

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Hartford Seminary
ET-631 FALL 2022
(Draft 2, March 11, 2022)

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I will be checking email daily on weekdays. Usually you can expect a reply from me within 24 hours if you send the email Mon-Thursday, and a reply on Monday if you email Fri-Sunday. I am usually available by phone 9-2 EST, but if you would like to speak with me for an extended time, it's best to make an appointment. I'm also available by text during normal business hours.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

People of faith have a moral obligation to bring their religious and spiritual resources to bear on the unprecedented challenges we face regarding the climate crisis and other environmental issues that threaten the well-being of our communities and planet. This course will equip students to utilize ethical, moral, and faith-based approaches to address 1) the climate crisis and 2) a local environmental issue in their community. In this course, we will discuss challenges and opportunities for communicating what we have learned about the climate crisis and local environmental issues with our houses of worship and/or faith communities. We will also reflect on the realities of grief and loss that come with our growing awareness about the ecological crises we face and what spiritual resources can sustain us for engaging these issues over time.

WHAT WILL WE ACCOMPLISH?

Course Objectives

- 1. Students will gain basic facility with moral and ethical frameworks to discuss and analyze environmental problems and suggest ways to discuss them in their faith communities.**
 - a. Applicable course assignments:
 - i. Class discussions
 - ii. Deliberative dialogue on Climate Choices
 - iii. Reflection papers
 - iv. "Who Is My Neighbor" project
- 2. Students will articulate how different ethical and religious frameworks can be utilized for analyzing environmental issues, noting how the addition of ecological thinking to ethics and religion forces a search for new answers to human dilemmas.**
 - a. Applicable course assignments:
 - i. Class discussions
 - ii. Deliberative dialogue on Climate Choices
 - iii. Reflection papers
 - iv. "Who Is My Neighbor" project
- 3. Students will articulate a reasoned position on the question of who or what is to be included in moral consideration in environmental issues.**
 - a. Applicable course assignments:
 - i. Class discussions
 - ii. Deliberative dialogue on Climate Choices
 - iii. Reflection papers
 - iv. "Who Is My Neighbor" project

4. **Students will analyze the intersections of the social, economic, ethical, and structural complexities of an environmental issue in their community informed by their ethical and religious commitments.**
 - a. Applicable course assignments:
 - i. Class discussions
 - ii. “Who Is My Neighbor” project

Note: This course will fulfill the following degree program requirements:

MAIRS Foundational Fields requirement, with the following outcome:

Examine the lived and historic theological or legal traditions within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, being able to explain how communities move from the text to structured beliefs and traditions, approaches, and doctrines within various communities.

MAC elective, with the following outcomes:

From the BCCI competencies: Organizational leadership: OL1, OL3, OL4, OL5

WHAT WILL WE READ?

There are three required books for this course:

Haidt, Jonathan, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Disagree About Religion and Politics*. New York: Vintage Books, 2012.

(This book will give us six moral frameworks for how people decide what is right and wrong – and help us understand why people often talk past each other on ethical issues.)

Schade, Leah D., and Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, ed. *Rooted and Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

(This is a collection of 21 essays by religious environmental activists from across multiple faiths. Their reflections will model multi-faith engagement and provide spiritual sustenance for this journey.)

Climate Choices: How Should We Meet the Challenges of a Warming Planet? National Issues Forums Institute, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-943028-03-0. Available for free download at

<https://www.nifi.org/en/catalog/product/climate-choices-how-should-we-meet-challenges-warming-planet-issue-guide>

(This is the issue guide we will use for our online deliberative dialogue about how to weigh the pros and cons of three different approaches to the climate crisis.)

There will also be selections from the following which will be available on Canvas:

Midgley, Mary. *The Essential Mary Midgley*, David Midgley, ed., Routledge, NY, 2005

Schade, Leah D. *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

There will also be additional resources assigned for the course. I will make these available as PDF files or links on Canvas.

METHOD OF TEACHING

The class will consist of readings, online lectures, discussion boards, experiential learning in the form of deliberative dialogue, the creation of a Powerpoint presentation for a local congregation, and reflection papers.

HOW TO NAVIGATE THROUGH THIS COURSE:

This course is organized by Modules. Each week is its own module, so start with Week 1 and do each item in sequence as it is set up in the module. Each week is a prerequisite for the following week.

EXPECTATIONS

Attendance and Participation

Because this is an asynchronous online class, there are no required in-person or online meetings. The normal weekly pattern will be a reading and/or lecture on Monday – Tuesday followed by discussion board Wednesday – Friday.

This class will be discussion-oriented because dialogue is a crucial part of religion and ethics. Not only is it important to ask questions if you do not understand something, but you will find that your own ideas become clearer when you attempt to articulate them in discussions. It is also an opportunity to receive feedback from your peers and the instructor about the coursework. As we engage in dialogue, it is important that we remain respectful of each other and encourage each other's participation.

Civility and Respect

Hartford Seminary is a community of inclusive excellence. We affirm the rights of all persons to a superior educational experience that is characterized by respect for and tolerance of others. As such, this class and all classes at Hartford are places where our core values of inclusiveness, civility, and appreciation of difference are affirmed.

MEASUREMENTS OF LEARNING AND ASSIGNMENTS DUE

Discussion boards (25%): Students are expected to complete the readings, view the lectures, and participate in the online discussion boards each week.

- *Discussion board expectations:* Your initial response to the professor's question should be about 300 words and must be posted on the first day that the discussion board opens.
 - *Every* initial post and reply to a comment **MUST** reference course material (lectures, readings, etc.). Full-blown notation is not required, but explicit reference is, including page numbers for texts.
 - ◆ *Response to Other Students' Comments:* In addition to your initial post, you must reply a minimum of two times to other students (50-100 words). These must be posted by midnight of the day the discussion board closes. Make sure you put your comments in the proper place so they are threaded correctly in the discussion. Only use the "Comment" box at the bottom of the thread if you want to reply to the initial post. If you want to reply to a reply, hit the link in that specific comment labeled "Reply to Comment." Make sure to stay on topic in discussion.
 - Do NOT add a comment that simply agrees with or praises a colleague's comment. This is not to avoid supporting one another but to minimize clutter in the discussion boards. *Every* reply to a comment should either take a different position than or expand upon the comment being replied to. Disagreement is not disrespectful. Play devil's advocate with each other if you have to in order to generate interesting conversation.
 - Adherence to proper writing mechanics is required in discussion boards. Remember – this is not Facebook. Spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, and coherent thought all count.

Deliberative Dialogue on Climate Choices (25%): All students will participate in an online deliberative dialogue on *Climate Choices* throughout the first half of the course. This will happen through the discussion boards in weeks 5—10.

Reflection papers (10%): We will be reading from essays in *Rooted and Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis* as we are processing through our feelings and emotions regarding the climate crisis. There will be five short reflection essays due in weeks 6—10.

“Who is my neighbor” project (Draft: 10%; Final: 30%): You will map the ecological, social, cultural, and political location of the house of worship which you attend on a regular basis in order to explore your congregation’s relationship to the community, ecological context, and a specific environmental problem you identify. The question, “Who is my neighbor?” posed to Jesus by the lawyer in Luke 10:29 and the parable of “The Good Samaritan” that follows (Luke 10:30-37) compels us to survey our landscapes to expand the concept of “neighbor” to those of our Earth-kin and those entities that connect to each other in a biotic, social, and spiritual way.

- a. Identify your house of worship and choose six of the suggestions in numbers 1 – 12 in Chapter 3 of Creation-Crisis Preaching, under “Part Two: Guiding questions and exercises in mapping our neighbors” and complete them. Use that information to do #13 – the “map.”
- b. Create a “map” of your findings in the form of a narrated Powerpoint presentation. In this presentation, identify a specific environmental issue that is a problem or concern for your community. Also indicate how your faith community might take steps to be involved in it. (Hint #1: for ideas of topics to address, see the list in Canvas.) The slides of the Powerpoint can take the form of an actual map with key features noted, a hand-drawn representation, photos or images, or some other kind of visual display of the “neighbors” surrounding your congregation. Any images should have accompanying text so that people will understand what they are looking at and can follow the progression of your presentation. (Hint #2 – See examples of previous students’ maps available in the course resource tab.)
- c. The video of your narrated Powerpoint should be about 10-15 minutes long with no less than 10 slides. (See Canvas for instructions on how to create a narrated Powerpoint and turn it into a video.) **Draft of narrated Powerpoint to be posted in discussion board by: Dec. 2.**
- d. In the discussion board during Week 14, the students and instructor will ask questions, give feedback, and offer suggestions for improving the map presentations.
- e. **The final version of the narrated Powerpoint, along with the script of your presentation, is due by Dec. 17. Students are strongly encouraged (but not required) to present their “Who Is My Neighbor” project in their congregations.**

NOTE for all students:

All assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. in your own time zone on the due date.

Late submissions will lose one half letter grade for every 24-hour period beyond the deadline. In other words, if you submit at 12:01 a.m., and you turn in an A assignment, it will automatically become an A-.

NOTE: All written work must be submitted as a Word document (.doc or .docx) unless otherwise noted. All written work must be double-spaced with 1-inch margins.

Title your file with your last name and then the name of the assignment like this:

- *Lastname.[nameofassignment]*

The top of the first page of each assignment must include the following:

- *Your name*
- *Name of the class*
- *Name of the assignment*
- *Date of submission*

GRADING

(Please note: A+’s and C-’s are not part of the grading system.)

A (95-100)	Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
A- (90-94)	Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
B+(87-89)	Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.
B (83-86)	Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
B-(80-82)	Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.
C+(77-79)	Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.
C (70-76)	Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.
F (below 70)	Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

Other Academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW

Attendance policy – For an online course, attendance is assessed through participation in weekly discussion boards. Failure to fully participate in discussion boards each week will result in points deducted from participation grade. As per the Student Handbook, 3 or more weeks without posts “without explanation or permission” will result in failure.

Inclusive language – Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another’s images of God.

Email Policy –The instructor will use the official Hartford Seminary student email address for all course communications. Students should check their hartsem.edu email account regularly.

Accommodations: If you have a physical, medical, psychological, or learning disability that is going to impact your participation or require accommodation, please contact the Student Services Coordinator. All requests for accommodation must come through the SSC office.

WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

Plagiarism: Plagiarism, the failure to give proper credit for the words and ideas of another person, whether published or unpublished, is strictly prohibited. All written material submitted by students must be their own original work; where the words and ideas of others are used they must be acknowledged. Additionally, if students receive editorial help with their writing they should also acknowledge it appropriately.

Credit will not be given for work containing plagiarism, and plagiarism can lead to failure of a course. Faculty will report all instances of plagiarism to the Academic Dean. The Academic Dean will then collect documented details of the case and advance any recommendations for further action to the Academic Policy Committee. Through this process the situation will be reviewed and any additional penalties that may be warranted (up to and including expulsion from the school) will be determined. For clarity as to what constitutes plagiarism, the following description is provided:

1. Word for word plagiarism: (a) the submission of another person’s work as one’s own; (b) the submission of a commercially prepared paper; (c) the submission of work from a source which is not acknowledged by

a footnote or other specific reference in the paper itself; (d) the submission of any part of another person's work without proper use of quotation marks.

2. Plagiarism by paraphrase: (a) mere re-arrangement of another person's works and phrases does not make them your own and also constitutes plagiarism; (b) paraphrasing another person's words, ideas, and information without acknowledging the original source from which you took them is also plagiarism. See Part II of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, (7th Edition, University of Chicago Press, 2007) for an explanation of the proper ways to acknowledge the work of others and to avoid plagiarism.

3. Reuse of your own work: Coursework submitted for credit in one course cannot be submitted for credit in another course. While technically not plagiarism, this type of infraction will be treated in the same manner as plagiarism and will be subject to the same penalties. If you are using small amounts of material from a previous submitted work, that work should be referenced appropriately. When a student is writing their final program requirement (paper, project or thesis) it may be appropriate, with their advisor's permission, to include portions of previously submitted materials if properly referenced.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEKS 1 AND 2 (Sept. 8-17): INTRODUCTIONS; THE CLIMATE CRISIS: WHERE WE ARE, WHAT'S AT STAKE

Discussion (Thurs, Sept. 8 – Mon., Sept. 12): Introduction of instructor and students.

- 1) List your name, how you wish us to address you, and your pronouns.
- 2) Tell us your faith tradition and the name and location of your house of worship. Tell us a bit about the congregation (number who attend worship, what the congregation is "known for," one thing you appreciate about them, and one thing that frustrates you or concerns you about the congregation).
- 3) Describe one place in nature in which you feel a sense of sacredness. What is this place like? What is it about this place that helps you connect to the sacred?

Read: "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability," Summary for Policymakers.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022. (See PDF in Canvas)

Discussion (Tues. Sept. 13 – Fri., Sept. 16): What most concerns you about the IPCC report? How much is your faith community talking about the impacts of the climate crisis? Why do you think they are talking (or not talking) about climate?

WEEK 3 (Sept. 18 - 24): FOUNDATIONS FOR UNDERSTAND MORALITY AND ETHICS – PART ONE

Read: Haidt, Part 1 (Chapters 1-4)

Read: Midgley – "Emotion, Emotiveness and Sentimentality" (available as PDF)

Lecture: Emotion, Emotiveness, and Sentimentality (see module in Canvas)

Discussion (Wed. – Fri.): What insights can we draw from Haidt that would impact the way we talk about ecological and environmental ethics? How does Midgely's philosophy enable our work for addressing environmental issues? In what ways do Haidt and Midgely complement each other? In what ways do they differ?

WEEK 4 (Sept. 25 – Oct. 1): FOUNDATIONS FOR UNDERSTAND MORALITY AND ETHICS – PART TWO

Read: Haidt, Part 2 (Chapters 5-8)

Discussion (Wed. - Fri.): Using Haidt's six moral frameworks (Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, Sanctity/Degradation, Liberty/Oppression), provide two different rankings:

- 1) From highest to lowest, list the frameworks you would use to frame your moral/ethical decision making when it comes to the climate crisis.
- 2) From highest to lowest, list the frameworks you think your faith/religious tradition would emphasize in guiding its adherents' moral/ethical decision making regarding the climate crisis.

Where do you see alignment between your moral frameworks and those of your faith/religious tradition? Where do you see differences? What tensions do you see that might be a challenge to overcome when wanting to talk to people in your congregation about the climate crisis?

Optional reading: Gottlieb, Roger S., ed. *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, 2nd Ed., ed. London: Routledge, 2004.

(This volume has essays from nearly all the world's religions about environmental issues. If you're looking for a resource to help you understand your faith tradition's position on environmental issues, there's probably one in here that will work for you.)

WEEK 5 (Oct. 2 - 8): DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE ON CLIMATE CHOICES

Read: *Rooted and Rising*, Forwards and Introduction (pp. xiii – xxxi)

Lecture: What is Deliberative Dialogue?

Read: *Climate Choices*, pp. 1-5

Discussion (Wed. – Fri.): Explain how the climate crisis has affected you, your community, your region, or people close to you. What are projections for how climate change will affect your area in the future? Share your feelings about all of this.

WEEK 6 (Oct. 9 - 15): DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE, OPTION 1: REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

Read: *Climate Choices*, pp. 6-10

Read: *Rooted and Rising*: Section Three (Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12)

Discussion (Wed. – Fri.): List one benefit and one drawback to Option 1 and explain your reasoning in a paragraph for each. (Note – do not repeat something someone else has already posted in the discussion.)

Due Oct. 15: Choose one of the Questions to Ponder from Chapter 12 in R&R and write a brief response (appr. 300 words).

WEEK 7 (Oct. 16-22): DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE, OPTION 2: PREPARE AND PROTECT COMMUNITIES

Read: *Climate Choices*, pp. 11-16

Read: *Rooted and Rising*: Section 1 (Chapter 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Discussion (Wed. - Fri.): List one benefit and one drawback to Option 2 and explain your reasoning in a paragraph for each. (Note – do not repeat something someone else has already posted in the discussion.)

Due Oct. 22: Choose one of the Questions to Ponder from Chapter 4 in R&R and write a brief response (appr. 300 words).

WEEK 8 (Oct. 23 - 29): DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE, OPTION 3: ACCELERATE INNOVATION

Read: *Climate Choices*, pp. 17-21

Read: *Rooted and Rising*: Section 2 (Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9)

Discussion (Wed - Fri.): List one benefit and one drawback to this option and explain your reasoning in a paragraph for each. (Note – do not repeat something someone else has already posted in the discussion.)

Due Oct. 29: Choose one of the Questions to Ponder from Chapter 9 in R&R and write a brief response (appr. 300 words).

WEEK 9 (Oct. 30 – Nov. 5): DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE, SHARED VALUES, COMMON GROUND

Read: *Rooted and Rising*, Section 4 (Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16)

Read: *Rooted and Rising*, Section 5 (Chapter 17, 18, 19 and 20)

Discussion (Wed. - Fri.): Review the discussion boards for Options 1, 2, and 3 in the *Climate Choices* dialogue. As you look at the benefits and drawbacks of each one, identify two values you see this group sharing in common. In other words, given our diverse backgrounds and experiences, and given the pros and cons of the different approaches to climate disruption, where do you see common ground among us?

Due Nov. 5: Choose one of the Questions to Ponder from either Chapter 16 or Chapter 20 in R&R and write a brief response (appr. 300 words).

WEEK 10 (Nov. 6 - 12): NEXT STEPS

Read: *Rooted and Rising*, Section 6 (Chapters 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25)

Read: *Rooted and Rising*, Section 7 (Chapter 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30)

Optional: Read: “What If We Stopped Pretending?” Jonathan Frazer, *New Yorker Magazine*, Sept. 8, 2019.

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/what-if-we-stopped-pretending>

Discussion: (Wed. - Fri.): Given the common ground we've discerned among us, and given the examples you've seen in *Rooted and Rising* of different responses to the climate crisis (for example, non-violent civil disobedience, scientific inquiry, community organizing, and liturgical responses, for example), what is your next step? What is one thing you can commit to do after you finish this course? Explain how you will hold yourself accountable for taking this step.

Due Nov. 12: Hope has been a prominent theme in *Rooted and Rising*. Some religious activists expressed very different thoughts ranging from loss of hope, to commitment to hope, to rethinking what hope means. Write a brief reflection on how you are thinking about hope in regards to the climate crisis (appr. 300 words; DMin appr. 500 words)

WEEK 11 (Nov. 13 - 19): WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? INTRODUCTION

Read: *Creation-Crisis Preaching*: "Who Is My Neighbor? Mapping a Preacher's Eco-Location" (available as pdf)

View: Lecture - Who is My Neighbor

Discussion (Wed. - Fri.): What is an environmental issue that is affecting the community in which your house of worship is located? Explain why you want to address this issue in your "Who Is My Neighbor" map.

WEEK 12 (Nov. 20 - 26): NO CLASS (Reading Week, Thanksgiving Break)

Work on "Who is My Neighbor" mapping exercise. Choose six of options 1—12 to complete during the break.

WEEK 13 (Nov. 27 – Dec. 5): WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? DRAFT OF PRESENTATION

Complete draft of your narrated Powerpoint for the "Who is My Neighbor" map

Due Dec. 2: In the discussion board, post video of "Who Is My Neighbor" project as a link on Youtube.

WEEK 14 (Dec. 4 - 10): DISCUSSION OF "WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR" PRESENTATIONS

Discussion (Mon. - Friday): Each student will be assigned to watch two of their peers' presentations. In your responses, analyze your peers' presentations utilizing the ethical, religious, and philosophical concepts we have learned in this class so far. Note the strengths of the presentation as well as suggestions for how it might be improved.

WEEKS 15 AND 16 (Dec. 11 - 23): WRAPPING UP

Discussion (Mon., Dec. 12 – Fri. Dec. 16): What are your take-aways from this course? What questions still remain for you? How do you think this course might shape your life and vocation going forward?

Due Dec. 19: Revised and final version of "Who Is My Neighbor" video along with script.

Fill out course evaluation by Dec. 23