**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS**

**PHIL 3665.001**

**EASTERN RELIGION AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Spring 2016 Dr. George James (James@unt.edu)

TuTh 12:30-1:50pm Office: EESAT (ENV) 225E

SAGE 356 (940)565-4791

Hours: TuTh 3:30-4:30pm and by appointment

**Scope and purpose of the Course**:

The purpose of this course is to examine critically the relationship that exists between religions of non-Western origin and the environment. The term “Eastern Religion” in the title of this course is inherently problematic. For one thing popular comparisons between "Eastern" and "Western" thought have unfortunately engendered many misconceptions concerning this subject matter. We often hear that Western religion is dualistic, while Eastern religion is "holistic," or that Western philosophy is “materialistic” while Eastern philosophy is "spiritual." The West is said to be rational, while the East is "intuitive." The problem with this kind of generalization is the assumption that all Eastern traditions represent a single and unitary “Eastern Wisdom.” In fact “Eastern traditions,” wherever it is that “the East” begins are not one but many, for too many to be covered within a course of one semester. For this reason we must specify the traditions we will explore. Our purpose then is to look specifically but briefly at Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Jainism, and then focus for the bulk of the semester upon the Hindu religious tradition.

Our purpose is to understand how members of different religious communities in Asia and especially in South Asia have conceptualized nature and the relationship between humans, the divine, and the natural world, and to articulate the limits and possibilities of employing religious discourse to address significant environmental issues.

**Requirements**:

Your coming to terms with the material of this course will require careful attention to reading assignments, thoughtful reflection upon the material, and full participation in class discussions and presentations. Because important background material *not available from your reading* will be given in classroom lectures, regular attendance is crucial to the successful completion of the course.

To receive a grade of “A” for the course you must complete a thoroughly researched, appropriately documented, clearly written research paper, and achieve an average grade of 90% on all exams for the course. Without the research paper the highest grade you can earn is a “B.” Research papers are intended to represent a significant research effort. They will not be the sort of assignment that can be completed overnight, or over a sleepless weekend. The topic for the paper should be chosen within the first six weeks of the course. If you wish to do a paper but cannot find a topic sufficiently specific for a research paper, your instructor can help. All topics must be discussed with your instructor and approved by your instructor before beginning. Specific dates will be given in the course of the semester for the completion of the various phases of the project: preliminary reading and research, completion of a tentative outline, completion of the first draft of the paper, and submission of the final draft complete with bibliography. The topic for the paper must pertain to the subject matter of the course. **Research papers must represent your own original work. Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" for the paper and the course, as well as disciplinary action by the appropriate university authorities.** As time permits, some of the papers will be presented to the class as a whole.

Besides the research paper there will be a quarter-term exam, a mid‑term, and a final exam. The quarter term, and the mid‑term exam will cover all material dealt with in the first half of the course. The final exam will cover material from the course in its entirety, but stress the topics covered in the last part of the course. These exams will contain both objective and subjective questions. In addition, small unannounced quizzes may be given at any time in the course of the semester. These will usually deal with the reading assignment of the week. Conscientious daily preparation for class is the best preparation for all exams.

**Grades**:

Grades will be based upon the quality of class participation, the quality of the research paper, and the results of quizzes and exams. The quarter-term exam and the mid‑term exam will count about equally towards the final grade for the course. Those two exams together, the research paper (if you choose to do one), and the final exam will count about equally, making up the greater part of the grade. But attendance, participation, and the results of unannounced quizzes will also count. These considerations can make the difference between letter grades when your final course grade is calculated, especially if the results of the quarter-term and mid-term, the research paper, and the final exam put you on the margin of a grade.

**Attendance Policy**:

Students are expected to be in attendance in class, every class session, unless prevented by accident or serious illness. While the instructor will not maintain records for every absence, attendance records are kept on the basis of occasional attendance checks. The result is that at the end of the semester the instructor does not have a record of absences, but an accurate record of students whose attendance is perfect or nearly perfect. A record of perfect or near perfect attendance will be considered in the calculation of final grades, and may be crucial when the result of other material puts you on the margin of a grade category. The presumption is that if all your absences are the result of serious injury or illness they will be rare, and your record of attendance will be nearly perfect. Please do not bother me with excuses.

**Policy on Absences from Exams**:

If you are absent from any major exams because of accident or serious illness, arrangements for a make-up exam will be made only on receipt of a letter or other notification from the appropriate medical authority. There are no make-up exams for unannounced quizzes.

**Policy on Papers Printed by Electronic Means**:

Your research paper for the course must be handed in on time. You are, of course, welcome to use a computer and electronic printer to produce the final copy of your paper. Nevertheless, it is your responsibility to see that the paper is submitted by the date and time required. And the paper must be submitted in hard copy. Any computer malfunction that may have caused a file to have been mysteriously lost is your responsibility alone.

**Policy on Grades of I (Incomplete)**:

A grade of I will be given for the course only in the case of extenuating circumstances such as accident or serious illness that make it impossible to complete all the requirements.

**Drop Policy**:

A student may drop the course with instructor's permission with a “W” until the last day allowed by the university to drop the course with instructor's permission. That day is Tuesday April 5, 2016 . The drop schedule is available on line at <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>

**Academic Dishonesty**:

An explanation of the university’s Academic Dishonesty policy is available at the following web site: http://www.vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm

**Americans with Disabilities Law and the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA)**:

The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

**Books**:

Books for this course are available at the University Store in the Student Union Building, at Voertman's, 1314 W. Hickory, and at other outlets close to the campus. They include:

Pankaj Jain, *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability,* (Burlington VT: Ashgate), 2011

David Haberman, *River of Love in an Age of Pollution: The Yamuna River of Northern India,* (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press), 2006.

George Alfred James, *Ecology is Permanent Economy: The Activism and Environmental Philosophy of Sunderlal Bahuguna* (Albany NY: SUNY Press), 2013.

**Approximate Schedule of Topics and Reading Assignments**:

Week of

Jan. 18 Introduction: Religion and Ecology, Lynn White Jr. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *Science*, Vol 155: 3767 (March 10, 1967) pp. 1203-1207

On Blackboard

25 Confucianism and Taoism: Principles and Practices, Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Ecological Themes in Taoism and Confucianism,” in *Worldviews and Ecology* (Orbis Books 1994) pp. 150-160; Tu Weiming, “The Ecological Turn in New Confucianism Humanism: Implications for China and the World,” in *Daedalus* Vol. 130: 4 (Fall 2001), pp 243-264; James Miller “Envisioning the Taoist Body in the Economy of Cosmic Power,” in *Daedalus* Vol. 130: 4 (Fall 2001), pp 265- 282. On Blackboard

Feb. 1 Buddhism and Jainism: Principles and Practices, Donald K. Swearer, “Principles and Poetry, Places and Stories: The Resources of Buddhist Ecology,” *Daedalus* Vol. 130: 4 (Fall 2001), pp 225-241; Brian Brown, “Towards and Buddhist Ecological Cosmology,” in *Worldviews and Ecology*, (Orbis Books 1994) pp. 124-137; Chris Chapple, “The Living Cosmos of Jainsim: A Traditional Science Grounded in Environmental Ethics,” in *Daedalus* Vol. 130: 4 (Fall 2001), pp 207- 224. On Blackboard

8 Hinduism: Principles and Practices, Vasudha Narayanan. “Water, Wood, and Wisdom: Ecological Perspectives from the Hindu Tradition,” in *Daedalus* Vol. 130: 4 (Fall 2001), pp 179-206; Larry Shinn, “The Inner Logic of Gandhian Ecology,” in *Hinduism and Ecology,* edited by Christopher Key Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker (Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 213-241. On Blackboard

15 Hinduism and Ecology: Pankaj Jain, *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability* (Ashgate: 2011), pp. 1-16

22 Pankaj Jain, *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities,* The Bishnmoi Community, pp. 51-77

29 Pankaj Jain, *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities*, Modern Organizations Adapting to Ecology, Dharma as Religious and Environmental Ethos, Conclusions, pp. 95-132.

March 7 David Haberman*, River of Love in an Age of Pollution: The Yamuna River of Northern India,* (University of California Press, 2006), The Mother of Life, pp. 1- 42.

14 SPRING BREAK

21 David Haberman*, River of Love in an Age of Pollution*, River of Death. pp. 43- 94.

28 David Haberman*, River of Love in an Age of Pollution,* Goddess of Love, pp. 95- 140. Kelly Alley, “Idioms of Degeneracy: Assessing Ganga’s Purity,” in *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*, edited by Lance Nelson (SUNY Press, 1998,) pp. 297-330.

Apr 4 David Haberman*, River of Love in an Age of Pollution,* Signs of Hope, A Matter of Balance pp. 141-195.

11 Hinduism, Ecology and Environmental Activism: George Alfred James, *Ecology*

*is Permanent Economy: The Activism and Environmental Philosophy of Sunderlal Bahuguna,* (SUNY Press, 2013) pp. 1-46.

18 The Chipko Movement: George Alfred James, *Ecology is Permanent Economy,* pp. 47-98

25 Non-Violent Resistance in the Gandhian Tradition: George Alfred James, *Ecology*

*is Permanent Economy,* pp. 99-148.

May 3 Conclusions, Environmental Protest, Religion, and Politics: George Alfred James, *Ecology is Permanent Economy,* pp. 171-225.