

**\*\*DRAFT SYLLABUS, SUBJECT TO CHANGE\*\***

**THEO 5140: Advanced Seminar**  
**Creation Theology & Ecological Justice**  
North Park Theological Seminary  
Spring Semester 2022, Thurs. 2–4:45pm CT  
3 credit hours

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The advanced seminar builds on skills and content learned in Christian Theology through in-depth study of either (1) a single doctrinal locus (Christology, Trinity, Sacraments, etc.) from multiple methodologies or (2) multiple doctrines through a single methodology (e.g., liberation theology). Course is run seminar style. (from Catalog)

This course will explore the theology of creation, practices of ecological justice, and intersection between the two. It will consider the implications of the material world as God's good creation for the present ecological crisis and intersecting ethical arenas of poverty, racism, and consumption. Students will engage premodern, indigenous, liberationist, Catholic, and Orthodox Christian traditions and begin to practice concrete acts of justice toward an "integral ecology."

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Through the course students will:

1. Understand and compare diverse scriptural, historical, and contemporary perspectives on the stewardship of creation.
2. Theologically analyze the intersection of creation theologies and creation ethics, demonstrating an understanding of how the Christian doctrine of creation shapes Christian faith and action.
3. Reflect theologically on contemporary ethical choices that intersect with creation care, namely poverty, racism, and consumption.
4. Develop their own scriptural, theological, and ethical response to the present ecological crisis, applying course learnings to concrete individual and ecclesial action.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

1. Jame Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics: Reconstructing Patristic and Medieval Concepts* (Georgetown University Press, 2009).
2. Pope Francis, *Laudato si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Ignatius Press, 2015).
3. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, eds., *Ecology and Poverty* (SCM Press, 1995).
4. Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Eerdmans, 2012).
5. Chapters will be available on Canvas from these volumes:
  - a. Melanie L. Harris, *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths* (Orbis Books, 2017).
  - b. Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Baylor University Press, 2010).

- c. William T. Cavanaugh, ed., *Fragile World: Ecology and the Church* (Cascade Books, 2018).
- d. Daniel P. Castillo, *An Ecological Theology of Liberation* (Orbis Books, 2019).
- e. Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- f. Vincent J. Miller, ed., *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si': Everything is Connected* (Bloomsbury, 2017).
- g. John Hart, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology* (Wiley Blackwell, 2017).

## ASSESSMENTS

*Additional guidelines will be provided on Canvas.*

**1. Reading journal** (25% of course grade). As a seminar course, your careful, critical reading of texts is the foundation of our learning. Readings should be completed in preparation for each class session to ensure constructive discussion. A reading journal will be kept and submitted periodically, compiling your summary of readings and a running list of insights they contribute and questions they raise. This weekly work will both inform class discussion and provide resources for other course projects. This will be graded on a scale of inadequate (-), adequate (x), and exceptional (+).

**2. Leading class discussion** (10% of course grade). Each student will be responsible to lead the class in discussion for one session, providing a summary of course readings and suggestions for their integration and application as well as five questions for discussion. This work should be submitted by 11:59pm the Tuesday before the relevant session and will take the place of journaling for that week.

**3. Biblical survey** (15% of course grade). Provide a summary of biblical teaching foundational to creation care. This may be submitted in any of the following forms. In all cases, submit a bibliography of sources used, totalling at least five beyond required course sources.

- Traditional Paper (~2000 words)
- Sermon transcript
- Adult education session(s)
- Oral presentation (recorded)
- Video
- Podcast
- *Covenant Companion* article (or equivalent popular Christian magazine)
- You're welcome to choose an alternate medium if approved two weeks before submission date.

**4. Theology and ethics essay** (25% of course grade). Explore further the creation theology and practical application/implications of one of the key traditions we've been tracing: premodern, indigenous, liberationist, Roman Catholic, Orthodox. Use at least ten sources; only five can be from class readings.

**5. Action & reflection** (25% of final grade). Engage in a constructive practice that embodies ecological justice and submit a paper providing both (1) a biblical, theological rationale for that practice and (2) a reflective summary of your experience.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the Seminary Catalog located in the Resource room or online [Seminary Academic Catalog](#) (pp. 25–27).

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

North Park is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this class, please communicate this with the instructor.

## **INCOMPLETE POLICY**

If, due to extenuating circumstances a student anticipates he will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student must submit the request form for a grade of incomplete to the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request.

Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, the grade for that class will be listed as “I” until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of “I” will automatically be changed to “F.”

## **SCHEDULE**

To follow