

# Nature, Spirituality & Popular Culture

## The University of Florida

### COURSE NUMBER, TIME & PLACE

Interdisciplinary Studies: IDS 2935 (This course will be entirely online.)

### INSTRUCTORS

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### 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, New Age devotees, 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 trends 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 Humanities (H), International (N) and Quest 1 "Nature and Culture" theme. It also meets the University Writing Requirement (2000 words).

*Pages 2-5 explain 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 proenvironmental 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.
Clarity & 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.'
Critical Thinking & 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.
Expression & 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 writing 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.
Reflection	Good reflexivity makes connections and provides insights that demonstrates connections with one's intellectual, personal, and professional growth.	Unsatisfactory writing is unreflective and does not demonstrate that the student is gaining the kind of insights that lead to personal growth
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 good and socially just ecological and social systems?

## 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 participation in course discussions, students will 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
- 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
- explain how social contexts and processes of socialization shape nature-related worldviews, beliefs, values, and practices
- 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.
- 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.

## PRIVACY

Class discussions are for enrolled students in this class and are not to be shared outside of class. This said, students cannot expect that comments made during this class will remain private.

## READINGS

The required books are either available for free from UF's library or can be found inexpensively from online or purchased from 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). A digital copy of this book is available on reserve at UF's library. Also available at the books website are 'dark green' [nature-venerating video](#) and [nature-venerating music](#), and other [supplementary materials](#).

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. Students will need access to streaming services such as Netflix to view some of the video resources. *Students must see required films no later than they are assigned.*

### Discussion & Quizzes

Nearly every week there will be discussion sessions and quizzes. Students must participate in assigned discussions between Wednesdays and Saturdays and complete assigned quizzes by Sunday at 11:59 p.m., which is when that module ends. Only the highest ten scores from the quizzes will count toward the 100 points possible for this assignment. The regularity and quality of discussion participation will be evaluated by the instructors at the end of the term.

### Field Trips (fieldwork / experiential research)

Students will participate in at least one, course-relevant cultural production in Gainesville or the wider region (or virtually if this is not possible), and subsequently, write up an analysis of the course-relevant themes encountered and discuss their findings during class with student colleagues and course instructors. For due dates see the "Schedule" section and for more information see "Fieldwork & Research Paper Guidelines" (pages 19 & 20).

### 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. Slideshows will be prepared with PowerPoint, Keynote, or other slideshow presentation programs. For more information see the section "Fieldwork & Research Paper Guidelines" (pages 19 & 20).

**Discussions.** There will be ample opportunities for students to express confusions and ask questions about all course materials and presentations via the discussion features provided in 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
Regular Quizzes (10%) (10 each, 75 total)	7.5%
Participation in Discussions (75 points)	7.5%
Fieldwork Research (5%) (50 points)	5%
Research Paper (200 points; up to 240 if optional slide show also provided.)	20%
Midterm (250 points)	25%
Final (350 points)	35%

### Evaluation of Contributions to Discussions

Participation in discussions is essential to student learning and enhancing the experience in the class by connecting students personally to one another as well as their instructors. Responses to

each discussion question can be usually be provided succinctly, in one to three sentences. Students are also expected to provide feedback, to respond, to what their colleagues and instructors say during the discussion sections. Student contributions to discussions will be evaluated on a scale of 1-5, every week that discussions questions are posed. Excellent contributions will receive 5 points, good contributions 4 points, fair contributions 3 points, and insufficient contributions will receive 1 or 0 points.

Most weeks there will be 6-8 questions posed. Excellent performance will involve providing well written and accurate responses to two or more of these questions, and in cases where others have answered well, responding to them in agreement, and if possible, adding one's own insights.

*Excellent* contributions will also, often, involve making specific references to relevant course materials, and they may also include unique insights. In short, as much as can be approximated with online discussions, excellent responses will actively engage the questions in the way a lively and collegial conversation would take place in person. This can include agreements, disagreements, adding additional perspectives and relevant facts. *Good* contributions will involve much of the same but some occasional misapprehensions and writing flaws. *Fair* contributions will involve less engagement, fewer direct references learning materials and/or inaccurate statements about them (indicating that the student is not studying courses materials in the depth, and with the effectiveness, needed). Fair contributions may also suffer from less lucid and grammatically correct writing. *Insufficient* contributions will be judged when engagement is low or absent and when extant, indicates that the student is not engaging the courses learning materials.

In summary: the more lively one's participation the more one will learn during discussions and contribute to the learning of others. As importantly, the more one participates in discussions the better one will soon the quizzes that flow directly from the questions engaged in them.

### **Evaluation of Written Research 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 by this 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.

### **Attendance, 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 UF authorized excuses, 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 emergency immediately prior to the exam. Any makeup exams will take place during finals week. For further information about what constitutes acceptable absences or late assignments, see [UF's Attendance Policies](#).

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the [Student Honor Code](#), will be subject to other disciplinary measures. *Students should*

*know what constitutes plagiarism and avoid inadvertent forms of it that can occur, as for example, by cutting and pasting quotations from various digital texts and failing to put them in quotation marks with appropriate crediting of the source.*

### **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 and instructors all have much to learn and room for improvement. Your feedback on your courses is critical to their quality. Students will be notified when the window for providing feedback on the course opens, and will be able to do so under the GatorEvals link in the Canvas course menu or [here](#). After the end of the semester students can also review a [Summary of Student Evaluations](#).

### **Courtesy to fellow students and instructors**

One of the beautiful things about higher education, at its best, is the ability to wrestle with wildly diverse perspectives on critically important issues and ideas. Exchanges among all course participants should remain collegial, even when serious and emotionally-charged perspectives are being advanced and criticized.

### **Communicating with instructors**

Students should contact their instructors through the Canvas email link. 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. Plan ahead.

### **Accommodation for Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers who wish to learn about and possibly request special accommodations should begin by contacting the [Disability Resource Center](#). Students should discuss such needs within the first two weeks of the semester, and share any letter requesting accommodations, with Professor Taylor.

### **In-Class Recording**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

## Health & Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

## Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.

## SCHEDULE

Important notes:

- Complete all readings and review all recorded resources by 11:59 a.m. on the Wednesdays during the week of a given Module. Quizzes when assigned will be due by 11:59 p.m. on Sundays.
- Readings average about 55 pages per Module.
- *This schedule is subject to change: during the class, for the weekly assignments, use the online version, which will reflect any changes.* The syllabus here has additional information you will need, including about how many points are available per assignment and how exams are evaluated.

### **(Orientation Week; 8/16-22/2021) ~ Introducing the Course Goals and Instructor**

#### **Assignments**

View the Professor Taylor's welcome message, review the course goals, familiarize yourself with Canvas, our online course venue, and if possible, get started on the assignments Module One.

### **(Module 1; 8/23-29/2021) ~ The Quest for Knowledge & Introducing NSPC**

In broad terms, this course is about the quest for knowledge, so we begin by examining how knowledge is acquired, expressed, promoted, and ultimately integrated into the worldviews (aka cosmovisions) that provide people with meaning and guidance for the course of their lives. We also begin introducing the terminology - such as religion, spirituality, culture, and popular culture - that we will need to analyze the social phenomena that are the focus of this course.

#### **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](#)

#### **Lectures:**

-> Welcome to UF & 'The Great Quest'

-> Epistemological Humility & the Liberating Power of the Sociology of Knowledge

-> Course Framework & Key Terms

***Note: Every week there will be discussions and nearly most weeks, a short quiz, to evaluate learning during that week's module.***

## **(Module 2; 8/30-9/5/2021) ~ Abrahamic Cosmogonies**

### **Assignments/Readings & Viewing (before class)**

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 (begin reading)

Zeitgeist Documentary (excerpts to view)

Optional viewing: "[The Bible's Buried Secrets](#)" [1:46:31]

### **Presentations & discussions:**

-> Genesis & Abrahamic cosmogonies

-> Lynn White's thesis about religion and environmental behavior; Saint & Pope Francis

-> Motion Picture: Noah (2014), directed by Darren Aronofsky

## **(Module 3; 9/6-12/2021) ~ Animism & Pagan Cosmogonies ~ & two approaches to understanding religion**

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

Motion Picture: Bambi (1942), 79 minutes (link provided via canvas)

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B*, Bantam, 1997 (complete reading this novel; the "Epilogue" & "Public Teachings appendices are optional")

Graham Harvey, [Contemporary Paganism](#)

### **Presentations & discussions**

-> Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1972); prologue, motion picture, epilogue, and discussion.

-> Explanation of fieldwork-based and course research papers & deadlines.

## **(Module 4; 9/13-19/2021) ~ Analyzing 'religion'**

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

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

Movie: *The Wicker Man* (1993).

### **Presentations**

-> Two Analytic Approaches to Religion

-> Paganism & The Wicker Man

### **Introductory resources for motion picture the Mists of Avalon**

-> Audio recording on 'Camelot, the Arthurian Legends, & 'The Mists of Avalon'

-> Companion to the Mists of Avalon (document with plot and characters described)

\* Recommended: submit your research project proposal for approval this week.

### **(Module 5; 9/20-26/2021) ~ Types of Religion**

#### **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 & discussions:**

> Types of Religion: 'World Religions', Civil & Market Religions; New Religious Movements; New Age, Pagan, and Indigenous traditions.

-> "I AM" - documentary & discussion

\* Deadline for submitting your research proposal for approval is Sunday 26 September, at 11:59 p.m.

### **(Module 6; 9/27-10/3/2021) ~ Disney's Natures & the New Age**

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

Bron Taylor, "[Rebels against the Anthropocene? Ideology, Spirituality, Popular Culture, and Human Domination of the World within the Disney Empire](#)," JSRNC 2019

Bron Taylor, [Celestine Prophecy](#)

Jose Arguelles, [Harmonic Convergence](#)

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

#### **Presentations & discussions:**

-> Disney's Natures

-> Nature, Science & New Age Nature Spiritualities (in the Celestine Prophecy, and beyond)

-> New Age v. indigenous spiritualities & competing understandings of the sacred (featuring excerpts from "In the Light of Reverence: The Wintu & New Age on Mt. Shasta" [29:00].

#### **Presentations & discussions:**

-> "Hopi Four Corners / Black Mesa" [25:00]

-> "The Lion King" [1:29:00]

### **(Module 7; 10/4-10/2021) ~ Ecotopias & Dystopias (Midterm Week)**

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

- Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy*, conclude reading

- Ernest Callenbach's, *Ecotopia*, read first ½.

#### **Presentations & discussions:**

-> Utopias, Dystopias and Ecotopias

-> Last chance for pre-exam Q & A

## Mid-term exam this week

### (Module 8; 10/11-17/2021) ~ Pagan & Radical Environmentalism

#### Assignments/Readings & Viewing

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

Bron Taylor, [Animism, Tree Consciousness and the Religion of Life](#), the backstory to Richard Powers' Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Overstory*.

John Seed, [Re-Earthing](#)

Ernest Callenbach's, *Ecotopia*, read next ½.

“Earth First!” (60 minutes, 1990) [14:35]

“Earth Liberation Front” 60 minutes, 2001) [13:39]

Recommended Movies (available various ways with streaming services; extra credit for movie reviews): *The East* (2013) *FernGully* (1992); *The Last Rainforest* (1992), *Hoot* (2006), *Butterfly* (2000), *If a Tree Falls*, and [Pickaxe](#) (1999).

#### Presentations & discussions:

-> Midterm exam debriefing

-> View the final 22 minutes of ‘The East’ and discuss.

-> Radical Environmentalism and Nature Spirituality in novels and cinema.

### (Module 9; 10/18-24/2021) ~ Surfing Spirituality and Outdoor Nature Spiritualities

#### Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (conclude, if necessary)

*Dark Green Religion*, Ch 5. Surfing Spirituality (103-126)

Tina Grandinetti, [“Indigenous Surfing Rides High: The ocean is my totem,”](#) *The Guardian*.

Bron Taylor on [Surfing, Nature and Spirituality](#) [3:30]

[Decolonizing Surfing with Native Like Water | Sea of Change](#) [5:02]

#### Presentations & discussions:

-> Surfing into Spirituality lecture (with excerpts from *Point Break* (1991), *Five Summer Stories* (1972), *Whale Rider* (2002), *Step into Liquid* (2003), *Blue Horizon* (2004), and *Intentio* (2012).

-> Climbing Devil's Tower: Religious Ritual or Desecrating Act? Lecture with excerpts from “In the Light of Reverence”

-> Discussion of outdoor recreation & nature spiritualities

\* Recommended due date for Field Trip reports is by 11:59 p.m. on 31 October. (More time is possible because some such experiences may be after this date.)

### (Module 10; 10/25-31/2021) ~ Pantheism, Gaian Naturalism, & Dark Green Religion

### 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 & discussions:

-> Dark Green Spiritualities (Part 1): Painting, Photography, and Prose

-> Dark Green Spiritualities (Part 2): Museums, Aquariums & Science Performances

-> Pantheism in the movies and music (including discussion of Zaleha article), including excerpts and discussion of the motion picture *Stigmata* and the role of the Dead Sea scrolls in Christian Pantheism today.

-> Analysis of [A Walk Through Time](#) (an online version of museum-like exhibition on cosmological and biological evolution produced by the Hewlett Packard company).

### Video & Motion Picture

Michael Jackson, [Earth Song](#)

*Stigmata* (1999)

[Monterey Bay Aquarium Jelly Cam](#) (discussed in lecture)

The first draft of your research paper is due by 11:59 p.m. on 7 November.

Note: it will be returned to you, evaluated as indicated previously with suggestions, no later than 21 November.

## (Module 11; 11/1-7/2021) ~ Nature spirituality from pilgrimage to the future

### 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

Kari Sonde (2020). "[How 'Avatar: The Last Airbender' Became One of the Summer's Most](#)

[Popular Shows 15 Years After Its Debut](#), Movie: *Avatar* (2009) (Watch this or next week; there will be a collective viewing opportunity with popcorn after class this or next week.)

The optional slide show, which goes with the research paper, must be turned in by 11:59 p.m. on 13 November.

### Presentations & discussions:

-> Dark Green Spiritualities (Part 3): From Pilgrimage to the Future

-> Introduce and begin watching *Avatar* excerpts.

## (Module 12; 11/8-14/2021) ~ Avatar, Contact & Cultural Conflict over Religion & Nature in Motion Pictures

### 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 & discussions:**

-> Conclude Avatar excerpts.

-> discuss & debate the competing perspectives described in Avatar & Contact, and how they reflect competing views in society at large.

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).

## **(Module 13; 11/15-28/2021) - includes Thanksgiving week) ~ Civil Religion & Terrapolitan Earth Civilization**

### **Readings:**

\* *Dark Green Religion*, Ch 8, “Terrapolitan Earth Religion (180-99); ch 9 recommended now.

### **Presentations & discussions:**

-> Civil and Terrapolitan Earth Religion, from Abraham Lincoln to Robert Bellah and Daniel Deudney

-> Civil Religion and “America’s Best Idea” - the PBS documentary about our National Parks - and what it reveals about nature spirituality (and Nationalism) in America.

-> Patriotism, environmentalism, and the consecration of The National Parks: America’s Best Idea (2009), with excerpts from this PBS documentary series.

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

\* Motion Picture to watch: *Contact* (1997)

\* Documentary excerpts to watch: *The National Parks*

Important: 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 country's 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 a 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 do you see in this film? E.g., some people were and are horrified 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.
- 8) 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 enraptured by bison during 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.
- 9) Are there examples of animistic or Gaian spiritualities depicted in, and even expressed by the filmmakers, in this documentary? If so, where/when?
- 10) What role did photographers and landscape painters play in expressing and promoting nature spirituality and the establishment and protection of National Parks?
- 11) 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?

## **(Module 14; 11/29-12/8) ~ Popular Culture & the Future of Religion & Nature**

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

\* Motion Picture to watch: *The Fountain* (2006)

### **Readings**

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

## **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* (2006, dir. Darren Aronofsky), 96 minutes

**Any previously un-submitted Field Trip reports are due by 11:59 p.m. on 5 December**

**The revised Research Paper is due no later than 11:59 p.m. on 1 December — it will be returned by 8 December.**

**The only exceptions will be in the case of a documented medical or family emergency.**

**Any approved extra credit assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on 8 December.**

**FINAL EXAM: 16 DECEMBER, 10 A.M. TO NOON**

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

The rest of this syllabus provides resources and 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 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.

*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.

***Field Trips (fieldwork) analysis assignment.*** 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 Harn Art Museum has regular exhibitions that are often fitting (see <http://harn.ufl.edu/exhibitions/current>) and our Florida Museum of Natural History (see <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/>) provide many opportunities for such experiences as does the Planetarium at Santa Fe College (see <https://www.sfcollge.edu/planetarium/index>).

Many of the world's great museums, aquariums and planetariums provide virtual experiences. Due to the corona virus pandemic, some of these have enhanced what they offer or are providing such experiences for the first time. If local experiences are not available, or with the approval of instructors, for this field studies requirement students may analyze the virtual exhibitions at venues such as the American Visionary Art Museum (Baltimore), Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (Washington DC), Shedd Aquarium, Chicago, United States (Chicago), Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna (Italy), and the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City. At Google Arts and Culture there are many possibilities (see <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en&tab=pop>). Students can also submit for approval other

exhibitions they may wish to explore, and additional ideas will be shared during the course via canvas.

When writing up your analyses, in 1,000 to 1,500 words, do the following:

- provide detailed description of the venue or event. Consider saying something about the visitors and whether there is something about them that is worth analyzing.
- analyze what course-relevant beliefs and values the curators, and those whose work is being featured, are trying to convey. Reflect as well on whether you find the approach evocative and/or compelling.
- 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 an *argument*.

In short, do not just describe but *analyze* and make connections with the course material.

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

## 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).

Richard Powers, *The Overstory* (New York: Norton, 2018)

Kim Stanley Robinson, *Ministry of the Future* (Orbit, 2020)

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: [part 1](#); [part 2](#); [part 3](#); [part 4](#); [Astronaut's View of Earth: Science and Spirituality](#).

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, Busch Gardens, Sea World, etc.*

**WEBSITES**

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