



Nature Religion

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Welcome to the course!

This is an introductory survey of religious traditions that locate sacred realities in the natural world, and of ecological traditions that attribute spiritual significance to nature.

The term "nature religion" is an interpretive construct that guides our exploration of various movements and expressions emphasizing convergences of the ecological and the spiritual.

Assigned readings are drawn from key texts in the fields of religious studies and environmental studies.

Class discussions are supplemented by audiovisual materials, guest speakers, campus events, and web-based assignments.

Course grades are based on class participation and two examinations.

Students have the opportunity to gain a basic understanding of the relationship between religion and nature and to develop their critical skills for use in educational, professional, and personal settings.

Follow the links above, at left, or below for more information about the course.



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Required Textbooks

The course textbooks can be purchased at the [Illini Union Bookstore](#):

Catherine L. Albanese, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Graham Harvey, *Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth* (New York University Press, 2000 [1997]).

Lloyd Burton, *Worship and Wilderness: Culture, Religion, and Law in Public Lands Management* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).

Mary Midgley (ed.), *Earthy Realism: The Meaning of Gaia* (Imprint Academic, 2007).

These books are also available from the Reserves Desk at the Undergraduate Library.

You can find a bibliography of recommended readings listed on the Nature Religion page of **the indigenous ecologies project**.



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Course Schedule

January 19	Introductions
January 21	<i>Nature Religion in America</i> ; Introduction
January 26	Native Ground
January 28	Republican Nature
February 2	Wildness and the Passing Show; Physical Religion
February 4	Recapitulating Pieties; Epilogue
February 9	Intermission
February 11	<i>Contemporary Paganism</i> ; Celebrating the Seasons
February 16	Druidry; The Craft of Witches; Heathens
February 18	Goddess Spirituality; Magic
February 23	Shamanism; Ecology; Earth Mysteries
February 25	Gods and Hedgehogs in the Greenwood; History, Sources and Influences
March 2	Rites of Passage; Paganism and Other Religions
March 4	Sabbatical
March 9	FIRST EXAM
March 11	<i>Worship and Wilderness</i> ; Full Circle
March 16	Contemplation and Connection; Nature as Haven, Nature as Hades
March 18	Culture and Justice; Of Walls and Windows
March 23	SPRING BREAK
March 25	
March 30	Rising to Heaven or Risen from Hell?; Other Spaces, Other Cases
April 1	Birthing the Woolly Cow
April 6	Conservation and Cultural Renewal; Pacific Rim Variations
April 8	Coming Home; The National Commons as Sacred Space
April 13	Intermission

April 15 ***Earthy Realism***; Introduction

April 20 Pluralism; Holistic Science; Animate Earth; Gaia's Law; Can We Get There from Here?

April 22 Human-Caused Climate Change; Micro-Organisms; The Gaia Effect; Can Gaia Forgive Us?
Earth Day

April 27 The Human Psyche; Spiritual Transformation; Reconnecting; Imagining Gaia; The Sacred Feminine

April 29 **Conclusions**

May 4 **SECOND EXAM**



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Grading Criteria

All course work is governed by the [Student Code](#)—please make sure you understand your rights and responsibilities as an Illinois student, especially the policy on [Academic Integrity](#) (including the [Definitions](#) of, and [Penalties](#) for, [Infractions of Academic Integrity](#)).

Each course assignment is evaluated according to the [Grading System](#). Special circumstances are handled in accordance with the [Policy for the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#).

Course grades are determined according to the following schedule:

First Exam (33%) — Tuesday, March 9

Second Exam (33%) — Tuesday, May 4

Class Participation (33%) — 29 class meetings

In the event that you are unable to attend a class meeting, you can receive **PARTIAL CREDIT** by submitting a written response to the assigned readings within one week. Exceptions will be made only for the excused absences specified in paragraphs (c) and (d) of section 1-501 of the policy on [Class Attendance](#), in which case you can receive **FULL CREDIT** by submitting supporting documentation along with a written response to the assigned readings within one week.