Religion, Ethics, and the Environment

(Link to Publications on Religion, Ethics, Environment, Education, and Theology)

Cornell University Natural Resources 407

Lecture Collection Volume 1



Dr. Richard A. Baer, Jr.

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Course Syllabus

Recording Contents

Notes:

- The lectures represent three entire semesters and parts of other semesters of NR 407. The content of the lectures is similar, but not identical, from semester to semester, and the student-participation discussions are, of course, different each semester.
- These lectures were originally recorded on cassette tape or Sony Minidisk recorder, and then transcribed into MP3 files.
- Some were recorded with a lapel microphone, and others with a stereo microphone. The former provides a clearer recording.
- For the 1991 - 1994 lectures, roving wireless microphones were available for the students during discussions, resulting in a better recording of their comments.
- Some of the recordings are truncated due to equipment failure.
- Volume 1 contains the most recent complete set of taped recordings (1994) and all the most recent recordings (2001, 2003). The 1994 recordings are better recordings. The 2003 recordings reflect Dr. Baer's most recent thoughts and organization.
- Volume 2 contains some lectures from 1991 and 1992, along with a complete set of the lectures from 1993. These are all good recordings.
- The descriptions were written over a necessarily long time period (it takes a while to listen to c. 67 hours of lectures), so the style, level of detail, and quality of the descriptions vary. Please feel free to offer enhancements and corrections. Email Rick Cochran (rcc2@cornell.edu).

Date	Lecturer	Description	Code
1994-01-25	Dr. Richard Baer	Introduction: Religion and culture - the nature of religion; personal stories	LM, CT
1994-01-27	Dr. Richard Baer	Environmental studies - theory vs. specifics,	LM, CT
1994-02-01	Dr. Richard Baer	God and Religion: William Cantwell Smith The Meaning and End of Religion, "religio", reification, God reveals not *religion*, but himself; the language of discourse in the university, the importance of *soft* knowledge	LM, CT
1994-02-03	Dr. Richard Baer	Religion in the University: Emil Brunner, Jefferson and the use of the word *sectarian*, implications for government public schools, the Big Questions, religious neutrality, a functional view of religion, Emil Durkheim, the Cornell School of Human Ecology, discussion	LM, CT, *
1994-02-08	Dr. Richard Baer	Moral judgments, epistemology and Liberal thinking, enlightenment and post-modern reasoning, polishing bowls	LM, CT
1994-02-10	Dr. Richard Baer	Wayne Booth Modern Dogma And The Rhetoric of Assent, knowledge claims in the hard sciences vs. knowledge claims in the humanities, Neurath's boat, how to show proper respect for moral and religious arguments	LM, CT
1994-02-22	Dr. Richard Baer	Descriptive vs. normative ethics, meta-ethics, logical positivism, the extent of ethical consensus, John Rawls "reflective equilibrium", teleological ethics, Alistair MacIntyre	LM, CT, *
1994-02-24	Dr. Richard Baer	Deontological ethics, social contract theories, John Rawls A Theory of Justice, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill (utilitarians), "rights", English Liberalism, John Locke	LM, CT
1994-03-01	Dr. Richard Baer	Stanley Hauerwas on Iris Murdoch, the meaning of "freedom", rationality in the service of desire vs. being part of a worthy story, cost-benefit analysis vs. "unselfing", Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, discussion	LM, CT
1994-03-03	Dr. Richard Baer	Uriah the Hittite, ideological taint, sensuality vs. pride	LM, CT, *
1994-03-10	Dr. Richard Baer	Greek vs. Hebrew views of history, discussion of Deut. 26, Deut. 6:20-25, the indicative precedes the imperative	LM, CT
1994-03-12	Dr. Richard Baer	Galatians, historical time line for Judaism and Christianity, Gospel precedes Law, Peter, Paul, and circumcision, Harvard grad school, Emil Brunner, how are we to love our neighbor?	LM, CT
1994-03-17	Dr. Richard Baer	Controlling nature: Leiss The Domination of Nature, the myth of Icarus, Francis Bacon, Betrand Russell Icarus, or the Future of Science , Mircea Eliade The Forge and the Crucible, alchemy and magic, the secular version of the alchemist's dream as the driving force in modern society, Goethe's Faust, CS Lewis The Abolition of Man and That Hideous Strength, discussion	LM, CT, *
1994-03-29	Dr. Richard Baer	A feminist perspective on environmental ethics: Carol Gilligan, Val Plumwood, the effects of the sexual revolution, daycare vs. parental care, Wendell Berry The Unsettling of America,	LM, CT, *
1994-03-31	Dr. Richard Baer	Class discussion: the meaning of *nature*: can human beings be fully comprehended under the term nature? Are human beings more valuable than any other part of nature? The infamous caterpillar example.	LM, CT, *
1994-04-05	Dr. Richard Baer	What is nature? Gordon Kaufman The Concept of Nature: A Problem for Theology; terms: *nature*, *natural*, *artificial*, *world*, *cosmos*, *uni verse*;	LM, CT, *
1994-04-07	Dr. Richard Baer	Anthropocentrism, efficacy of ethics courses vs. great literature and drama in forming "environmental character", Joseph Sachs, biocentrism, Lynn White The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisishttp://www.aeoe.org/resources/spiritual/rootsofcrisis.pdf, conservatism regarding "nature" vs. conservatism regarding "human nature"	LM, CT
1994-04-12	Dr. Richard Baer	Biocentrism and animal rights; Paul Taylor, The Ethics of Respect for Nature; Peter Singer, Animal Liberation - human beings are not different from other animals in any qualitative sense; Regan, Animal Rights and Human Obligations: the *rights* view - attempts to limit the *rights* view to human beings are "rationally defective"; Paul Taylor - extends rights to plants; the Image of God as the origin of human equality; the bigotry of modern philosophers.	LM, CT, *

1994-04-14	Dr. Richard Baer	How much of heaven is available to us now? How much of the biocentric agenda is implementable without becoming inhumane? pros and cons of anthropo-, bio-, and theo-centrism; Parfit's dilemma - our obligations to future generations; John Passmore, Man's Responsibility to Nature; theistic, Christian, Jewish approaches; biocentrics as prophets of the ideal.	LM, CT
1994-04-19	Dr. James Tantillo	The Machine In The Garden (also the title of a book by Leo Marx): the Walden Pond restoration project; Martin Lewis, Green Delusions ; the biocentric world view; breeding endangered species in captivity; Michael Pollan, Second Nature, A Gardener's Education; the *gar den* metaphor vs. the *wilderness* metaphor; primitivism, primal purity, decentralization, "appropriate technology", capitalism as evil; Rodman, Four Forms of Ecological Consciousness Reconsidered; the principle of non-intervention, the California Condor, "better dead than bred".	LM, CT
1994-04-21	Dr. Richard Baer	Barry Smith, ideological solutions vs. practical solutions, Baer's Garbage Principle, justice issues, John Rawls, foreign aid, Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus To Empower People - mediating structures, government neutrality on issues of The Good, the effects of private sexual behavior on our ability to address environmental issues - illegitimacy and single parenting.	LM, CT
1994-04-26	Ms. Mical Smart	Foundations for a Jewish Environmental Ethic: the Biblical world view, the world and all that is in it belongs to God, Lynn White's article, Jewish law - human autonomy subject to restraint; there is purpose to everything in creation; God is continuously active in creation; the connection between social and ecological justice; the Sabbath year; spirituality and the wilderness experience; all creation as a "community of praise"; laws regarding ownership and use of property; the Sabbath as a curb on unbridled consumption and acquisition; discussion.	LM, CT, *
1994-04-28	Dr. Richard Baer	The nature of the environmental debate, extremist language, the Loyal Opposition, magnanimity and trust vs. government regulation, developing standards for truth-telling in the context of contentious issues, elephants in Zimbabwe, the Boston Rt 128 loop, development value, Henry George Progress and Poverty, ethics of transition and compromise, Spotted Owl habitat, property use restrictions	LM, CT
1994-05-03	Dr. Richard Baer	The God Who Plays.	LM, CT, **
1994-05-05	Dr. Richard Baer	Celebration, praise, and thanksgiving.	LM, CT
2001-09-04	Dr. Richard Baer	The epistemological status of moral claims, CS Lewis The Abolition of Man, human dominance over nature; Thomas Merton	LM, CT, IR
2001-09-06	Dr. Richard Baer	Epistemology (discussion): radical doubt, "knowledge equals certainty", warrantable assertions, examples: gratuitous harm and truth-telling, difference between hard and social sciences, experimental method, literature as thought-experiment, learning by mistakes (eg. no-fault divorce), unprovable assumptions of science	LM, CT, *
2001-09-25	Dr. Richard Baer	Epistemology, Gordon Kaufman, Ian Barbour, Carl Sagan, the Genesis account from the Bible, H. & H.A. Frankfort	
2001-09-27	Dr. Richard Baer	The de-mythologizing and de-sacralizing of nature, Greek philosophy, natural causes for natural events, cyclical vs. linear view of time, David and Bathsheba, discussion	LM, CT, IR
xxxx-09-18	Dr. Richard Baer	What is nature, discussion, the infamous caterpillar example	LM, CT
2003-08-28	Dr. Richard Baer	Introduction: How should we live? intentions vs. performance, Bill Joy Why the future doesn't need us, the theology of the ballet, CS Lewis The Abolition of Man, discussion	SM, MD
2003-09-02	Dr. Richard Baer	Guided discussion on *values* and *facts*, theoretical certainty, knowledge as warrantable assertions	SM, MD, *
2003-09-04	Dr. Richard Baer	How to read the assigned readings, Sachs, facts, values, knowledge, relativism, radical doubt	SM, MD
2003-09-11	Dr. Richard Baer	Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* vs. the Genesis accounts of creation, human dominion over nature, freedom, determinism, moral responsibility, Gordon Kaufman on Kant The Concept of Nature: A Problem for Theology, what is *nature*? can human beings be fully comprehended under the term *nature*? The terms *world*, *cosmos*, and *universe*, brief discussion	SM, MD
2003-09-16	Dr. Richard Baer	Relationship between humans and nature, dominion over nature, H. & H.A. Frankfort The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, Western scientific progress and the desacralization of nature, Louis Moncrief The Cultural Basis of Our Environmental Crisis, democratization and the exploitation of nature, Biblical environmentalism, short discussion	SM, MD
2003-09-18	Dr. Richard Baer	The meaning of the term *nature*, consequences of the desacralization of nature, King David and Nathan the prophet, the romanticization of nature, the need for historical imagination	LM, MD, IR
2003-09-23	Dr. Richard Baer	The desacralization of nature, Leo Marx Pastoral Ideals and City Troubles, recurring themes in literature - retreat from civilization, escape to nature, return to civilization; The Interrupted Idyll, symbolic landscape, lengthy discussion - racism, breakdown of family structure, lack of diverse viewpoints at Cornell	SM, MD
2003-09-25	Dr. Richard Baer	Philosophy of science - faith and reason, values and facts; fallibism, running commentary on Ian Barbour Issues in Science and Religion: logical positivism and the "verification principle", factual claims vs. value claims, Michael Polanyi Personal Knowledge, brief discussion	LM, MD, *
2003-09-30	Dr. Richard Baer	Arterial roads and development - a case study	LM, MD
2003-10-02		Allen Wood Relativism, indoctrination in K-12 schools, Ian Barbour, what motivates scientists, William Leiss The Domination of Nature, science as knowledge for knowledge's sake (middle ages) vs. knowledge for the sake of domination of nature (modern era), the value	LM, MD, **

	Dr. Richard Baer	of the scientific practice of viewing nature as value-free, the intuitive fear of the power of technology, Francis Bacon, Bertrand Russell Icarus, or the Future of Science, Mircea Eliade The Forge and the Crucible alchemy and modern science, mining and metallurgy, the Faustus legend, discussion	
2003-10-07	Dr. Richard Baer	Science in the context of an absence of transcendent authority, the need for authoritative community, a functional view of religion, Emil Durkheim, the Big Questions, Wilfred Cantwell Smith	LM, MD
2003-10-09	Dr. Richard Baer	The limitations of rationalism in ethics, male and female perspectives, Carol Gilligan, modern feminism, the environmental effect of social pathologies	LM, MD
2003-10-23	Dr. Brian Richards	Land application of wastewater sludge - science, policy, and politics	LM, MD, IR
2003-10-28	Dr. Richard Baer	Running commentary on Stanley Hauerwas on Iris Murdoch, the concepts of freedom, humility, and love	LM, MD
2003-10-30	Dr. Richard Baer	Wendell Berry, hyper-individualism and faithfulness to each other and to the environment, the environmental effect of social pathologies, the interrelatedness of things, David Blankenhorn, fatherlessness	LM, MD
2003-11-04	Dr. Richard Baer	What do Christianity and Judaism have to say about environmental ethics, Plato, the ancient Hebrews, Deuteronomy 26:1-9, Joshua, the Decalogue, Emil Brunner	LM, MD
2003-11-06	Dr. Richard Baer	Sin, determinism, human responsibility, Reinhold Niebuhr	LM, MD
2003-11-11	Dr. Richard Baer	The God Who Plays	LM, MD
2003-11-13	Dr. Richard Baer	Reinhold Niebuhr, history of Judaism and Christianity, Paul's letter to the Galatians, God's love, freedom, writer's block at Harvard	LM, MD, CF
2003-11-18	Dr. Richard Baer	Animal rights, classical Liberalism, wilderness preservation, intergenerational justice, Derek Parfit, Peter Singer, Tom Regan, equality, speciesism, the image of God, religion in the public sphere, Robert Audi, Kramnick and Moore	LM, MD, CF
2003-11-20	Dr. James Tantillo	No-kill animal shelters, feral cats vs. wildlife, hunting	LM, MD
2003-11-25a	Dr. Richard Baer	The future of NR-407	LM, MD
2003-11-25b	Dr. Richard Baer	Anthropocentrism (Joseph Sachs), biocentrism (Paul Taylor), theocentrism (St. Agustin, St. Thomas), John Locke, "positive law" and "rights", CS Lewis	LM, MD, IR
2003-12-02	Dr. Richard Baer	The modern university, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, questions and comments about the course, imposing beliefs on others	LM, MD
2003-12-04a	Dr. Richard Baer	How should we live?, CS Lewis, sehnsucht, the sweet poison of the false infinite, overzealous reformers and planners, praise and celebration, cosmic compost, Merlin Caruthers, Thomas Merton	LM, MD
2003-12-04b	Friends		LM, MD

Recording Code Key

Code	Description
SM	Stereo Microphone
LM	Lapel Microphone
MD	Sony Minidisk Recorder
CT	Cassette Tape
IR	Incomplete Recording (eg. due to battery failure)
CF	Copying Flaws
*	Exceptional Lecture