

The University of Toronto
ENV 333HF: Ecological Worldviews

Term: Fall 2016
Instructor: Prof. Stephen B. Scharper (Stephen.scharper@utoronto.ca)
Phone (416) 978-7433 (St. George Office)
Time: Thursdays 4 p.m.-6 p.m.
Room: LM 162

Office Hours: Room 2103, Earth Sciences, Thursdays, 3-3:30 p.m., and by appointment.

I want to emphasize my willingness to meet with students outside of class. Feel free to meet me before or after class time to arrange an appointment.

Course Description and Rationale

This course attempts to introduce students to both the scope and seriousness of present ecological concerns, as well as some core principles and concepts in the intersection of environment and culture, through the lens of worldviews. Scientists, policy makers, and activists have of late been frustrated with the long-term efficacy of their actions, and have begun to reflect on the underlying worldviews and core values of their work. Is the neoliberal economic model a “worldview,” for example? Is consumerism? This has led to a recrudescence of interest in religious worldviews as a source of environmental theory and practice.

Class lectures will be supplemented by audiovisuals, guest lectures and class discussions.

Course Texts

There are 2 required texts: 1) a photocopied reader. These readers are being produced by **The Copy Place, 720 Spadina Ave., Suite 103, Toronto, ON, M5S 2T9, 416-961-2679, copyplace@bellnet.ca**

2) Scharper, Stephen Bede. *For Earth's Sake: Toward a Compassionate Ecology*. Toronto: Novalis, 2013. This book will be available next week in the **University of Toronto Bookstore, 214 College St., (416) 640-7900.**

Recommended:

Berry, Thomas. *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Berry, Thomas. *The Great Work*. New York: Random House, 2000.

Boff, Leonardo and M. Hathaway. *The Tao of Liberation*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2009.

Brown, Peter G. and G. Garver. *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1962.

Foltz, Richard C., ed., *Worldviews, Religion and Environment: A Global Anthology*. Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth. 2003.

Gottlieb, R. *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Hallman, David G. *Spiritual Values for Earth Community*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000.

Hunter, Emily. *The Next Eco-Warriors: 20 Young Women and Men Who Are Saving the Planet*. Berkeley, Cal.: Conari Press, 2011.

Katz, E. *The Film Encyclopedia*. San Francisco: Harper, 1998.

McKibben, Bill. *Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age*. New York, Houghton-Mifflin, 2003.

Rockefeller, S. and J.C. Elder. *Spirit and Nature*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Scharper, Stephen. *Redeeming the Time: A Political Theology of the Environment*. New York: Continuum, 1998.

Hawken, Paul. *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and No One Saw It Coming*. New York: Viking, 2007.

Scharper, Stephen Bede and H. Cunningham. *The Green Bible*. New York: Lantern Books, 2002.

Wright, Ronald. *A Short History of Progress*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2004.

Course Requirements

a) Class attendance and participation and final quiz (10%)

It is essential for the success of this course that students attend class regularly and participate in class discussions. (All of us are part of this learning process!) Students are granted one unexcused absence; any further absences should be cleared with the instructor; if they are not, they will adversely affect a students' participation grade in class. **Also a final quiz will be given on the last day of class.**

b) 2 In-Class Tests (25% each). Two 1.5 hour in-class tests will be given to cover lectures, readings, and class discussions. **Test 1: Oct. 6; Test 2: Nov. 3.**

Make-up tests for those with valid university approved documentation will be held one week after the regularly scheduled test.

c) Major Assignment (40%)

There are 3 options for the major assignment, all due by 17 November.

Option #1: Book or Film Review

The review can be of any book or film dealing with the class theme subject to the approval of the instructor. The review will be 7-10 pages typed, double-spaced. In the review, at least three sources should be cited, and students can explore an environmental theme as it pertains to an ecological worldview in a film or book of their choice.

Option #2: Class Presentation

Students may wish to opt for a **class presentation** instead of a book or film review, but must inform the instructor of their choice to do so **by 20 October**. Up to three students may work together on any particular class presentation (a legitimate collaboration). Students will hand in a one-page summary of their thesis as well as their bibliography on the day of the presentation. If a group presents, students will submit these individually and include what part of the presentation each was responsible for.

Option #3: Journal

Students may wish, in lieu of a research paper or seminar, to prepare a written **journal reflection** with three parts.

Part 1: Reflection on a personal experience of nature or the wilderness and how it shaped your own worldview(s).

Part 2: An interview with an older person concerning his or her understanding of nature, changes in the environmental situation over this person's life and this person's ecological worldview.

Part 3: Reflection on two class readings which most clearly speak to your own ecological worldview and why.

Each part should be 3-5 pages typed, double-spaced. The entire journal should thus be no more than 15 pages.

Plagiarism, as you know, is an academic offense. For guidelines on this issue, please visit: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

Late assignments will not be accepted without university-approved documentation.

All written assignments are to be handed in on paper during class. Valid late assignments will be handed in directly to the instructor or the TA, again in paper format.

1: Introduction

Sep. 8:

Why a Course in Ecological Worldviews?

The Nature of "Eco-Crisis"

We will go over course requirements and goals and begin the semester by discussing the terms of the course and some dimensions of the so-called environmental crisis as well what is meant by “worldviews.”

2: The Modern Worldview

Sep. 15:

This week we will discuss notions of development and modernity as a worldview and its relationship to our current ecological situation.

Reading: F. Heylighen, C. Joslyn, and V. Turchin, “What Is a World View,” Course Packet (CP), Scharper, Foreword and Introduction, 11-21 and “The Ecological Crisis,” 47-56.

3: The Consumerist or “Economist” Worldview

Sep. 22:

This week we will explore the notion of consumerism as promulgated by global capitalism as a worldview.

Reading: David Loy, “The Religion of the Market,” CP, Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” CP, and Scharper, “Revered Billy’s Crusade against the ‘Shopocalypse,’” 30-32, and “The Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill: Would the Precautionary Principle Have Averted This Disaster?” 115-120.

4: Water

Sep 29:

Reading: Vasudha Narayanan, “Water, Wood, and Wisdom: Ecological Perspectives from the Hindu Traditions,” CP, Scharper, “Water as a Human Right, Not a Commodity,” *Toronto Star*: <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2016/09/05/water-is-a-human-right-not-a-mere-commodity.html>

Jordan Pearson, Abolish Bottled Water, Vice:

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2016/09/05/water-is-a-human-right-not-a-mere-commodity.html>

5: In-Class Test

Oct. 6: This week we will have our first test, which may be held in the Exam Centre. Details will be clarified in class.

6: The Universe

Oct. 13: This week we will investigate the new cosmology proffered by Thomas Berry, a Roman Catholic priest and cultural historian, and Brian Swimme, a gravitational mathematician, who co-wrote *The Universe Story*.

Reading: Thomas Berry, “The New Story”, CP., Scharper, “Green Dreams: Religious Cosmologies and Environmental Commitments, 35-40 and “The Rise of Nature Deficit Disorder,” 33-34.

7: Aboriginal Approaches to the Environment

Oct. 20: A look at aboriginal lifeways and worldviews.

Reading: Melissa Nelson, “Lighting the Sun of Our Future: How These Teachings Can Provide Illumination,” CP, John Mohawk, “A Positive Solitary View of Nature,” CP, Scharper, “O Ye of Little Eco-Faith,” 65-67.

8: Ecology and Liberation

Oct. 27: Linking ecology and social justice through a liberationist paradigm.
Reading: Scharper, "Option for the Poor and Option for the Earth: Toward a Sustainable Solidarity," 154-171, and "Ecofeminism: From Patriarchy to Mutuality," 85-114, Murray Bookchin, "What Is Social Ecology?", CP, and Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier, "The Environmentalism of the Poor," CP.

10: In-Class Test

Nov. 3: **In-Class Test. Again, an announcement will be made regarding test location.**

9: Deep Ecology and Gaia: Biocentrism

Nov. 10:

Reading: Scharper, "The Gaia Theory," 68-82 and Warwick Fox, "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy for Our Times?" CP. James Lovelock, "Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth, (Oxford University Press, 1979, v ii-12.) CP.

11: The Natural City

Nov. 17: ***Major assignments due.**

Scharper, "From Community to Communion: The Natural City in Biotic and Cosmological Perspective, CP.

12: Rituals of the Life Cycle

Nov. 24:

Reading: Scharper, "From Corpse to Compost," and "The Bride Wore ... Green," 126-134 and "On Sacrifice, Spirituality, and Silver Linings," 172-174.

13. From Anthropocentrism to Anthropoharmonism

Dec. 1:

Reading: Scharper, "Conclusion: From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Liberation: Toward an Anthropoharmonic Ethic," 180-199.

Final wrap-up, final quiz and party: B.Y.O.E.F.F (Bring Your Own Eco-Friendly Foods).