing spirituality venue](#). There have been many websites that have dealt with surfing spirituality (some of which have disappeared since the first time this course was offered) *Recommended:* [video of Kelly Slater and Eddie Vetter](#). Search also for their conservation efforts at Trestles surf break in California; search also online for surf music.

[Point Break](#) (1991), [Golf in the Kingdom](#) (2010), *Minds in the Water* (2011), *Intentio* (2012), *Five Summer Stories* (1972), *Whale Rider* (2002), *Soul Surfer* [about a Christian surfer girl who loses her arm to a shark but keeps her faith] (2013). For a free website see [surf movies](#).

*Recommendations about fishy spirituality:*

*You tube videos about Bristol Bay, which UF Religion and Nature graduate Dr. Samuel Snyder is trying to defend* (4-5 minutes each).

· [Casting for Conservation in Bristol Bay](#) (and) [The Live Cast](#)



Blogs:

- Erin Block's [Mysteries Internal](#)
- Chris Hunt's [Eat More Brook Trout](#) (who recommended the film 'A Deliberate Life' which is available there).

Books:

- Books: David James Duncan, *River Why* (Snyder does not recommend the movie based on it); and Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It* (1976).

### **(Week 10) ~ Pantheism and Gaian Naturalism**

*Recommended readings:*

[Pantheism Net](#) of the World Pantheist Movement (see especially the [WPM Statement of Principles](#))

Movie: *Stigmata* (1999), 98 minutes (search online, available at several sites)

*Highly recommended documentaries*

[Cosmos: a spacetime odyssey](#) (2014) with Neil deGrasse Tyson, lead author co-written with Ann Druyan; and *Cosmos: A personal voyage* (1980) narrated by Carl Sagan, co-written with Ann Druyan & Steven Soter

*Recommended resources about David Attenborough*

[Sir David Attenborough - the story behind Life on Earth - BBC](#): Here, Naturalistic Animism is exemplified in Attenborough's famous encounter with Mountain Gorillas, during which he said, "There is more meaning and mutual understanding in exchanging a glance with a Gorilla than any animal I know. We're that similar. Their sight, their hearing, their sense of smell, are so similar to ours that we see the world as they do."

Yet, ecstatic experiences like this do not prevent him from seeing the violent side of nature and facing head on those who wish he would attribute it to a divine being: [Sir David Attenborough on nature, worms, predation, and those who believe in a beneficent God](#) (2.23)

David Attenborough [on Darwin and the Tree of Life](#) blames Genesis as the root cause of the despoliation of the earth. (See Christian [article in response](#))

[David Attenborough's favorite moments](#) (*recommended*, worth perusing)

[Symphony of Science music videos](#) (scroll down and, at least, view 'We're all connected' and 'The Unbroken Thread'), then look at the other music there, such as '[Holy Now](#) (new video at this link), and Tracy Chapman's music video, [Heaven's Here on Earth](#).

*Recommended movies:*

*American Beauty* (1999); *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012)

### **(Week 11) ~ Museums, Theme Parks, Photographic Art & Comic Books**

*Recommended documentary: Journey of the Universe (2001)*

### **(Week 12) ~ Cultural Battle over Religion (and Nature) in Contact and Avatar**

*Recommended readings:*

David Landis Barnhill, Spirituality and Resistance: Ursula Le Guin's *The Word for World is Forest* and the Film *Avatar*

Matthew Holtmeier, Post-Pandoran Depression or Na'vi Sympathy: *Avatar*, Affect, and Audience Reception

Rachelle K. Gould, Nicole M. Ardoin, and Jennifer Kamakanipakolonahē'okekai Hashimoto

Transposing the Conversation into Popular Idiom: The reaction to *Avatar* in Hawai'i  
Joy H. Greenberg, *Avatar and Artemis: Indigenous Narratives as Neo-Romantic Environmental Ethics*

Daniel Heath Justice, Afterword.

[Avatar and Nature Religion](#) from the DGR website

Alexander Zaitchik, [To get the gold, they will have to kill every one of us](#), Salon, 10 February 2013.

Martin Ball, [Why Psychedelics Make Avatar More Sophisticated](#) (no date)

*Recommended Movie*: *Dances with Wolves* (1990), 2 hours, 18 minutes.

### **(Week 13) ~ Religion, Nature and the Environmental Future**

*Recommended film*: *Spirit Bear* (2005)

### **(Week 14) ~ Religion, Science and the Future of Religion and Nature**

*Recommended film*: *Tree of Life* (2011)

Recommended YouTube documentary: [There's No Tomorrow](#) (2012) (produced with support from the [Post Carbon Institute](#)).

### **(Week 15) (last day of class)**