

IPS 645: Eco-Justice: Environmental Issues and Human Ethics

Dr. Shannon Jung, Instructor

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Office hours by appointment: suggested: before or after class.

**Description:**

This course takes as its mandate a review of the theological positions on the way the environment is approached in Christian, especially Catholic, theology and ethics. It will begin with a general overview of the state of the environment. (Worldwatch volumes on **The State of the World** and **Vital Signs** are helpful.) It will ask how Protestant and Roman Catholic voices differ and coalesce on this moral issue. Then it will direct attention to the moral life and what sort of personal and public policies might make for a remediation of the fragile state of the world. Students will be urged to explore their own concerns and present the results of their research in class.

**Objectives:**

1. To consider the state of the planet that confronts us during this era.
2. To consider how and why it is that the state of the planet is a religious issue that we are called to address.
3. To frame the environmental crisis as a matter of faith and theology
4. To consider the moral ramifications of this issue from a Christian, and distinctively Catholic, perspective.

**Requirements:**

1. Attendance and participation in class. Classes will be conducted in a graduate seminar format, which means that students will engage in conversation and bring to the table matters that they don't understand or that have stimulated them. (33%)
2. A special research project of the student's choosing that raises an issue of eco-justice and environmental theology. Resulting in an 8-page tightly presented or argued paper to be presented to the class during the final two sessions. The paper should use our classroom discussions and reading and add at least 5 original sources. **DUE: July 20 (50%)**

Possible topics, for example:

Feminist Theology and Environmental Responsibility

Global Warming: An Instance of Injustice

How to Motivate Environmental Responsibility on the Basis of Christian Values.

A Distinctively Roman Catholic Approach to the Environment

The Connection Between Food and Environment  
Industrial Agriculture, Globalization, and the Environment  
Poverty and the Environment  
The Church's Stance Toward Eco-Justice

3. Reading the following materials. (17%)

Thomas Berry and Mary Evelyn Tucker, **Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community.**  
John Hart, **Sacramental Commons**  
Larry Rasmussen, **Earth Community, Earth Ethics**  
**Other materials of a shorter nature.**

**Tentative Outline**

July 9. Introductions.

A Case Study

July 10. Catholic Stance on the Environment

Required: Pope John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis A Common Responsibility," January 1, 1990. World Day of Peace.  
USCCB, **For I Was Hungry & You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farm Workers**, 2004.

Others

July 11. Environmental Facts

Required: Larry Rasmussen, Chapters 1-3.  
John Hart, Chapter 1.

July 12. What is the responsibility of the Christian? (Should the question even be framed this way?)

Relevant portions of Hart and Rasmussen

July 13. What makes an Eco-Justice perspective Catholic?

Thomas Berry and Mary Evelyn Tucker, **Evening Thoughts**, entire book.

July 16 – Why has the Church not seen Eco-justice concerns as central to the Gospel?  
Finish Rasmussen

July 17 – Why does John Hart adopt that term “sacramental commons” and is it helpful?  
Finish Hart

July 18 – What has feminist theology or liberation theology or postcolonial theology added to the earth ethic?  
Reading TBA

July 19—Student presentations.

July 20 – Student presentations.