

## ENVS 160: Spirituality & Sustainability

### Our Vocations & Earth's Future

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[www.scu.edu/fevp](http://www.scu.edu/fevp), click on class title

**Spirituality** is (1) both how a person lives out his or her values (explicitly religious or otherwise) to find meaning; and (2) the academic study of how people and social groups express their religious experiences.

**Sustainability** means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. A complete definition must address issues of social equity and economic development as well as ecological indicators.



### Course description

The term “spirituality” has recently taken on remarkable prominence in American culture, but its varied use defies consistent definition. Spiritualities are rooted in religion and religious practice, but find specific expression in cultural and personal contexts. Spirituality may carry a deeply individualistic or even narcissistic meaning, or it may indicate the movement of one’s whole being toward a life of religious, social, and personal integrity. In the context of a Jesuit education, spirituality can be understood to responding to call, the needs others have for our gifts and talents, and for living a good life.

The term “sustainability” emerged during the 1980s to project a framework for addressing the scale and complexity of the ecological crises facing our planet. At a fundamental level, the term reminds us that we cannot continue depleting resources and generating hazardous wastes and greenhouse gasses indefinitely without serious consequences for future generations. The UN definition indicates that addressing our environmental crises requires the integration of social, economic, and ecological dimensions of sustainability. Environmental leaders have begun describing sustainability as an ecological and inter-generational definition of justice, and using the concept of “ecological footprints” as a way to make visible human impacts on the earth. A few visionary religious leaders propose a spiritual approach to sustainability as well, one based on global ethics and consciousness. Since this is also a religious studies course, we will look at the role of spirituality and consciousness in

cultural transformation. This course will invite you to consider your own consciousness, and to take seriously the spiritual practices we will examine.

This particular quarter we will address intensively the issue of global climate disruption. Prior courses have addressed sustainability issues in general, but this one will focus on the CO<sub>2</sub> cycle, climate disruption, and how we can make a difference. It will introduce the brand-new field of climate ethics. This course will tackle the “why” questions, such as: why should we consider future generations in our actions? Why should we re-think and re-design our energy economy?

This course uses the campus community as a part of its learning laboratory. We will learn about on-going campus initiatives, and participate in the intellectual life of the campus as it wrestles with sustainability and climate change issues.

### **Amy's dictum**

All students must abide by this dictum at all times in this class:

“If it's not fun, it's not sustainable.”

If you are experiencing difficulty with this component of the course, consult your instructor.

### **Student learning goals**

1. To understand the meanings of spirituality, key elements of spirituality, and recent currents in the study of spirituality.
2. To reflect on the formation of his or her own spirituality, and to consciously shape its trajectory, especially as a student at Santa Clara.
3. To articulate emerging elements of one's own vocation, and to gain some practical tools for discerning its meaning and key elements in light of global environmental disruption.
4. To understand the global sustainability crisis, and the key issues society must address to transition toward a more sustainable world.
5. To learn the salient implications of the crisis of global climate disruption: the Carbon cycle, the sources of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and other climate changing gasses, the range of projected effects, mitigation and adaptation strategies, and the character of scientific uncertainty.
6. To think critically about the Christian story and Buddhist practice in light of the sustainability crises.
7. To learn about the emerging field of climate ethics and the ways in which people are using ethics to urge political action on greenhouse gasses.

**Course evaluation (boldface are confirmed deadlines)**

10%	<b>Fri January 18</b>	The vocation of Julia Butterfly Hill reflection
10%	<b>Weds January 30</b>	<i>via positiva</i> reflection
10%	<b>Weds February 6</b>	Show <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> to 2+ friends, calculate their carbon footprint, and describe its impact
10%	<b>Mon February 11</b>	<i>via negativa</i> reflection
10%	February 20	Create or conduct a meditation activity in the spirit of <i>via transformativa</i>
10%	March 3	Write a lesson plan on virtue & climate change ethics for religious high school students
10%	March 10	Explain a major ethical implication of an anthropocentric climate disruption
15%	TBA	Presentation on your vocation in light of global climate disruption to friends and your reflection
5%	Extra-class participation	
10%	<u>In-class participation</u>	
100%	Total	

**Short description of assignments** (more info on Keith's webpage)

There are two general types of assignments for this course. One involves "going out" and the other "going in." You will be required to talk to other people outside of this class about its themes, and then write about that experience. You are also required to write about your own values and spirituality, although you are not required to share anything you do not want to.

1. Based on reading the "Legacy of Luna" and the first 4 chapters of "A Sacred Voice is Calling," describe the vocation of Julia Butterfly Hill and how she discerned it. Be sure to include a discussion of some similarities and differences between your vocation and hers. >1000 words.
2. Write 2 reflection essays (>800 words each). They should respond to "Questions for Reflection" in Uhl, and should demonstrate understanding of vocation as presented in *A Sacred Voice is Calling*. They should follow the themes of:
  - a. *via positiva* (either question on Uhl p. 97).
  - b. *via negativa* (either questions on Uhl p. 180 or 217)
3. Select one of the carbon calculators, linked on the class webpage. Then line up 2+ friends to show them *An Inconvenient Truth*, have them calculate their carbon footprint, and give you feedback on this. Then write up what you did, what the scores were, how your friends responded, and what kind of impact you think it had.
4. Create or conduct a meditation activity, linking *via transformativa* with either *Care for Creation* by Ilia, Keith & Pam or *The Engaged Spiritual Life*. Explain what you did and why, and if relevant, what impact you think it had.
5. Create a lesson plan on virtue & climate change ethics for religious high school students.
6. Write an explanation of a major ethical implication of anthropogenic climate disruption. Write this as a contribution to one of the religious environmental websites.
7. Create a presentation about the implications of global climate disruption for your vocation. This will involve an electronic slide show and a script. Show it to 2+ friends; include a reflection on this experience. See ESL 196-204, & 210.

## **Required Texts**

Hill, Julia Butterfly. 2000. *The Legacy of Luna*. San Francisco: Harper.

Neafsy, John. 2006. *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*. Orbis, New York

Rothberg, Donald. 2006. *The Engaged Spiritual Life: A Buddhist Approach to Transforming Ourselves and the World*. Beacon, Boston.

Uhl, Christopher. 2003. *Developing Ecological Consciousness: Path to a Sustainable World*. Rowman & Littlefield: New York.

A reader, including portions of a book I co-authored with Pam and Ilia: *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*

Several draft Environmental Ethics webpage essays, on my webpage.

## **Extra class participation**

This course requires you to participate in activities outside of class. These are designed to be fun. Several of the options are movies. If you do not find them to be fun, consult with your instructor. To receive 5% of the grade, attend five of the events, described in the syllabus in the reader.

## **Attendance policy**

You may miss two class meetings without penalty. Each subsequent class absence (starting with the third) will result in lost points for course participation.

## **Deadline extensions>late papers**

I routinely grant extensions of deadlines, if requested before the deadline. Late papers will be marked off. You choose.

## **Plagiarism Policy**

All students will perform their assignments honestly and assignments will be original work. Any plagiarism will result in immediate and appropriate disciplinary action not limited to failing the course and possible expulsion from the University (see "Student Handbook"). Some assignments will involve collaboration with a fellow student, which will require negotiation and equitable exercise of responsibilities. This too is a part of our collective learning experience. If you do not understand this policy please consult the instructor.

**Disability Accommodation Policy:** To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahnann Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

**Course reading assignments and topical outline** (parentheses = week number)

ASV=A Sacred Voice; ESL=Engaged Spiritual Life; R= Reader; EE=env ethics draft chapters on Keith's webpage; W=the web

	Reading for next class	Topics
	Jan 7	Introductions, the course and each other Defining sustainability, religion & spirituality, vocation, climate & energy
	9	Hill: Prologue, p. 1-62 ASV: Preface, ch 1 Listening to the Earth calling Defining problems of ultimate meaning as spirituality
	11	Hill: p. 63-134 ASV: ch 2, 3 Where did sustainability come from? Where do vocational calls come from?
	14 (2)	Hill: p135-250 ASV: ch 4 EE: "virtue ethics" Authenticity, vocation, virtue
	15	TUES 7 PM*** Gandhi (movie): Kennedy 109 at 7pm (alternate: Thurs Jan 17) Note: 3 hour movie!!
	<i>Via positiva</i>	16
18		Uhl Preface, 1 R: Our Changing Climate Climate change as a challenge, vocational call
w23 *w* (3)		Uhl 2, ESL forward, introduction R: Care for Creation, Intro W: any carbon calculator A living planet? Measuring footprints; assessing our fair earth share Religious engagement with social issues
25		Uhl 3 R: Care for Creation 1, 2 The role of ecology in sustainability Franciscan approaches
28 (4)		Uhl 4 R: Care for Creation 4, 5 Cultivating an intimacy with nature
30		R: Care for Creation <u>6</u> Family as metaphor Mediation as spiritual practice
<i>Via negativa</i>	Fb 1	Uhl 5, ESL 1 Listening to the Earth Ethical training
	4 (5)	Uhl 6 ASV: 7 R: Schneiders, Religion vs... Gazing at suffering Sorting out religion and spirituality

	6	ESL 2	It's much worse than you think Mindfulness
	8	Uhl 7	Living on a destabilized planet
	11 (6)	ESL 4 R: Pew 101	Open to suffering, open to compassion
<i>Via transformativa</i>	13	Uhl 8 R: Care for Creation <b>9</b> , <b>appendix A B</b>	<i>Metanoia</i> , transformation, conversion? New or old? The role of tradition
	15	R: Care for Creation <b>12</b>	Sustainability revolution
	20 *w* (7)	Uhl 9 R: Care for Creation, conclusion	Environmental ethics from Christian perspectives
	22	ESL 5	Self-care as spiritual practice
	25 (8)	Uhl 10 EE: Climate Ethics	A zero-waste world, designing with nature
Climate ethics	27	ASV 8 R: Rock EC, White Paper on Ethical Dimension, 1-28	Introducing ethics, environmental ethics, climate ethics
	29	ASV: 9 R: Rock EC, White Paper on Ethical Dimension, 29-38	Climate ethics and moral reasoning
	Mr3 (9)	R: Assisi Conference ESL 8	Inter-religious environmental ethics dialogue
	5	R: Earth Charter EE: science in env ethics	Global ethics
	7	W: IPCC	The UN IPCC, Bali Conference, what's next
	10 (10)	R: US Bishops on CC ESL 9	Catholic moral thought
	12	ESL 10	Developing a vision for our vocation
	14	R: Pew, Highlights from ...	
20	<i>Final project due</i>		