

**Creation, Food, Land: Biblical Faith, Current Crisis**  
**WYB3837HF/WYB6837HF**

**Professor:** Dr. Sylvia C. Keesmaat

**Course Description**

Throughout the biblical story, land, economic justice, and food justice are intimately linked. These themes, in turn, are rooted in vibrant a relationship between creation and the Creator, not to mention creation and humanity. This course will explore such biblical themes in light of competing views of land, economics and justice both in biblical times and in our own context, locally and internationally. Interactions with indigenous views of land, land justice and food security for immigrants and the poor in our city, the transition movement, bioregionalism and watershed discipleship, will all contribute to a vision for a sustainable creation locally and on a global level.

**Required Readings:**

- \*Wendell Berry, "The Whole Horse" in Norman Wirzba, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (Washington, D.C: Counterpoint, 2002).
- Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- \*Hawkin, David J, "The Critique of Ideology in the Book of Revelation and its Implications for Ecology" *Ecotheology* 8.2 (2003) 161-172.
- \*Keesmaat, Sylvia C, "The Beautiful Creatures: Trees in the Biblical Story" published online in *The Other Journal: An Intersection of Theology and Culture* ([www.thootherjournal.com](http://www.thootherjournal.com)). Issue #15. The Aesthetics Issue.
- \*Keesmaat, Sylvia C. and Brian Walsh, "Land, Ecology and The Defilement of Home" Chapter 5 of *Romans Disarmed* (Brazos Press, forthcoming).
- \*Myers, Ched, "From Garden to Tower: Genesis 1-11 as a Critique of Civilization and an Invitation to Indigenous Re-visioning" in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land, Justice and Life Together*. Ed. Steve Heinrichs (Waterloo: Herald Press, 2013), 109-121.
- \*Rossing, Barbara R, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future" in Deiter T. Hessel and Rosemary R. Ruether (eds.), *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of the Earth and Humans*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000. pp. 205-224.
- \*Woodley, Randy, "Early Dialogue in the Community of Creation" in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land, Justice and Life Together*. Ed. Steve Heinrichs (Waterloo: Herald Press, 2013), 92-103. *I have also included with this article the two poems entitled "Talking Waters" by Rose Marie Berger that bookend the article in the anthology.*

*\*Readings marked with an asterisk will be available digitally from the Professor after the first class.*

Please come to each class prepared to answer the following questions about the required readings:

1. Summarize the main point of the article or chapters in one or two sentences. Does this reading raise any concerns or questions in your mind? Does it challenge anything that you had previously thought?
2. Does this reading change how you consider the role of creation in the Biblical story? If so, how? If not, why not?

### **Requirements**

***NB: The use of computers, laptops and ipads, tablets and cellphones is not permitted during class time in the course.***

Class participation, worth 20% of the grade. Students are required to come to class prepared with one or two questions arising out of their readings for that class. Attendance for site visits is considered part of class participation.

Two reflection papers of approximately 5 pages worth 20% (10% each). Each paper should exegete a biblical text, locate it within the topics discussed in class and in the readings thus far.

One Research Paper worth 60% of the grade. The research paper must be based on a particular biblical text or theme and should locate the text or theme within the larger biblical canon, as well within its historical context. In addition, the paper should explore how this biblical text or theme illuminates or critiques contemporary environmental issues or practices. Academic protocols must be followed, using either Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* or the *SBL Handbook of Style*. Whatever style is used should be used consistently. *BD students* are required to submit a paper of 12-15 pages, with a bibliography of at least 10 entries. Since this is a research paper, your secondary sources should be used to help you explain, analyze and assess the text or topic under discussion. *AD students* are required to submit a paper of 15-20 pages with a bibliography of at least 15 entries. Since this is an advanced research paper, your paper should engage, appraise and debate your secondary sources, as well as integrate their insights to defend your thesis.

### **Additional Bibliography**

M. Kat Anderson, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources* (University of California Press, 2013).

Bahanson, Fred & Norman Wirzba. *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation*.

Berry, Wendell. *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*.

Berry, Wendell. *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural*.

Berry, Wendall. *Bringing it to the Table: On Farming and Food*.

Bauckham, Richard. *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology*. (Waco, TX: Baylor Press, 2011).

----- . *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010.

Bauman, Whitney. *Theology, Creation, and Environmental Ethics: From Creatio Ex Nihilo to Terra Nullius*. (New York: Routledge, 2009).

Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997).

Boff, Leonardo. 1994. "Social Ecology: Poverty and Misery." *In Eco-theology: Voices from South and North*. Edited by David G. Hallman, 235-47. (Geneva and Maryknoll, N.Y.: WCC Publications and Orbis Books).

Boff, Leonardo. 1995a. *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*. Trans. John Cumming. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.

Bouma-Prediger, Steven. *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.

Fretheim, Terence, "Nature's Praise of God in the Psalms" *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987), 16-30.

Fretheim, Terence, "The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110/3 (1991) 385-396.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. 1971. "Contestation in Latin America, " in *Contestation in the Church* (ed. T. Jimenez. New York: Herder and Herder.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. 1988. *A Theology of Liberation. History, Politics and Salvation*. Translated and edited by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, (revised edition). (Originally published 1973.)

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. 1990. *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990).

Habel, Norman C. ed. *Readings from the Perspective of the Earth*. Earth Bible 1. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

Hamilton, Lisa, *Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness*.

Hawkin, David J, "The Critique of Ideology in the Book of Revelation and its Implications for Ecology" *Ecotheology* 8.2 (2003) 161-172.

Heinrichs, Steve. *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land, Justice and Life Together*. (Herald Press, 2013).

Horrell, David G, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate and Francesca Stavrakopoulou, eds.. *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*. (T&T Clark, 2010).

Horrell, David G, Cheryl Hunt and Christopher Southgate. *Greening Paul: Reading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis*. (Baylor: Baylor University Press, 2010).

Hughes, Donald J, *Environmental Problems of the Greeks and Romans*. John Hopkins University Press 2014.

Jackson, Wes and Wendell Berry, *Meeting the Expectations of the Land: Essays in Sustainable Agriculture and Stewardship*.

Jewett, Paul, "The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Reading Rom 8.18-23 within the Imperial Context" in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2004, pp. 25-46.

Keesmaat, Sylvia C. "Sabbath and Jubilee: Radical Alternatives for Being Human" in *Making a New Beginning: Biblical Reflections on Jubilee*. Toronto: Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, pp. 15-23.

Keesmaat, Sylvia C, "The Beautiful Creatures: Trees in the Biblical Story" published online in *The Other Journal: An Intersection of Theology and Culture* ([www.thootherjournal.com](http://www.thootherjournal.com)). Issue #15. The Aesthetics Issue. Available at <http://www.thootherjournal.com/article.php?id=837> or by going to [www.thootherjournal.com](http://www.thootherjournal.com) and typing Keesmaat into the search engine.

Keesmaat, Sylvia C. "Land, Idolatry and Justice in Romans," in *Conception, Reception and the Spirit: Essays in Honour of Andrew T. Lincoln* ed. J. Gordon McConville and Lloyd J. Pietersen. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 90-103.

Munn, Kerri, Ed. *Living Ecological Justice: A Biblical Response to the Ecological Crisis*. Ottawa: Citizens for Public Justice, 2014.

Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*.

Richard, Pablo, et al. *The Idols of Death and the God of Life: A Theology*. Trans. Barbara E. Campbell and Bonnie Shepard. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983).

Rossing, Barbara R, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future" in Deiter T. Hessel and Rosemary R. Ruether (eds.), *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of the Earth and Humans*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000. pp. 205-224.

Scharper, Stephen. *For Earth's Sake: Toward a Compassionate Ecology*. Toronto: Novalis, 2013.

Scharper, Stephen B. 1999. "The Ecological Crisis." In Gregory Baum, ed. *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books: 219-227.

Scharper, Stephen B. 1997. *Redeeming the Time: A Political Theology of the Environment*. New York: Continuum.

Sobrino, Jon and Feliz Wilfred, eds .2001. *Globalization and Its Victims*. (Concilium

2001/5) London: SCM Press.

Wallace, Mark. *Green Christianity: Five Ways to a Sustainable Future*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Wirzba, Norman. *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*.

Woodley, Randy. *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*. (Eerdmans, 2012).