 Daoism and the Environment
Religious Studies 3350/ASIA 3350

Instructor: Pamela Herron
Semester: Spring 2017
Day & Time: MW 4:30 – 5:50 p.m.
January through May 2017
CRN: RS 3350 – 24226/ASIA 3350 – 27959
Classroom: LART 210
Credits: 3
Office: Hudspeth 209
Office Hrs: MW 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. and by appointment.
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Texts:
 Daodejing: Making this life significant - Roger T. Ames, David L. Hall.  
Sisters of the Earth. Editor - Lorraine Anderson.  
The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering our Place in Nature. David Suzuki  
The Sacred Earth: Writers on Nature and Spirit. Editor – John Gardner. * Please note this is only available as an e-text or to be ordered used online from a used bookseller.  
Sustainability: A Bedford Spotlight Reader. Editor Christian Weisser
Additional texts and/or articles may be required reading. Assigned films/clips shown in class are considered part of required material.
Recommended texts, not required:  
Silent Spring – Rachel Carson; A Sand County Almanac – Aldo Leopold.
You will choose an environmental writer to research in addition to the required texts.

Purpose: Classic Chinese texts emphasize working toward a harmony with nature without the assumption of man set above plants, animals, mountains, water and other aspects of nature; rather man is a part of this greater whole. This course uses the Daodejing as the central text and includes a variety of more modern environmental texts including essays, poetry, and non-fiction which explore the natural world, sustainability, and the human connection and influence. This course challenges the view of man’s superiority or dominion over nature and explores specific references in the assigned texts which reinforce the idea of man being simply part of the natural world. What is the possible influence or impact on contemporary sustainable environmentally responsible attitudes of Chinese or Eastern philosophical thinking, compared with writings of traditional nature/environmental writers, or the beliefs, poetry and traditions of Native American/First Peoples culture? Are ancient and modern concepts of interconnectedness and sustainability relevant to environmentalists, ecocritics, and the general public today? This course requires students to interpret and respond to these concepts within a variety of texts, both Eastern and Western, which present relationships between man and nature, man and woman, humans and their governments; and their significance in today’s culture and society.

Procedure: Students will examine, understand and analyze aspects of various environmental texts including utilizing translations of the classical text Daodejing and commentary as a focus text. Students will understand and analyze these various texts with consideration of their application to contemporary issues. Students will examine and analyze relationships and interdependency of humans and the natural world and their influence and impact on one another. Students will independently read and research an environmental writer of their choice subject to the approval of the instructor and present their findings to the class. This writing intensive course requires students to read and analyze a variety of written texts, maintain a nature journal throughout the course, engage in eco-criticism of both individual works and comparative analysis, and communicate their ideas and discoveries both orally and written form.

The course will focus on the assigned texts and may include other assigned articles, films, or material. These texts serve as the springboard for individual, small group, and whole class discussion and analysis. Students are also expected to read and analyze all assignments with a focus on examining how these texts and principles might be relevant in contemporary society. Please read all assignments thoroughly and carefully, so that others can learn from your interpretations and you can learn from the interpretations of others through class discourse. Students may also be asked to attend talks or events outside regular class time.

Learning Goals and Outcomes
With full participation, after completing this course, students should be able to:
• Demonstrate basic familiarity with foundation and texts of environmentalism/sustainability including the Daodejing.
• Appreciate the relevance of these texts to today’s society.
• Analyze the positive and negative aspects of economic development, consumerism, progress, agricultural practices, and the identification and understanding of impact on society based on social class, gender, race, and sexual orientation.
• Evaluate and compare individual passages of the texts and apply them to contemporary society.
• Better understand differences and similarities of Eastern and western cultures and people from those cultures in a way that is respectful and promotes mutual understanding.

With full participation, after completing this course, students will have improved their skills in:
• Reading – Students will become critical and careful readers of both primary and secondary source material and learn to synthesize what they are reading by responding to it in writing and in class discussion. Liberal Arts Honors Criteria #2 Advanced Readings
• Writing – Students will write reflective response papers, both in class and online, and will learn to develop and support an argument through their writing and incorporate the arguments and thoughts of others. Liberal Arts Honors Criteria #3 Intensive Writing and #4 Intensive Research
• Critical thinking – Students will be asked to critically evaluate texts, the perspectives articulated in those texts, and the assumptions underlying the arguments being made. Students should become comfortable with differences of opinion and confident in expressing their own point of view. Liberal Arts Honors Criteria #9 Critical Thinking
• Campus and community engagement – Students will be encouraged to participate in campus and community events related to the subject being studied. Students will be encouraged to participate in events organized by Religious Studies and its affiliated student organizations. Liberal Arts Honors Criteria #6 Campus Resources and #7 Community Based Experiences
• Lifelong learning – Students should feel motivated and confident in seeking out new and unfamiliar cultural experiences with the goal of learning more about themselves and their world.

Grading Scale: A = 450-500 points; B = 374-449 points; C = 273-373 points, D = 172-272 points; F = 171 points and below

Assignments: Please note assignments may be altered depending on class pace and needs.
• Short paper on your environmental views due first week (25 pts.).
• Students will keep a nature journal throughout the semester with regular entries weekly. (100 pts.) Examples will be provided but students are encouraged to explore various techniques and create their own unique journal. Journal will include but is not limited to: nature observation, writings modeled on assigned texts, visits to natural areas, regular observations and notes which focus on one particular area easily accessible to your home.
• Your notes and short reflective papers on each of the texts due the same evening the text is to be discussed in class. (4 papers approx. 1000-1250 words accompanied by interactive Blackboard discussion at 50 pts. each for a total of 200 pts.) Your notes, word count and bibliography must be included in each paper. Papers are not a summary of the readings! Use your critical thinking to explore an issue or idea and expand. BB Discussions will preview and provide a format to discuss and explore various aspects of the readings. Each paper/discussion will compare one required text with the Daodejing. All papers will be uploaded through SafeAssign on BB. Text citations are required from the texts.
• Research, Paper and Final Presentation. Students will individually choose a nature/environmental writer (choice approved by instructor), read their work, analyze, compare to our assigned readings, and present their results to the class. Research paper – 1,500 words, bibliography required, and oral presentation with visuals. Students must sign up for their writer of choice by mid-semester. (150 pts.) An additional check on research will be required during the planning/research period– 25 pts.
• Class Participation/Class Discussion (considered with every class and text discussion) Please keep all notes, graded work and journals until the end of the semester. You are encouraged to maintain a personal reading log of any other books or publications in your nature journal which will be considered in your grade.

Attendance and Participation: Active participation is essential. Lack of participation in class discussion or failure to read/analyze the assigned texts will result in a reduction of points from your papers. Cell phones and computers will be turned off at the beginning of class. This includes no text messaging. If you must eat in class, please limit your food to a small, quietly consumed snack. Because learning rarely happens in isolation, but from a sharing of ideas and experiences, attendance at every class is mandatory. Since emergencies do arise, two absences will be allowed without penalty; after two absences, you will lose 10 points for each class you miss, regardless of the reason. Students who miss a portion of the class will lose a commensurate number of points. These points will
be deducted from the total accumulation of points you have earned by the end of the semester. If you miss a class, it is YOUR responsibility to contact a CLASSMATE, not the instructor, to get information on what was covered that day and copies of any papers that were passed out. It is assumed that since you signed up for this time slot, you are able to make the class in a timely manner. If you come to class late, points will be deducted from your assigned paper. Make-up assignments will be allowed only with a documented excuse (i.e. medical emergency or military duty). Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class; those students entering class after roll call are counted tardy; each tardy counts as half an absence. It is your responsibility to notify the instructor at the end of class if you are tardy. Do not assume that I have noted your appearance after roll call is taken. You do not need to contact me if you are going to be absent. Students missing more than 20% of classes (6 classes) will be dropped.

**Plagiarism and theft of intellectual property:** If you use work from someone else and submit it as your own; if you use work from another source in your assignments and do not give direct credit to your source; or if someone with whom you are working writes/creates any part of the work for you, you are plagiarizing. Acts of plagiarism are acts of theft, and will be dealt with swiftly according to UTEP’s established policy. All assignments will be submitted through SafeAssign on Blackboard to help you with appropriate citation.

**Assignments:** All out-of-class assignments MUST be typed, double-spaced. 12 pt. font (10 pt. Arial), unless otherwise stated. In some cases I may request assignments be emailed to me. Emailed assignments should be sent as an attachment in Microsoft Word and saved as Rich Text Format. Save a copy of your assignments before you hand them in, as well as keep returned assignments until the end of the semester so you can keep abreast of your grade. Please ensure that you understand the requirements for the assignments before you begin, and give yourself ample time to complete them so that you can turn in your best work. Assignments are due at the beginning of class; those turned in to me after class will be counted as late. If you know you are going to be absent, give it to a classmate to turn in or turn it in early. Please note: Assignments that do not follow the given directions will not be given a passing grade. There are no “redo’s.” Late assignments will lose 5 points per day.

**PLEASE REALIZE AT ALL TIMES THAT YOU ARE PREPARING TO ENTER A PROFESSIONAL CAREER. IN THIS CLASS, YOU ARE EXPECTED TO LEARN, BEHAVE, AND DRESS IN THE COURTEOUS, CONSCIENTIOUS, AND GENERALLY BUSINESS-LIKE MANNER CALLED FOR IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION.**

**Extra Help:** Students may see me by appointment. Help is also available at the UTEP Library Tutoring and Learning Center, Room 30, 747-5366 and at the UTEP Writing Center in the UTEP Library.
This syllabus is subject to change at my discretion to meet instructional needs and/or to accommodate time constraints. Bring this syllabus and your assigned text to class daily. Remember: readings are a springboard for your ideas and exploration. Feel free to explore other resources to better understand a topic or issue. Additional films may be added to the schedule. A reflection for each film is required in your nature journal.

Assignments: The assignments are listed by week; please note the Blackboard deadlines for the reflection paper and discussions which will be detailed on Blackboard.

Text assignments: Each assigned text after the Daodejing will draw comparisons between the two texts. Text citations are required from both texts.

Wk 1 Introduction to class and review of syllabus and policies. An introduction to the classical text Daodejing and its significance in Chinese and contemporary culture. Discussion of expectations and final project. Introduction and discussion of environmental movement in US and current environmental issues. First assignment: Your personal environmental views.

Wk 2 BB Discussion of Daodejing. Plan first reflective paper and discuss environmental themes and passages used in Chinese philosophical thinking and this classical text and how you understand it.

Feb 14 Last day to select P/F option.

Wk 3 Daodejing (1) due. Read Sacred Earth Introduction and entire book. Choose at least 2 writers from each section (Experience, Texture, Practice and Belief) to discuss. Begin Sacred Earth BB discussion.

Wk 4 Respond to someone else’s chosen passages.

Wk 5 Sacred Earth (2) due. Watch film “The Gleaners” and discussion. Begin reading Sisters of the Earth and be finished before next week.

Wk 6 Sisters of the Earth Discussion

Wk 7 Sisters of the Earth (3)

Wk 8 Choose your writer for final project and write a general outline/explanation.

Mar 13 – 17 Spring break – no classes

Wk 9 Sacred Balance Discussion.

Wk 10 Sacred Balance (4)

March 30 Course Drop Deadline

Wk 11 Work on projects

Wk 12 Presentations

Wk 13 Presentations

Wk 14 Presentations

Wk 15 Presentations. Your final project counts as your final. There will be no final exam during exam week.