

**Syllabus: RELI 4095/6095 (CRNs: 46344; 59903)**  
**“Christianity and Sustainability”**  
**MWF 11:30 – 12:20; Fall 2024; Sanford Hall 312**

**Dr. Jason Roberts**

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**Office Hours: MWF 8 – 9 AM or by appointment; Peabody 221** (top of south stairs)

### **Course Description:**

In an era marked by profound and often deepening environmental, social, and economic crises, we are challenged to seek sustainable solutions to these issues. This course surveys, analyzes, evaluates, and applies ways in which various Christian thinkers and communities define these local and global crises and seek sustainable solutions. We will proceed by 1) exploring “sustainability” as a concept and goal, 2) learning how others have begun to raise and address concerns at the intersection of Christianity and sustainability, and 3) developing our own research questions in order to survey chosen participants about their present and future endeavors to pursue sustainability religiously and religion sustainably.

### **Course Objectives:**

In this course students will:

1. Develop the procedural skills necessary to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate diverse educational materials critically and charitably
2. Survey definitions and models of sustainability, as well as organizations devoted to these concerns and outcomes
3. Encounter, recall, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the history of Christian theoretical and practical responses to concerns in various areas of the triple bottom line of sustainability—ecological, social, and economic
4. Apply knowledge from the course through experiential learning, by developing research questions and surveying local Christian ministries about sustainability
5. Apply course materials to personal and professional knowledge, experiences, and goals

### **Required Texts:**

- Erin Lothes Biviano, *Inspired Sustainability: Planting Seeds for Action* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016), ISBN: 978-1626981638.
- Other readings hyperlinked or available in PDF format on eLC (may contain copyrighted material)

### **Academic Honesty:**

Students are responsible for maintaining The University of Georgia’s “Culture of Honesty” described at the following website and all relevant links: <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>; the use of generative AI for writing or research is prohibited unless otherwise instructed.

### **Attendance Policy/Participation:**

Come to class! Your presence and participation will help you and your peers succeed on exams and other assessments. Grade will be lowered by half a letter grade for every session missed beyond four, unless “make-up” arrangements are made. Multiple absences = grounds for removal. Contact instructor if a long-term absence is required.

**Assessments:**

- **Two in-class exams covering the required readings and lecture materials; 9/6 and 10/21;** multiple choice, T/F, matching, fill-in, short essay; 25% of final grade (=35+40 points)
- **Two response papers based on the readings and lecture materials; due 9/20 and 10/28 on eLC;** three to four pages in length (1,000 – 1,5000 [max] words, not including references, double-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman); several prompts/topics will be listed on eLC for each response paper; students must cite relevant class readings parenthetically or in footnotes (e.g., Chicago, MLA, APA formats); a grading rubric is available on eLC; “border-line” grades can only increase from students constructively utilizing optional readings, sources cited or suggested within readings, and/or outside texts approved by the instructor; 25% of final grade (= 35+40 pts.)
- **One to three weekly reflection questions based on the readings; due on eLC every Friday by 8 AM;** designed to guide reading, discussion, and research (so viewing questions early in the week may be very helpful); posted and submitted on eLC in designated assignment submission folders; response lengths will vary, but should always be (1) thorough/complete, (2) thoughtful, and (3) make specific references to the text (including citation where applicable); students are expected to bring to class print or electronic copies of responses to facilitate discussion/activities; please let Dr. Roberts know if/why responses every need to be submitted late; 5.0 point scale; one date may be missed without penalty; 25% of final grade (15 weeks•5 points = 75 points)
- **Sustainability Survey Project; See final four weeks of course calendar below for various due dates; detailed instructions available in relevant content module on eLC;** after researching sustainability surveys/questionnaires as a class, we will craft our own (**10 point in-class participation grade**) and distribute it to targeted participants who have volunteered their time; students will work with Dr. Roberts to choose and contact participants and then distribute and collect and submit survey and (transcribed) interview data (**25 points**); students will be assigned a participant (or participants) individually or in randomly-selected pairs (depending on class size); sustainability survey will aim to assess knowledge, prioritization, actions, and future desires and goals of participants concerning Christianity and sustainability (ecological, social, economic); students will then be assessed on class-wide and individual data collation, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (**40 points**); 25% of final grade (=75 total points)

**Grading: Points→Percentage→Grade→GPA**

- **Points:** As per the “Assessments” section above, grades are based on a percentage of 300 possible points, 75 for each type of assessment: exams, response papers, reflection questions; Sustainability Survey Project
- **Final grades** will be rounded up to the next whole percent (e.g., an 89.05% = a 90% A-)
- **Percentages to letter grades to GPA:**

|            |    |      |
|------------|----|------|
| 94% - 100% | A  | 4.00 |
| 90% - 93%  | A- | 3.70 |
| 87% - 89%  | B+ | 3.30 |
| 84% - 86%  | B  | 3.00 |
| 80% - 83%  | B- | 2.70 |
| 77% - 79%  | C+ | 2.30 |
| 74% - 76%  | C  | 2.00 |
| 70% - 73%  | C- | 1.70 |
| 65% - 69%  | D  | 1.00 |
| ≤64.00%    | F  | 0.00 |

**Course Calendar:**

- “Session Title” =“Underlined in Quotes”
- ~Textbook Readings = ~Highlighted
- ~eLC Readings (PDF/links) = ~No Highlight
- ~Optional Readings = ~Dark highlight
- **Due Dates and Exams** = **Bolded and Underlined**
- No Class = **Bolded**

| Date | Monday  | Date | Wednesday   | Date                            | Friday – Reflection Questions Due   |
|------|---|------|---|---------------------------------|---|
|      |   | 8/14 | “ <u>Syllabus Day</u> ”<br>Course Overview and Expectations   | 8/16<br><b>Wk.#</b><br><b>1</b> | “ <u>Defining Sustainability—UGA-Style</u> ”<br>~View narrated PowerPoint, “Introduction to Sustainability”; do Pre- and Post-Assessment; prepare to discuss from...<br>... <b>Week 1 reflection questions due on eLC by 8 AM</b>       |
| 8/19 | “‘Sustainability’ and ‘Resilience’: History and Organizations” Possible Guest Speaker<br>~View narrated PowerPoint, “Introduction to Community Resilience”<br>~Brazal, “Resilience: Virtue in an Unexpected Wilderness” | 8/21 | Relating People, Planet, & Prosperity Sustainably” (Resilience wrap-up...then)<br>~Genesis 12:1-3<br>~“The Triple Bottom Line”<br>~“Sustainability Model-Nested Pie”<br>~John Barry, “Strong and Weak Sustainability”                       | 8/23<br><b>2</b>                | “ <u>Christianity: The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crises?</u> ”<br>~Genesis 1:1-5:3 (5:4-12:3 optional)<br>~Lynn White Jr, “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” 1203-1207<br>~Optional: Roberts: “‘Fill and Subdue?’” |
| 8/26 | “ <u>Pope Francis and ‘The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis’</u> ”<br>~ <i>Laudato Si’</i> , ch.3, nos.101-136 (chs.1-2 optional)   | 8/28 | “ <u>Christians as Sustainable Creatures</u> ”<br>~Edwards, “Humans and Other Creatures: Creation, Original Grace, and Original Sin”<br>~Optional: Edwards, <i>Partaking of God</i> , Part III, chs.9-10, pp.147-182                        | 8/30<br><b>3</b>                | “ <u>Pope Francis and the Triple Bottom Line</u> ”<br>~ <i>Laudato Si’</i> , ch.4, nos.137-162  |
| 9/2  | <b>No Class – Labor Day</b>   | 9/4  | “ <u>The Virtues of/and Sustainability</u> ”<br>~Deane-Drummond, “Technology, Ecology, and the Divine: A Critical Look...”<br>~Rourke, “A Catholic Virtues Ecology”<br>~Optional: Schaefer, “Catholic Foundations for Environmental Ethics” | 9/6<br><b>4</b>                 | <b>Exam #1 (35 points)</b><br>(weekly reflection still due)   |
| 9/9  | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 1</u> ”<br>~Biviano, <b>Peface &amp; Introduction</b> , xv-xxxiii  | 9/11 | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 2</u> ”<br>~Biviano, <b>Chapter 1</b> , 1-15   | 9/13<br><b>5</b>                | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 3</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 15-26   |
| 9/16 | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 4</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 27-37   | 9/18 | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 5</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 37-52   | 9/20<br><b>6</b>                | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 6</u> ”<br>~Biviano, <b>Chapter 2</b> , 53-79<br><br><b>Response Paper #1 Due (eLC b/f midnt.)</b>   |

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|-------|---|----------------------------------|--|-------|--|
| 9/23  | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 7</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 79-94   | 9/25                             | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 8</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 94-110   | 9/27  | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 9</u> ”<br>~Biviano, <b>Chapter 3</b> , 111-129   |
| 9/30  | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 10</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 129-145  | 10/2                             | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 11</u> ”<br>~Biviano, <b>Chapter 4</b> , 146-168  | 10/4  | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 12</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 168-186   |
| 10/7  | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 13</u> ”<br>~Biviano, <b>Chapter 5</b> , 187-204   | 10/9                             | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 14</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 204-216   | 10/11 | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 15</u> ”<br>~Biviano, 216-228   |
| 10/14 | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 16</u> ”<br>~Biviano, <b>Chapter 6 +</b> , 229-241   | 10/16                            | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 17</u> ”<br>~Biviano, “Research Design and Methods,”<br>243-260   | 10/18 | “ <u>Inspired Sustainability 18</u> ”<br>~Biviano, “Appendices,” 261-280   |
| 10/20 | <b>Exam #2 (40 points)</b>  | 10/23                            | “ <u>Develop Methods; Connect w/ Contacts 1</u> ”<br>~Review Biviano, Appendix B, 267-68<br>~RELI 4095 Experiential Learning Application<br>~Initial Letter to Ministers (Sample) (in<br>“Research Project Resources” submodule<br>under “Readings”) | 10/25 | “ <u>Develop Methods; Connect w/ Contacts 2</u> ”<br>~Bernard, Ch10, <i>Research Methods in<br/>Anthropology</i> , pp.251-61, 268-77, 281-87,<br>298 (in “Research Project Resources”<br>submodule under “Readings”) |
| 10/28 | “ <u>Craft Survey Questions 1</u> ”<br>Working in/as class<br>~possible reading(s) TBD<br><b>Response Paper #2 Due (eLC b/f midnt.)</b> | 10/30                            | “ <u>Craft Survey Questions 2</u> ”<br>Working in/as class<br>~possible reading(s) TBD   | 11/1  | <b>No Class-Fall Break</b><br><br>(weekly reflection still due)  |
| 11/4  | “ <u>Craft Survey Questions 3</u> ”<br>Working in/as class<br>~possible reading(s) TBD  | 11/6                             | “ <u>Craft Survey Questions 4</u> ”<br>Working in/as class<br>~possible reading(s) TBD   | 11/8  | “ <u>Finalize Sustainability Survey</u> ”<br>Make final survey preparations<br><b>Implement Survey (by date determined)</b>  |
| 11/11 | “ <u>Craft Interview Questions 1</u> ”<br>Working in/as class<br>~possible reading(s) TBD   | 11/13                            | “ <u>Craft Interview Questions 2</u> ”<br>Working in/as class<br>~possible reading(s) TBD  | 11/15 | “ <u>Finalize Interview questions</u> ”<br>Meet as class to finalize interview questions<br>(or Monday at the latest)  |
| 11/18 | “ <u>Report, Analyze, Evaluate Data 1</u> ”<br>Meet, report, discuss any available data   | 11/20                            | “ <u>Report, Analyze, Evaluate Data 2</u> ”<br>Meet, report, interpret data  | 11/22 | “ <u>Report, Analyze, Evaluate Data 3</u> ”<br>Meet, report, interpret data  |
| 11/25 | Class meeting TBD   | 11/27                            | <b>No Class – Thanksgiving Break</b>   | 11/29 | <b>No Class – Thanksgiving Break</b>   |
| 12/2  | “ <u>Course in Retrospect</u> ”<br>Meeting format TBD   | 12/3<br>Tue =<br>Fri<br>schedule | “ <u>Class and Individual Conclusions</u> ”<br>Meeting format TBD<br>Students present/discuss findings (from Data<br>Interpretation Report in progress)  | 12/6  | <b>Data Interpretation Report Due in eLC<br/>Submission Folder by 11:59 PM</b><br><br><b>Interview Transcript due Sun 12/8</b>   |