

HST 203: U.S. History Sp18 (Escobar Meta 41002 43590)

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Forum 4 Environmentalism as Religion

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Environmentalism as Religion

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Friday, May 25, 2018, 7:13 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Environmentalism as Religion topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which one of the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Environmentalism as Religion

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Legislation is Necessary for Change



by [Rachel Gragg](#) - Friday, May 25, 2018, 2:07 PM

I would consider myself an environmentalist, so as a result, I was very drawn to this topic. I feel as though I have a pretty good understanding of a lot of environmental concepts and the ways that the ecological issues of this earth can be solved and I would say I try hard to educate others and practice what I preach constantly. The facts about the environment are pretty straight forward. It is a fact that there is an island of plastic in the Pacific ocean more than twice the size of Texas that is mostly human caused that is causing detrimental environmental harm (theoceancleanup.com). It is a fact that more than 51% of global greenhouse gas emissions which harm the OZone Layer and therefore cause global warming are caused by animal agriculture (peta.org). It is a fact that most of this is human caused, and yet, humans continue to consume these products that are, quite literally, killing the environment.

I try every day to educate people on these facts and to tell them how they can do just a little bit to help, but people don't listen. Humans, but especially Americans, are stuck in their ways and value comfort over anything else and therefore don't want to change the ways they live. As much as there are people all over doing a lot voluntarily to save the environment, I don't think it is going to all be completely solved with the reliance on those few volunteers. From experience, the only way I think people learn to change their ways is if it heavily affects them right away. Environmental harm is a slow and more global process that isn't going to directly affect a person right then and there so people aren't as likely to change. It's unfortunate, but I believe that the only way there will be change is if it's enforced. Maybe not as aggressively as in the commercial, but it can be enforced. Styrofoam can be outlawed completely. It is awful for the environment and it isn't necessary, so stopping the production of it will be the only way to force people to stop using it. Plastic straws are also terrible for the environment and completely unnecessary for day-to-day life. At the University of Portland, the sale of plastic straws has been banned on campus (up.edu). They handed out reusable, environmentally friendly stainless-steel straws to people that wanted them, and that is going to make a huge environmental difference. All in all, I definitely don't believe that looking into people's homes and invading privacy will make people happy about making environmental change, but I don't believe change will happen purely with volunteers. I think it's important for laws to be made and enforced and for people to vote for politicians who will make those changes happen.

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A religion for EuGREENians

by [Jason Yeager](#) - Saturday, May 26, 2018, 10:10 PM

I don't consider myself religious, but if I had to worship a deity, it would probably be Mother Earth. That being said.....I'm a total hypocrite! I'm a consumer. I love my truck, with all of its metal and plastic and oil. I love technology. And electricity--who doesn't? I love all of the comforts that I enjoy, despite the gnawing feeling in the back of my brain that by consuming all of these things, I am hastening the demise of our planet. Image #1 (Save the Planet - Kill Yourself) speaks to one of my beliefs. I think the world would be a far better place if humans didn't exist. Natural occurrences have been responsible for an estimated five mass-extinction events in Earth's history, the last one happening about 65 million years ago. Human activity is directly responsible for what can be classified as a sixth. As noted on the New Hampshire PBS website, flora and fauna are disappearing at a rate 1,000 times faster than at any time since the last extinction, and scientists estimate that 100 species will become extinct **every day** in the 21st century. (nhptv.org) But as I don't intend to off myself anytime soon.....

I do think that nuclear energy may be the most viable solution we have at this point. But I have a problem with Paul Rubin's assertion that it is the "best" solution. (Rubin, article) I agree that the process of using fusion to create heat is far cleaner than other methods. What he and other proponents of nuclear energy fail to point out is the before-and-after. How much fossil fuel is consumed in the mining, transportation, and processing of uranium? How many environments are irrevocably changed due to mining operations? And then, what becomes of all of the spent fuel? Until these questions are addressed, I don't think nuclear energy can be the be-all-end-all.

Wish I had the answer. Maybe after this I'll go sit in my cow-hide leather seats, burn some fuel, and pray to the almighty Mother so that she might give me the enlightenment to deliver ourselves from ourselves.

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Is Environmentalism a Religion?

by [Peyton Tooze](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 1:49 PM

I would have to disagree with Paul H. Ruben and his view that environmentalism is close to being a religion. As he states in his text "Scientists are understandably uninterested in religious stories because they do not meet the basic criterion for science." This to me says it all. A religion is something that doesn't have the benefit of scientific evidence whereas climate change or "going green" has overwhelming scientific evidence. Also, he says that an environmentalist's holy day is Earth Day, which I have never seen anyone celebrate, it actually makes me laugh that he would compare something like Christmas or Hanukkah to Earth Day. Ruben says that he walks around a college campus and he is "continually confronted with recycling bins."

...and instead of one trash." I think that it is obvious why places like universities have recycling bins and different means of disposing of waste, it is because a university is a place for education and waste management is something good to know, when you graduate there aren't separate bins with pictures around your house. Universities try to teach useful things and not considering the environment would be scientifically ignorant. It's true that using less plastic bags or no plastic bags will lessen the negative effect we have on the environment. Although, most people know this but don't seem to care just like the people in the comical "green police" video. With that said, I don't think it is right to push legislation to make people stop using plastic bags or whatever light bulb they want for the good of the environment. The "green police" video shows how ridiculous it would be to try and force everyone to dispose of their batteries properly or have an energy efficient light bulb. If you are educated enough to understand the profound effect that humans have in hurting our Earth than you would probably just choose paper bags or cloth bags at the grocery store. I believe that once people are educated in science, like a lot of my generation, most people will become environmentally conscious without forceful legislation.

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My issue with environmentalism

by [Maxam Robison](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 10:47 PM

I am all for utilizing the earth's resources and not using more than we need but I'm not willing to make a big stink about how awful the idea of an oil pipeline running through an open field is because the Caribou population will be negatively affected, scratch that, the Spotted Owls need to have their trees so logging must stop immediately.

Reality check: I recall a protest different from the Caribou but it was a pipeline happening in (South Dakota maybe), anyway once the protest was over everyone left.... Their garbage behind!!! The place looked better before the 'environmentalists' came in to protest. True environmentalists wouldn't have left garbage everywhere so that leaves a bad mark for people who actually care about the environment and strive to make a reasonable difference. On that note I move on to my next point, 'the Spotted Owl-don't cut the trees,' being from Utah my perspective is 'I can't see Oregon because all I see are trees' but the spotted owl which is a near threatened species (not even endangered) need the old growth forests to thrive. I have now heard that the elk populations are going down, that's kind of understandable maybe because they are only allowed to go through spaces as wide as their antlers and if there's a tree is in the way then they can't go through. Elk need to eat as well, and if they don't have an open area to graze then they don't get food. {If only there was a way to increase the number of open fields} oh wait if we did logging then...

Newton's third law "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" most of the time there are people who want to make a change but they don't see the consequences of the aftermath. My example: "there are birds living on an island but this island is being targeted for a complete eradication and all of these birds will lose their home if that happens so let's stop this from happening and end the great pacific garbage patch removal...." Truthfully I would rather burn the island itself and feel bad for any living creature that was unfortunately burned with it because it needs to be dealt with.

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Religion or not, does it matter?

by [David Nguyen](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 11:33 PM

I think the intention of the Environmentalism group is just trying to make the world a better place to live. When I read through the article and looked at the images, there were some ideas that I didn't totally agree with. However, I think the overall message is that people should not "damage" the Earth more than what we have already did, and I completely agreed with this. Today, the Earth is not in a very good shape, and we, as humankind, are making it worse and worse everyday. The air, rivers, ocean, are getting more polluted all around the world. Many trees are getting exploited illegally in many countries. Animals are getting killed too much for unnecessary reasons. The Earth is warming up as proved scientifically, which could cause natural disasters around the world. Because of all these reasons, I will support the Green. I don't care what religion or group they believe in, as long as they do things that will not hurting themselves and others, and make the Earth a better place to live, they have my vote.

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Lest Ye Burn Image

by [Sydney Plaza](#) - Tuesday, May 29, 2018, 6:29 PM

I think that the concept of environmentalism as a religion is a flawed one because it does not include a ritual. In this image it shows a person who is likened to the Pope which I found interesting because of Anti-Catholic nativism in this country and our countries preference towards Protestants, so I felt like it was already a play on the taboo coming from a conservative perspective. I do understand how this is forcibly imposed and how that is questionable. However, I think that laws should be imposed on people's consumer choices in order to protect species who are affected by our consumer choices who have no say in what we do and our ecosystems depend on them. In all honesty I don't see how horrible choosing less polluting options are when

buying goods. I think that there should be plastic bans throughout the United States and globally.

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Disagreement that Environmentalism is a religion

by [Sydney Plaza](#) - Thursday, May 31, 2018, 5:56 PM

In his opening statement Rubin claims that "Many observers have made the point that environmentalism is eerily close to a religious belief system, since it includes creation stories and ideas of original sin" however, this claim seems to be pulled from a pool from which he has already made the assumption of which no source to backup his claim has been provided to check the accuracy of his claim. Environmentalism is not a religion because environmentalism is a multi-faceted term used to protect a multitude of resources and species which we as humans rely upon. We do not use these species and resources to worship, we use them to live off of, such as our waterways for fishing, consumption, industrial, and recreational use and so forth with a multitude of other pivotal resources that humans rely upon. The notion that an individual would be upset at the amount of recycling bins available on a University campus is an indication that the individual who does not have the scientific belief that plastics are a source of toxic waste and damages numerous ecosystems and species which humans are reliant upon is simply not an educated individual. The act of recycling does not automatically turn you into what this person probably detests-an image of a person and set of ideals which he or she has conjured up and has associated with recycling. The availability of recycling bins on campus helps to spur knowledge and accountability for our consumption of products. They are put in place to help inform and educate people about the products we use and how we can dispose of them responsibly to help to minimize our dependency on plastic products.

The attempt at associating Earth Day with either Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Ramadan, or any other religious holiday is a farce. To claim that Earth day is as significant as the latter, then the assumption must be made that Groundhog's Day is a religion. Earth day is a day dedicated to the celebration of all those who fought for Environmentalist rights, just as MLK day is celebrated to Honor the Late Martin Luther King and his achievements.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Can environmental issues ever be resolved?

by [Kyle Shrope](#) - Thursday, May 31, 2018, 9:16 PM

I think that the only way these conflicts can be resolved is through legislation and education. Even though there is a following for environmentalism there are still people who don't follow or care to believe the facts. The only way to change the way these people act and view the environment is through legal legislation. Also if we are able to

people act and view the environment is through legal legislation. Also if we are able to educate people on the environment and how to protect it then you will see more people following these practices. Educating the people is the best way to help people change. If we are able to teach people about the things that harm the environment we will see more voluntary action to keep our earth clean. However there will always be people on the other side questioning the studies of how to keep our environment clean. There is no way to persecute all people for negative actions taken on the environment, but we can take action against the big acts that hurt our environment. Legislation preventing these acts will force these people to change and force them to protect our environment.

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Re: Can environmental issues ever be resolved?

by [David Nguyen](#) - Friday, June 1, 2018, 11:51 PM

I totally agree with your idea. I think the best way to change people's action is to change their mind. We need to educate people the importance of the global warming or things that are hurting the Earth. We cannot just force someone to throw the trash to the trashcan instead of into the river. Well, maybe we can do that in the U.S., but not other part around in the world. What I think we need is that government should have programs where people go around and teach the community. Help the community to understand, so they can change their mind and maybe start doing things that are better for the Earth. I think one person cannot do everything, but everyone can do something to save the Earth.

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#5 Images (Book Titles)

by [Jacob Spriggs](#) - Friday, June 1, 2018, 12:20 AM

I found the images under #5 of the two book covers very interesting and I believe they add the most to the conversation of Environmentalism as a religion. Now that I am reading these forum materials, I do think that environmentalism is becoming more like a religion in almost every way, even if environmentalists accept that or not. There could even be a God-like figure to potentially be worshiped in Mother Nature. However, this book covers don't seem to imply that Environmentalism is a completely new religion, but rather a possible denomination of Christianity. If the authors of these books were trying to show that Environmentalism was its own new religion, Christianity definitely wouldn't be in the title and neither would the Bible or a Bible verse appear on the cover. To me, these images are signs that Environmentalism hasn't become an official religion yet, but that it is very possible and could happen very soon. It certainly

religion yet, but that it is very possible and could happen very soon. It certainly wouldn't be difficult to find places to go worship because buildings wouldn't be necessary.

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Image #7

by [Jason Yeager](#) - Friday, June 1, 2018, 2:28 PM

Image number 7, which shows Obama handing over a bag of money to a scientist, struck me as funny in its truthfulness. Nothing against Obama. Just that if there is enough money involved, especially government funding, any issue can be resolved in favor of the person/party/organization that is handing out the cash. I mean, couldn't we superimpose an image of Trump over Obama and have the cartoon mean exactly the same thing? Trump seems bent on undoing policies that the Obama administration put in place, including environmental protections. Trump wants to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Agreement, a deal ratified by 195 nations, because in his view, it is a bad deal for American businesses and jobs. This view seems to be limited to current businesses--and their D.C. lobbyists--and doesn't include potential jobs and industries that could be created as a result of this agreement. As noted in a June 2017 article in the New York Times, a number of business leaders, including Elon Musk of Tesla, feel that "the decision will ultimately harm the economy by ceding the jobs of the future in clean energy and technology to overseas competitors." (nytimes.com)

If only Trump could see the potential for job and industry creation, and would be willing to contribute government funding to enhance it, we could be a driving force in efforts to clean up the world. We should, since we are historically the largest emitter of harmful pollutants, particularly CO2. Unfortunately, our President's view of the future doesn't seem to extend much further than his Twitter feed.

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Environmentalism is not a Religion

by [Rachel Gragg](#) - Friday, June 1, 2018, 2:50 PM

The article really frustrated me because, in my opinion, the author didn't seem to know much about religion/theology nor environmentalism. I am a Christian and an environmentalist and I feel like I have a fairly good grasp on the concepts of the two and how they are different, yet how they also coexist. I do not, by any means, consider environmentalism to be a religion and I don't believe that most environmentalists would think that as well. There are definite ways that environmentalism fits into religion. in

particular, Christianity, but the parallels that Paul Ruben is attempting to draw are, in my opinion, inaccurate.

First of all, Earth Day is not celebrated at anywhere near the same caliber at which Christmas and Hanukkah and other religious holidays are celebrated. Sure, it's recognized, and it is in celebration of the Earth, but it is not anything like a religious holiday. The part of recycling being related to prayer is something that truly baffled me. I don't understand how recycling could be considered a "self-sacrificing ritual." He claims that the more we recycle, the less that trees will be planted and I'm genuinely curious about where he got that information from. Sure, recycling paper could possibly reduce the number of trees needing to be planted (even though it doesn't really) but there is also plastic and tin that are also incredibly important to be recycled. Those aren't self-sacrificial, but in fact just a necessary and scientifically proven way to help the earth. If plastic doesn't get recycled, then it has to end up somewhere where it will release toxins into the air and kill animals that mistake it for food, so in no way is recycling plastic a part of that narrative because it is way worse to not recycle it. Finally, the recycle bins on college campuses being compared to "shrines" baffles me. First of all, a large number of states have recycling laws (plasticsrecycling.org) and the bins are not there on the same basis that a shrine would be. They are simply deposits to make it easy for people to help the environment. A statue of Jesus isn't there in order to make people understand Christianity better, it's there as a display of affection and love and worship and, therefore, would be considered a shrine, but recycle bins serve real functions and are simply there to help people understand how to recycle. All in all, I am amazed that this man was able to draw these conclusions with, seemingly, not much evidence and I do not agree with almost anything he had to say.

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How I see Environmentalism

by [Kyle Shrope](#) - Friday, June 1, 2018, 4:02 PM

This article makes a lot of good points about environmentalism being a religion. It specifically list 6 reasons why it should be considered a religion. The only difference is that environmentalism is backed up by science and religion is not. It mentions many elements of religion, but I don't think it can be seen as a religion. There's no place of worship or a higher figure in environmentalism. I see environmentalism more as a healthy safe lifestyle that will help keep the earth we live on clean.

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Re: Environmentalism as Religion / Environmental Revelation vs Resolution

 by [Kevin Gable](#) - Friday, June 1, 2018, 11:09 PM

It may be possible to find a solution to this conflict through education. Conceivably, a better educated society should be able to produce better legislation. But as we have heard in class several times, legislation without enforcement undermines the authority of the governing body. Even if a better educated society were to pass better legislation they would still have to enforce it. For example: "the Wilderness Act of 1964, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, and the National Trails Act of 1968 - had already protected large areas of the country from commercial development." (textbook pg 978) Continuing in the 1970 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created by the support of Nixon, the Clean Air Act of 1970, the Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, the Pesticides Control Act of 1972 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 were passed. "National parks and wilderness areas were expanded, and a new law requiring that 'environmental impact statements' be prepared in advance of any major government projects." (textbook pg 978) Clearly our government has been working with the environmental issue for longer than I've been alive. In fact, this is just post WWII era legislation. Then in 1970 the first Earth Day festival took place. I will not argue that it was an inspiring event. I am all for environmental protection and conservation. I will always support a rational conversation and approach to the subject even if the topic is not easy. Another example, I visited the Earth Day website to read about the issue from both sides to consider if solutions can be peacefully enacted or will they be coercively done. What I found was interesting. These are quotes from the "history" of earth as published by earthday.org, (<https://www.earthday.org/about/the-history-of-earth-day/>) *"Each year, Earth Day—April 22—marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970."*

I am confused because the US Congress was passing legislation in the 1960's concerning environmental issues. Did that not count?

"The height of counterculture in the United States, 1970 brought the death of Jimi Hendrix, the last Beatles album, and Simon & Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water." War raged in Vietnam and students nationwide overwhelmingly opposed it." Which nation? Sure, there was protests in the US. As we heard in the class lecture on Thursday, 31 May, you would have to be referring to Europe for the overwhelming student opposition to be historically correct.

"At the time, Americans were slurping leaded gas through massive V8 sedans. Industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of legal consequences or bad press. Air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. "Environment" was a word that appeared more often in spelling bees than on the evening news." Even with the mistakes industry has made over the years it's doubtful any industry at any time got together in their board rooms to plan how to ruin the environment considering the

together in their board rooms to plan how to ruin the environment considering the extinction of the human race would be the result. Apple can't sell iPhones if there's no humans to buy them. What bad press? In the 1960's - 70's industry and government was just becoming aware of the dangers, hence the aforementioned legislation. When did we forget that our own government has always been on our side of this issue? Maybe the relationship is not perfect, maybe it needs continued effort of understanding. When a divide among the people concerning an issue is obscured by miss-information from either side I find a hard time predicting legislation bridging that gap voluntarily

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