

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Course Profile - Spring Term 2008

I/B/T(B/I/T; T/B/I)-400 The Future of Creation: Foundations for a Just and Sustainable World

Instructors: Professor Rhoads, Professor Woloschak, and guest lecturers

GOALS

To live faith in today's world, we need to face today's problems. This course will address the challenges that environmental degradation poses for the near future. We face numerous ecological crises: climate change, ozone loss, overuse of natural resources, loss of species/ecosystems, proliferation of waste, over-population, etc. These environmental problems have great human costs, especially upon the most vulnerable people in society and on the poorest nations. This course will prepare seminary students to offer informed leadership in response to ecological crisis. It seeks to inform students about science and to help them develop theological, ethical, and practical responses to environmental degradation.

OUTLINE AND CONTENT

The course will present scientific, biblical, and theological perspectives on ecology and human relationships with the earth and creation. Scientists will lecture on ecological systems and ecological threats, and will explain how human action contributes to environmental degradation. Biblical scholars and theologians will discuss how religious traditions inform how we think about our responsibilities to creation and how they might shape responses to environmental crisis. Community organizers will suggest strategies for community and parish-based action. Class discussions will prepare students to converse with and counsel parishioners on the problems of theodicy and ethics related to environmental issues.

ASSIGNMENTS

Required Reading:

Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet. Edited by David Rhoads. New York: Continuum, 2007.

Required Writing:

(1) Weekly journal entries reflecting on readings, lectures, etc. (2) A one- to five-page paper that reflects on the ecological science you have learned: what it tells us about God and humans; how we should live and why; who we humans are, and our place in the world. This is due halfway through the course, at the March 27 session. (3) A ten- to twelve-page essay assessing the pastoral and/or social implications of an environmental problem and developing a community/parish-based response. This is due at the last class session.

(The lectures are free and open to the public, so students will be interacting with a broad cross-section of the community during these lectures as well.)