

## **ENVS/REL 329: Religion and Ecology: Emory as Place Sustainability and Spiritual Practices**

**Tuesday/Thursday 11:30 – 12:45 p.m.**  
**Emerson Hall – E504**

**Bobbi Patterson**

**[bpatter@emory.edu](mailto:bpatter@emory.edu)**

**Candler Library 129, Office E**

**Office Hours:**

**Wednesday 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.**

**Thursday 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

**Christina Conroy**

**[Christina.Conroy@emory.edu](mailto:Christina.Conroy@emory.edu)**

**Office Hours By Appointment**

**Chris Rutlen, Peer Educator (Learnlink)**  
**Email for Appointments**

### **Questions that Bring us Here**

What do we mean when we use the word ‘place’? How do our connections to place reflect and shape our social, political, and cultural practices? What affects do places have on our ethical and spiritual assumptions, actions, and commitments? How does place connect to sustainability? And finally, what do we mean by place at Emory – how does connection to place affect our sustainability ethics at Emory?

We are also interested questions raising tensions, even chaos, associated with place. How do terms like landscape, terrain, and human geography interrelate – or not – to place? What are the embodied aspects of place? Are any of these aspects or definitions of place necessarily sacred? Can they be claimed – how have they been claimed - as sacred by some, including Buddhist and Christian contemplative traditions? How might Emory experience or define place as sacred?

### **Buddhist and Christian approaches to place**

How do Buddhist and Christian texts, practices, philosophies and theologies connect with and/or challenge our understandings and experiences of place? More specifically, how to contemplative approaches in traditions craft attitudes about and interactions with histories, cultures, ethics, and spiritualities of place?

### **Our Class and Community**

The initiating intention of this class is to experience and cultivate knowledge about, actions in, and ethics and spiritualities of place. As a learning and teaching community, this class generates shared motivation and dedication to the content, research, and exploration we share. In this class, as in places, interdependencies (in all their complexities of cultures, powers, and insights) are reality.

### **Course objectives: This Class will...**

- **Examine** Christian and Buddhist writers and practitioners' assumptions about relationships with nature, place, and sustainability
- **Explore and engage** different places within Emory's campus, Atlanta, and the Piedmont forest within this bioregion (contemplative practices of stillness, meditation, observation, hiking, sensing, drawing, camping, etc.)
- **Discover** the differences between thinking about and experiencing the Inter/intra-relationships of place including spirituality and sustainability ethics,
- **Create** practices and educational experiences of Emory as Place for others.

### **Methods to Achieve Goals**

#### **Integration**

This class will provide structured opportunities for integrating theory, method, and practice relevant to our driving questions.

#### **Analysis**

This class will provide structured opportunities for developing skills for close reading, critical assessment, and revision of assumptions based on class texts, experiences, and assignments

#### **Reflection**

This class will provide structured and ongoing opportunities for reflection on all class content and experiences, predominantly through the Working and Presenting Portfolio.

**All students will abide by the Emory Honor Code.**

### **Assignments**

Readings Found in **Reserves Direct**

#### **Working Portfolio**

Due every other week for comments.

300 points

#### **Presenting Portfolio**

**Due by 5pm on Friday, May 1**

**In the Department of Religion**

400 points

\*\* See handout for detailed instructions on working with a portfolio. \*\*

#### **Class participation**

300 points

Includes preparedness for practices and discussions, participation in class activities, commitment to our thriving as a community of learners and teachers, and team leadership of a practice on hikes/overnights

### **Schedule of Readings and Experiences**

\*\*\* subject to change as the class unfolds – regularly check the on-line syllabus \*\*\*

### **January 15: Experiencing Place**

Meet at Baker Woods (behind Carlos Hall)

**Assignment:** Theory Practice Learning

**Assignment: Due next week :** Write no more than a page: What drew you to this class? What do you hope for? What do you worry about? If you want, post your responses to our class conference, “Sharing Stuff”

### **January 20: Place, a Short Introduction**

**Assignment:** Read Pages 1-51

### **January 22: Place, a Short Introduction**

**Assignment:** Meet at Lullwater Gates  
Read The Lullwater Management Plan

### **January 27: Place: Atlanta and Equity**

**Guest Speaker: Nathaniel Smith about the Regional Equity Summit**

**Assignment:** Instructions for Portfolio

## **I. BUDDHIST CONTEMPLATIVES**

### **January 29: The Place of the Environment in Buddhism**

**Assignment:** Chapter 5: “Buddhism,” (pp. 161-207) in Richard C. Foltz, *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment*

### **\*\*\* January 31 – Walk the Forests of Emory, 2-4:30 pm \*\*\***

**Place:** Wesley Woods close to Briarcliff

**Practice/Creativity:** natural history, plant identification, sensing meditation, walking meditation

**Assignment:** “Conscious Breathing Meditation” – Chapters 1-3 (pp. 5-25)

### **February 3: Buddhist Contemplatives in the Forest**

**Assignment:** “Forest Meditations” (read both selections)

**Assignment:** Turn in Portfolio (with at least 3 entries + 1 reading summary)

*Introduction to Phenomenology Exercise*

**February 5: Practices of Place – Contemporary Buddhist Perspectives**

**Assignment:** Gary Snyder “The Etiquette of Freedom,” (pp. 3-24); “Blue Mountains Constantly Walking,” (pp. 97-115)

**February 10: Practices of Place – Contemporary Buddhist Perspectives**

**Assignment:** Kurt Hoelting, “Circling Home”

**II. CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATIVES**

**February 12: Christian Contemplatives in the Ridges and Ravines of the Desert**

**Assignment:** Belden Lane – “Connecting Spirituality and the Environment” (pp.9-21), “The Countercultural Spirituality of the Desert Christians” (pp.196-204)  
Western Asceticism Readings

**\*\*\*\*\*February 14 -- Hike At Stone Mountain: Drawing Meditation\*\*\*\*\*  
With Professor Anne Hall**

**February 17: Christian Asceticism in the Ridges and Ravines of the Forest**

**Assignment:** Phillip Sheldrake, “A Sense of Place” and “Place in Christian Tradition”

**Assignment:** Turn in Portfolio (with at least 6 entries + 2 reading summaries)  
\*\* One of these entries should be **Phenomenology Exercise I** \*\*

**February 19: Contemporary Christian Nuns and Ecological Renewal**

**Assignment:** Sarah McFarland Taylor, “Reinhabiting Religion: Green Sisters, Ecological Renewal, and the Biogeography of Religious Landscape”

**\*\*\*\*\*EQUITY SUMMIT: FEBRUARY 21\*\*\*\*\***

**February 24: Practices of Place - Some Christian Perspectives**

**Assignment:** Belden Lane – “Prayer Without Language in the Mystical Tradition”

**February 26: Practices of Place – Some Christian Perspectives**

**Assignment:** Selections from Thomas Merton

### **III. NATURE WRITING AND NATURAL HISTORY**

#### **March 3: “Secular” Eco-Asceticism**

**Assignment:** Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (pp. ix - 73)

#### **March 5: Natural History and Love**

**Assignment:** Bernd Heinrich, “Sex in Trees”  
Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia*, selection

**Assignment:** **Turn in Portfolio** (with at least 9 entries + 3 reading summaries)

\*\*\*\*\* You should include **Phenomenology Exercise I** and **II** \*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\***SPRING BREAK**\*\*\*\*\*

### **IV. EMORY AS PLACE**

#### **March 17: Emory and Atlanta’s Watersheds**

**Assignment:** David Kaufman, *Peachtree Creek: A Natural and Unnatural History of Atlanta’s Watershed*, “Introduction and Section 1”

**Meet at Hahn Woods:** Hahn Woods (on Houtson Mill, across from Miller Ward Alumni House). See online images at <http://www.creekimages.com/> and online video at <http://www.pba.org/programming/programs/thisisatlanta/peachtreecreek/>

#### **March 19: Peachtree Creek**

**Assignment:** Kaufman, *Peachtree Creek*, “Section 2 and Section 3”

#### **March 24: Race and Place: Environmental Justice in Atlanta and Emory**

**Assignment:** Robert Bullard, *The Black Metropolis in the Twenty-First Century: Race, Power, and Politics of Place*, (only pp. 1 – 40)

#### **March 26: Race and Place: Stories of Community Empowerment for Sustainable Ethics**

**Guest Speaker:** Ellen Spears and members of her Community-Building Class

\*\*\*\*\***Assignment:** **Turn in Portfolio**\*\*\*\*\*

#### **March 31: Ecofeminism and Place**

**Assignment:** Tavis Page, “Has Ecofeminism Cornered the Market”

**Assignment: Turn in Portfolio**

**April 2: Sustainability and Spiritual Practices at Emory**

**Guest Speaker:** Ciannat Howett, Director of Sustainability Initiatives

**\*\*\*\*\* CLASS CAMPOUT: PINE MOUNTAIN\*\*\*\*\***

**Friday, APRIL 3, 1:00 P.M. – Sunday, APRIL 5, 1:00 P.M.**

**April 7: NO CLASS: BEGIN WORKING ON YOUR FINAL PORTFOLIO**

**V. HOPE AND PLACE**

**April 9:** Exchanging Places

**Assignment:** David Abram, Phenomenology of Place

**Assignment:** **Turn in Portfolio**

**April 14:** Personal and Spiritual Guide to Whole Earth Thinking

**Assignment:** Stephanie Kaza

**April 16:** Places on the Edge

**Assignment:** Belden Lane, “Places on the Edge...” and “Fierce Back-Country”

**April 21:**

**Assignment:** John Gatta, “Learning to Love Creation”

**April 23:** Circling Home

**Assignment:** Telling the Truth as Healing

**Assignment:** Joanna Macy: Truth Circle

**April 28: Placing our Lives After Emory**

**\*\*\*\*\*MONDAY, MAY 5: PRESENTING PORTFOLIO DUE BY 5PM\*\*\*\*\***

**Department of Religion Office, Callaway South 214**