

## Ecological Conversion: From Critique to Creation

From decarbonizing economies to decolonizing academies, a critical dynamic of our time is a sense of a need for deep, paradigmatic change. This course explores the possibility of an “ecological conversion” that encompasses such paradigmatic change at existential/personal, systemic, and material/environmental levels. The course balances two correlative needs for theorizing change: critical diagnosis of problematic roots of the current paradigm, and creative constructive theory that proposes alternatives.

The working thesis will be that creative conversion arises through encounters between differing perspectives, modes of thought or traditions. As such, its methodology is deliberately pluralist in putting different traditions into dialogue, including ‘Eastern’ philosophy (primarily Kyoto school philosophers including Nishitani, Nishida, Tanabe), decolonial or postcolonial thinkers (Rodolfo Kusch, Édouard Glissant and others), contemporary and canonical Continental philosophy (Isabelle Stengers, Elizabeth Grosz, Rosi Braidotti, Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze), philosophers of race or critical race theory (Fred Moten, Charles Mills), eco-feminisms (Val Plumwood) and North American Indigenous (Kyle Whyte, Vine Deloria Jr., Leanne Betasamosake Simpson).

The course has three main units: (I) Conversion; (II) Critique; (III) Creation (Provisional reading list below). Questions include: what are the affective conditions of conversion (both social and personal)? How does conversion challenge static conceptions of identity? How does a logic of conversion intersect with time (all at once or incrementally)? Can we theorize change effectively without a determinate *telos*, that is, while remaining open to contingency and emergence? How does encounter with difference lead to creation? What are conditions of authentic encounter and how do encounters fail to be genuine? How can we think decolonization affirmatively, that is creatively or beyond the given binary of colonizer/colonized? What is the role of ideology in relation to imagination? Can we fruitfully read ‘western’ philosophy in a decolonial key and if so how? How can we cultivate imaginaries that exceed the patterns of the present while nevertheless still reckoning with inherited structures of injustice?

Though its emphasis is on philosophical texts and approaches, the course is interdisciplinary in spirit. It should appeal to students with interests in ecology, social transformation, eco-criticism, history of ideas, comparative philosophy, social justice, speculative philosophy and critical theory broadly construed.

Students will be expected to write one significant research paper and two shorter synopses over the course of the term.

Provisional Sessional Reading List: This list is **provisional**. It will **definitely change** in precise details but gives a good idea of course themes.

### **Conversion**

#### Week One: Ecological Conversion?

Félix Guattari *The Three Ecologies*

Pope Francis, selections from *Laudato Si*

Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*

Week Two: Affect and the affirmative/reactionary dialectic of critique

Rosi Braidotti, selections from *Nomadic Theory*

Sylvan Tomkins, selections from *Shame and Its Sisters*

Deleuze, selections from *Difference and Repetition, Nietzsche and Philosophy*

Selections from Mignolo and Walsh *On Decoloniality: "The Decolonial For"*

Week Three: Identity, essentialism, and conversion

Nishida Kitaro, "The Logic of the Place of Nothingness"

Nishitani Keiji, "The Impersonal and the Personal"; "The Standpoint of Sunyata"

Vine Deloria, Jr., "Relativity, Relatedness, and Reality"; "Reflection and Revelation: Knowing Land, Places, and Ourselves"

Kwame Anthony Appiah, selections from *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity*

Édouard Glissant, "Culture and Identity", "The Chaos-World" from *Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity*

Week Four: Relation and Encounter

Édouard Glissant, selections from *Poetics of Relation*

Rodolfo Kusch, selections from *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*

**Critique**

Week Five: Logics and grammars

Val Plumwood, selections from *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*

Rodolfo Kusch "Indigenous Logic", "Symmetry and Truth" from *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*

Nagatomo, Shigenori "The Logic of the Diamond Sutra: A is not A, therefore it is A"

Week Six: Interrupting the Present: Critiques of settler normalcy

Kyle Whyte: "Time as Kinship", "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice", "Against Crisis Epistemology"

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, selections from *As We Have Always Done*

Week Seven: Encounter Case Study One: From Contract to Relation

Charles S. Mills, *The Racial Contract*

"What is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid" by Aaron Mills / Waabishki Ma'ingan

"Changing the Treaty Question" by Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark

Thomas Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*

Week Eight: Encounter Case Study Two: "No Racism Intended", Moten reads Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas, "Is Ontology Fundamental?"; "Intention, Event, and the Other"; selections from *Totality and Infinity*

Fred Moten, "There is no Racism Intended" from *The Universal Machine*

**OR** Encounter Case Study Two: Decolonizing Bergson

Henri Bergson, selections from *Two Sources of Religion and Morality*

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Postcolonial Bergson*  
Alia Al-Saji, “Decolonizing Bergson: The Temporal Schema of the Open and the Closed”

### **Creation**

#### Week Nine: ‘New’ Natures?

Alfred North Whitehead “Nature Lifeless and Nature Alive”; “The Aim of Philosophy”  
from *Modes of Thought*

E. Richard Atleo, selections from *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*

Didier Debaise, *Nature as Event*

Vine Deloria Jr., “If you think about it, you will see that it is true”

Karen Barad, selections from *Meeting the Universe Halfway*

#### Week Ten: Ideology and Imagination

Louis Althusser “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”

Deleuze and Guattari, selections from *A Thousand Plateaus, What is Philosophy?*

Elizabeth Grosz, selections from *The Incorporeal*

Glissant, “Creolizations in the Caribbean and the Americas”, “On Beauty as complicity”

#### Week Eleven: History and Creation

Glissant, *Treatise on the Whole-World*

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four theses”

Rodolfo Kusch “Seminal Thinking”, “Seminal Economy”, “Thinking the ‘Asi’” in  
*Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*

Jacob Taubes, selections from *Occidental Eschatology*

#### Week Twelve: Transversality and Openness

Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times*

Nishida Kitaro, “The logic of the place of nothingness” (2<sup>nd</sup> time)

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