Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
LTRGY660 / SP650 - Praying with the Earth
Fall 2026
Location: On-campus, online synchronous

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Course Description

Prayer arises from creaturely locations shaped by power, interdependence, and coexistence. This elective course explores the relationship between prayer and the earth and its creatures. Students will encounter personal and communal prayer practices and postures in varied landscapes, habitats, and sites of human ecological interaction, creatively and critically exploring contemporary possibilities for praying with a deeper connection with the earth.

Course Delivery Methods

On site (Class will be held in varied outdoor sites in the Evanston area which will be negotiated at the start of class.)

Course Learning Outcomes and Assessment Instruments

Students completing this course will:

1. Develop skills for being with vegetal and animal life for extended periods of time.
2. Deploy knowledge of traditional prayer forms, prayer practices, and postures of prayer with attention to the earth in a diverse array of urban and suburban green spaces.
3. Critically reflect on their sense of relationship to nature, the universe, and the divine.
4. Create a constructive engagement of a prayer practice or theology of prayer for use in church or the public square.

These outcomes will be assessed by these respective assessment instruments:

1. class participation, weekly reflexivity journal, participant-observation
2. class participation, weekly reflexivity journal
3. class participation, weekly reflexivity journal, final project
4. final project

Alignment with MDiv learning outcomes:

Additionally, this course will contribute to the formation of students in relation to 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 of the MDiv learning outcomes which are:

1. Demonstrate a general knowledge of Scripture, church history, and doctrine;
2. Interprets Scripture and tradition critically and constructively in the varying contexts of contemporary life;
3. Demonstrate a growing depth of understanding and practice in personal and corporate spiritual discipline(s);
4. Promote prophetic inquiry and witness for the sake of justice;

5. Engage in critically informed analyses of gender, race, culture, social and economic structures that shape human beings;
6. Articulate critical and multi-faceted expressions of the gospel and invites others to receive it; and
7. Demonstrate the capacity to nurture further Christian formation through the practices of ministry (e.g., prayer, liturgy, preaching, pastoral care, and teaching).

Required Textbooks and Materials (All students must purchase.)

Cláudio Carvalhaes. *How Do We Become Green People and Earth Communities?: Inventory, Metamorphoses, and Emergence(i)es* (York, PA: Barber Son's Press, 2023). Cost: $29.99 ISBN: 1734718846

Patty Krawec. *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2022). Cost: $18.59 ASIN: B0BN6SFTJL

Maggie Oman Shannon. *The Way We Pray: Celebrating Spirit from Around the World* (Coral Gables: Mango Media, 2001). Cost: (Used on Amazon) $3.99 ISBN: 1573245712

Mark Wallace. *When God Was a Bird: Christianity, Animism, and the Re-Enchantment of the World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018). Cost: $25.66 ISBN: 0823281310

Daniel Wolpert. *Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices (Revised Edition)* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2023). Cost: $17.99 ISBN: 0835820394

Additional Required Learning Tools:

A foldable chair, easily moveable seat, or blanket (should student not have one, this will be provided)

A variety of layered clothes and footwear to ensure comfort in all weather

An unused journal and pen

Additional Required Readings and Media (Instructor will provide digitally.)

"Participant Observation" in Guest, et al. *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2012), 75-111.

Course Expectations

- All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year.
- This course is rooted in the conviction that theological education should be good for the body, the mind, and the soul. As such, if anything happens during the term that adversely affects your health and wellbeing, feel free to inform the instructor about it in whatever way is most comfortable for you, allowing the instructor to work with you to meet both your own needs and the requirements of this course.
- This course will require extensive time outdoors with the entirety of class being held outside except in case of life-threatening weather conditions, e.g. lightning, severe winds, and severe temperatures. Students will need to be prepared to participate fully in class during a wide range of potential weather conditions.
- The use of neutral, expansive, or emancipatory language in reference to God and human beings is a requirement for all written and oral work, and it is strongly encouraged in all other written or oral communications.

- In addition to the GETS policy on plagiarism, this course defines plagiarism as including words that are spoken. If someone else's words or ideas are included in or directly shape your spoken assignment, they must be verbally acknowledged in addition to being cited in the manuscript. Failure to do so constitutes an act of plagiarism.
- That the schedule and syllabus may be modified and additional material may be added as the professor considers necessary to the course and the development of students. However, any changes that have the potential to adversely impact students will be made in consultation with the students.
- All written assignments must be submitted electronically through Moodle unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. Standard format for all papers is double-spaced lines, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins top and bottom, and 1" margins on each side. All footnotes and headers should follow the appropriate seminary style guide.

Course Requirements and Course Feedback

1. Class participation and course reading: Students are expected to be present and on time in all class sessions. Late arrival or early departure will be considered in evaluating class attendance. Class participation will include individual and group activities. Students should arrive at each class session prepared to demonstrate their critical engagement of the reading material. Note the reading assignment for the first class session.
2. Weekly reflexivity journal: Beginning on the second week of class, students will write a weekly journal entry documenting the impact of class participation and readings on their sense of self in social, ecclesial, and ecological context. Entries will be no longer than 500 words and will be evaluated by rubric.
3. Participant-observation and reflection: In consultation with the instructor, each student will identify an activity in a wild space that corresponds with the focus of their final project. Students will encounter this wild space for a sustained period of eight hours in one visit or multiple visits engaging as possible in conversation with those in the space and who care for the space. As applicable, students will be expected to adhere to the protocols in "Participant Observation" in Guest, et al. *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2012). This material will be reviewed in class prior to implementation of the observation assignment. Students will submit an observation report, concluding with critical reflection on insights gained. Students will also submit an interview report concluding with critical reflection on insights gained. Reports should be a maximum of 500 words each. Reports will be evaluated by rubric.
4. Final project:
    a. Final project: Students will submit final research/reflection papers that: 1) identify and attend to the particularities of place; 2) critically and liberatively imagine wholeness in that particular place; 3) critically reflect on systems that actively restrict wholeness in that place with attention to course learnings; 4) construct a prayer resource for praying with that place; and 5) reflect on how that prayer resource might contribute to the life of the church and the world. Projects will be no longer than 3,000 words including the constructive prayer resource. Projects will be evaluated by rubric.
    b. Alternative final projects: Students may consult with the instructor on the possibility of an alternative project that creatively engages the five contours of the

final project. Alternative projects will be accompanied by a critical reflection paper of no more than 750 words. Alternative projects will be evaluated by rubric.

5. Feedback and grades: Emphasis in coursework will be placed on formative and summative feedback provided by the instructor in conversation with critical self-assessment and communal assessment of the learning process by students. The only letter or number grade for the course will be the final grade. Final grades will be determined by each student in conversation with the professor. In assigning their grade, each student will critically reflect on their achievement of the course learning outcomes attending to instructor assessments, self-assessments, and communal assessments in conversation with the instructor. Students will use a rubric provided by the instructor. While the final power of grade selection ultimately rests with the student, it should be noted that students' approach to critically reflecting on achievement of the course learning outcomes attending to instructor assessments, self-assessments, and communal assessments will also be assessed by the instructor and a data point for any potential future assessments such as references.
6. Names, pronouns, and identities: All students should be referred to by the names and pronouns that they use. Attending to using the correct names and pronouns is a key part of fulfilling our institutional mission to be an inclusive community that follows the way of Jesus. If I accidentally use an incorrect name or gender pronoun when addressing you or if the Garrett registration system contains an inaccurate name, please feel free to let me know, in whatever manner makes you comfortable, what name or pronouns you use, and I will make every effort to correct that error.

Course Schedule

Week 1:
Eco-liberation frameworks of prayer
Participant observation of other-than-human creatures
Personal and communal prayer
Course overview and logistics
Prayer practices: contemplation

Week 2:
"Water is life!" / Living Water
Watershed theology
Water and prayer
Shorelines, bodies of water, and watersheds
Prayer practices: body prayer

Week 3:
Eco-liberation theologies of prayer
Prayer in/with/from/for nature
Dimensions and dilemmas of urban green spaces
Prayer practices: journaling, extemporaneous prayer

Week 4:

Tracing earthen scars
Ancestors and indigenous land
Erasure, eradication, and reparation
Prayer practices: labyrinth prayer, walking prayer

Week 5:
Human waste and consumption
Colonialism and prayer
Wasteland and wastewater
Prayer practices: communal prayer, written prayer

Week 6:
Holy hills, earthen altars
Prayer, habitus, and habitat
Prayer and spiritual disciplines
Prayer practices: affirmations, centering prayer

Week 7:
Other than human creaturely life
Animism and prayer
Creaturely respect and learning
Prayer practices: examen, fasting

Week 8:
Vegetal theology
Prayer and plants
Vegetal respect and learning
Prayer practices: feasts, guided prayer

Week 9:
Trees and forests
Slow prayer
Prayer practices: prayer beads, prayer bowls

Week 10:
Fire and the divine
Prayer and flame
Prayer practices: candle prayers, praying scripture

Week 11:
Prayer as process
Expanding prayer spaces
Prayer practices: creativity, altars

Week 12:
Student reports of participant observations

Student reflection on journaling practice

Week 13:
Student presentations of final projects

Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing
• Academic integrity and plagiarism: (See 22-23 Handbook, 12, 68-73). Instructors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
• Writing and citations: The *Turabian Manual for Writers* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here. In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA).
• Writing Support: The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See the "Writing Center" Moodle page for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation
• Inclusivity/Diversity: The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed. All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues. (See 22-23 Handbook, 9)
• Attendance and lateness policies: Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (22-23 Handbook, 19)
• Some faculty may limit the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations
• Garrett's *Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities* policy and process is set out in the Academic Handbook (22-23 Handbook, 12). We are committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact Student Access (email: student.access@garrett.edu / phone: 847-467-5530) to move forward with the established accommodation process. If you already have established accommodations with Student Access, please contact the instructor prior to the first class session so the instructor can work with you to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic

accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations.
• *Extensions*: For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (22-23 Handbook, 20)

Syllabus Sources:
This syllabus is influenced by a lay course Dr. Kristen Daley Mosier and I proposed for prayer with attention to different alpine landscapes.

Weekly Reflexivity Journal Rubric

Criteria	Unsatisfactory-Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
Reflection on Content	Reflection lacks critical thinking. Superficial connections are made with key course concepts and course materials, activities, and/or assignments.	Reflection demonstrates limited critical thinking in applying, analyzing, and/or evaluating key course concepts and theories from readings, lectures, media, discussions, activities, and/or assignments. Minimal connections made through explanations, inferences, and/or examples.	Reflection demonstrates some degree of critical thinking in applying, analyzing, and/or evaluating key course concepts and theories from readings, lectures, media, discussions activities, and/or assignments. Connections made through explanations, inferences, and/or examples.	Reflection demonstrates a high degree of critical thinking in applying, analyzing, and evaluating key course concepts and theories from readings, lectures, media, discussions activities, and/or assignments. Insightful and relevant connections made through contextual explanations, inferences, and examples.
Personal Impact	Conveys inadequate evidence of reflection on own work in response to the self-assessment questions posed about sense of self in social, ecclesial, and ecological context. Personal impact or awareness are not evident and/or demonstrates a neutral experience with negligible personal impact. Lacks enough inferences, examples, personal insights and challenges, and/or future implications are overlooked.	Conveys limited evidence of reflection on own work in response to the self-assessment questions posed about sense of self in social, ecclesial, and ecological context. Demonstrates less than adequate personal growth and awareness through few or simplistic inferences made, examples, insights, and/or challenges that are not well developed. Minimal thought of the future implications of current experience.	Conveys evidence of reflection on own work with a personal response to the self-assessment questions posed about sense of self in social, ecclesial, and ecological context. Demonstrates satisfactory personal growth and awareness through some inferences made, examples, insights, and challenges. Some thought of the future implications of current experience.	Conveys strong evidence of reflection on own work with a personal response to the self-assessment questions posed about sense of self in social, ecclesial, and ecological context. Demonstrates significant personal growth and awareness of deeper meaning through inferences made, examples, well developed insights, and substantial depth in perceptions and challenges. Synthesizes current experience into future implications.
Writing	Poor writing style lacking in standard English, clarity, language used, and/or frequent errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling. Needs work.	Average and/or casual writing style that is sometimes unclear and/or with some errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling.	Above average writing style and logically organized using standard English with minor errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling.	Well written and clearly organized using standard English, characterized by elements of a strong writing style and basically free from grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling errors.
Timeliness	Journal reflection is submitted 2-3 days (49-72 hours) after the deadline.	Journal reflection is submitted 1-2 days (25-48 hours) after the deadline.	Journal reflection is submitted within 1 day (24 hours) after the deadline.	Journal reflection is submitted on or before deadline.

Revised from Rutgers School of Communication and Information

Participant-Observation and Reflection Rubric

	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Unsatisfactory/Beginning
Description of context	Richly describe the setting, paying attention to all sensory perception. Identify the setting from bioregion down to local specifics such as watershed and particularities of landscape, and carefully analyze the history of the land and how it came to be in its current reality.	Describe the setting, paying attention to all sensory perception. Identify the setting from bioregion down to local specifics such as watershed and particularities of landscape, and analyze the history of the land and how it came to be in its current reality.	Describe the setting, paying attention to some sensory perception. Generally identify the setting from bioregion down to local specifics such as watershed and particularities of landscape, and summarize the history of the land and how it came to be in its current reality.	Describe the setting, paying little attention to some sensory perception. Imprecisely and generally identifying the setting. Draw little connection to the history of the land and how it came to be in its current reality.
Analysis and interpretation	Richly and critically analyze the data gathered and draw rich and specific connections to course themes and learnings.	Critically analyze the data gathered and draw specific connections to course themes and learnings.	Generally analyze the data gathered and draw general or limited connections to course themes and learnings.	Little attention to analysis the data gathered and draws only superficial connections to course themes and learnings.
Critical reflection on insights gained	Clearly summarize insights from the observation, and critically and richly reflects on personal impact.	Clearly summarize insights from the observation, and critically reflects on personal impact.	Generally summarizes insights from the observation, and reflects on personal impact.	Imprecise summary of insights from the observation, and minimal and superficial reflection on personal impact.

Final Project Rubric

Project Elements	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Unsatisfactory/Beginning
"Identify and attend to the particularities of place"	Richly and Critically identifies and attends to…	Critically identifies and attends to…	Briefly identifies but does not significantly engage…	Does not or only superficially identifies and engages…
"critically and liberatively imagine wholeness in that particular place"	Critically and compellingly communicates a detailed and rich vision of wholeness…	Critically communicates a detailed vision of wholeness…	Briefly mentions but does not significantly engage a vision of wholeness…	Does not communicate…
"critically reflect on systems that actively restrict wholeness in that place with attention to course learnings"	Critically conducts rich and sustained analysis…	Critically draws connections and conducts analysis…	Briefly and Superficially draws connections and engages in limited analysis….	Does not draw…
"construct a prayer resource for praying with that place"	Critically constructs a rich and detailed…	Critically constructs a detailed…	Constructs a resource…	Does not construct…
"reflect on how that prayer resource might contribute to the life of the church and the world"	Critically and richly identifies how this resource can contribute…	Critically identifies how this resource can contribute…	Generally, but superficially identifies…	Does not identify…
Reflects the expectations of graduate-level writing with attention to proper citation, argumentation, grammar and syntax, structure, and headers.	Reflects…	Reflects with few, minor exceptions…	Partially reflects…	Does not reflect…

Grading Evaluation Rubric

Projects	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Unsatisfactory/Beginning
Class participation and reading	Student had no unexcused absences (or unexcused tardies) and demonstrated rich, specific, and substantive engagement with course readings in class activities and projects.	Student had no unexcused absences (and no unexcused tardies) and demonstrated specific, substantive engagement with course readings in class activities and projects.	Student had one to three unexcused absences (or multiple unexcused tardies) and demonstrated limited and inconsistent engagement with course readings in class activities and projects.	Student had more than three unexcused absences and failed to demonstrate engagement with course readings in class activities and projects.
Weekly reflexivity journal (identify which column the formative and summative feedback of the instructor on this project falls in)				
Participant-observation report (identify which column the formative and summative feedback of the instructor on this project falls in)				
Final project (identify which column the formative and summative feedback of the instructor on this project falls in)				

Personal narrative: In a maximum of 100 words per outcome, please identify the impact of this course in relationship to the first three course outcomes:

1. Develop skills for being with vegetal and animal life for extended periods of time.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Deploy knowledge of traditional prayer forms, prayer practices, and postures of prayer with attention to the earth in a diverse array of urban and suburban green spaces.

3. Critically reflect on their sense of relationship to nature, the universe, and the divine.

Student's proposed grade: ____ Assigned grade: ____

Instructor feedback on that proposed grade: