

AAR MEMBER CONTACT

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ABSTRACT

This project seeks to advance the discourse and practice of the emerging scholarly field of Religion and Ecology by establishing a sustainable and supportive regional network of scholar-practitioners in the San Francisco Bay Area. A one-day conference and ongoing networking – facilitated by students and faculty of the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion graduate program – will invite leaders of environmental organizations and public land managers into dialogue with faculty and students of Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Theology departments. Together, these scholar-practitioners will explore the transformational possibilities of incorporating ecological concerns into religious education and integrating spiritual perspectives into environmental protection and activism. CIIS envisions the conference and network as catalysts for scholarly growth of the Religion and Ecology field, effective regional organizing, and the professional development of both CIIS graduate students and AAR members.

NEED

The ecological crises of climate change, mass extinction, and fresh water depletion are caused not by a lack of knowledge or technology, but by the absence of a unifying vision and the will to take action toward it, according to leading scholars like Mary Evelyn Tucker, Gus Speth, and Brian Swimme. The environmental movement has recently come to embrace the notion that current worldviews and values are not sufficient to create more just and sustainable relationships between humans and the Earth. At the same time, some cite religious beliefs as reasons for opposing climate change research and policy. The need to bring greater depth of insight to the intersections of belief, spiritual/religious practice, and environmental concern is great.

To address these issues, California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) launched its graduate program in Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion (ESR) within the university's department of Philosophy and Religion in 2013. The ESR program is the first in the world to provide both master's and doctoral level study in the field of Religion and Ecology. The uniquely integrated ESR curriculum incorporates the study of religions and spiritualities, ecology and environmentalism, cosmology, and philosophy. Through ESR, CIIS plays a leadership role in higher education, Religious Studies, and the environmental movement, generating the

intellectual resources to contribute to an evolution in the understanding of the Earth-human relationships.

The ESR program attracts students who are committed to engaging ecological crises in a context that promotes spiritual inquiry, integral thinking, the exploration of diverse worldviews, and the expansion of consciousness. These students, who must negotiate a rapidly changing job market, need professional development opportunities that will serve as bridges to meaningful and gainful employment.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

With its numerous universities, thriving art scene, and progressive politics, the San Francisco Bay Area has a well-deserved reputation for social and cultural innovation. The nine-county region has been home to the Beat cultural movement, the Summer of Love, the activism of LGBT organizers and the Black Panthers, and more recently, technological innovations spurred by San Francisco-based companies like Salesforce, Twitter, Airbnb, Uber, and Square.

This thriving intellectual and social foment has contributed to the evolution of the environmental movement. The Bay Area is home to many leading environmental organizations including The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, Interfaith Power and Light, and the Earth Island Institute, founded by famed local environmentalist David Brower. Environmental justice organizations like SF Environment in San Francisco, Communities for a Better Environment in Richmond, and Asian Pacific Environmental Network in Oakland have taken a leading role in shifting ecological activism to embrace the concerns of people of color. San Francisco is also the site of one of the nation's largest urban parks, the 125-square mile Golden Gate National Recreation Area, which hosts more than 14.5 million visitors each year.

The Bay Area is the home of numerous departments of Religious Studies and Theology – at Stanford University, Golden Gate University, and University of San Francisco, among others – and several divinity schools and seminaries, including the Bay Area campus of Fuller Theological Seminary, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, and the eight member schools of the Graduate Theological Union.

CIIS proposes a one-day conference and ongoing networking that will draw on the rich intellectual and cultural resources of the San Francisco Bay Area. ESR students and faculty will identify opportunities for interdisciplinary and cross-sector alliances that can enhance the effectiveness of both environmental organizing and higher education in Religious Studies and Theology. The conference and network have three central goals:

- To initiate and nurture a regional conversation around the relationship of religious education, belief, and practice with environmental issues;
- To expand and strengthen the network of Bay Area AAR members interested in the field of Religion and Ecology; and
- To develop career pathways for graduate students studying Religion and Ecology.

To accomplish these goals, CIIS will invite representatives from Religious Studies and Theology departments in the Bay Area to engage in conversation with representatives from a range of environmental and land management organizations. The conference will open with a light

reception to welcome attendees, followed by an opening keynote address. Two panels, one before lunch and one after lunch, will enable scholars and leaders of environmental organizations to present their current work. Each panel will include accomplished senior scholars, mid-career and junior faculty, and at least one graduate student. These interactive, intergenerational conversations embody CIIS's vision of the conference as inclusive and broadly accessible.

The conference will be structured to provide ample time for formal and informal discussions throughout the day. Multiple breaks and a two-hour roundtable discussion facilitated using the participatory World Café method of dialogue will allow for the cultivation of strong connections between faculty, graduate students, and professionals in the environmental movement. The roundtable discussion will be guided by three questions: (1) what are the obstacles to incorporating spirituality in environmental protection and organizing in the Bay Area? (2) How can those obstacles be overcome? (3) How can ecological concerns best be incorporated into graduate level Theology and Religious Studies curricula? A second keynote speaker will give closing remarks at the end of the day.

Outreach and attendance

To advertise the conference, a graduate student worker supervised by ESR chair Elizabeth Allison will conduct personalized outreach to leaders of Bay Area environmental organizations and faculty of Religious Studies and Theology departments. CIIS anticipates 60 conference attendees: 25 leaders of environmental organizations, 15 faculty of departments of Religious Studies and Theology, 10 CIIS graduate students, and 10 graduate students of other local universities. Potential participants include:

- **Eric Andersen**, Director, Golden Gate Park
- **James Baraz**, Advisor, One Earth Sangha
- **Sofia Betancourt**, Adjunct Professor, Starr King School for the Ministry
- **Sally G. Bingham**, President and Founder, Interfaith Power and Light
- **Martin Bourque**, Executive Director, Ecology Center
- **Ambrose Carroll**, Founder, Green the Church; Senior Pastor, Church by The Side of The Road
- **Linda Cutts**, Central Abbess, Green Gulch Farm Zen Center
- **Drisana Davis**, Director, Hazon Bay Area
- **William Dyrness**, Professor of Theology and Culture, Fuller Theological Seminary
- **Ibrahim Abdurrahman Farajajé**, Provost and Professor of Cultural Studies and Islamic Studies, Starr King School for the Ministry
- **Zellig Golden**, Founding Director, Wilderness Torah
- **Marion Grau**, Associate Professor of Theology, Church Divinity School of the Pacific
- **Shauna Hanna**, Associate Professor of Homiletics, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
- **Jeremy Hays**, Executive Director, Green for All
- **Carol Jacobson**, Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Diaconal Ministry Program, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
- **John Knox**, Executive Director, Earth Island Institute
- **Michelle Latvala**, Executive Director, Spirit Rock Meditation Center
- **Chris Lehnertz**, Superintendent, Golden Gate National Recreation Area
- **Lois Lorentzen**, Professor of Theology and Religious Studies, University of San Francisco

- **Deb Love**, West Division Director, Trust for Public Land
- **Joanna Macy**, Root teacher of the Work That Reconnects
- **Nile Malloy**, Northern California Program Director, Communities for a Better Environment
- **Thomas Massaro**, Professor of Moral Theology, Jesuit School of Theology
- **Mary McGann**, Adjunct Associate Professor of Liturgical Studies, Jesuit School of Theology
- **Brian McPeck**, Chief Conservation Officer, The Nature Conservancy
- **Sam Mickey**, Adjunct Professor of Theology and Religious Studies, University of San Francisco
- **Cynthia Moe-Lobeda**, Professor of Christian Ethics, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and Church Divinity School of the Pacific
- **Vijaya Nagarajan**, Associate Professor of Theology and Religious Studies, University of San Francisco
- **Lindi Ramsden**, Acting Dean of Students and Community Life, Starr King School for the Ministry
- **Deborah Raphael**, Director, SF Environment
- **Gary Snyder**, Poet and long-time environmental advocate
- **Starhawk**, Founder, Earth Activist Trainings
- **Shelley Wilcox**, Professor of Philosophy, San Francisco State University
- **Miya Yoshitani**, Executive Director, Asian Pacific Environmental Network
- **Devin Zuber**, Assistant Professor of American Studies, Literature, and Swedenborgian Studies, Pacific School of Religion

Documentation and follow-up

Keynotes and panel sessions will be recorded and posted to the university's YouTube and social media accounts. To build on the relationships initiated at the conference, ESR students and faculty will organize and manage a listserv that will allow conference attendees and other stakeholders to exchange ideas and build community.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This project seeks to build bridges between the environmental and academic theological communities, bringing these groups into closer dialogue around issues of sustainability, environmental protection, and the development of a new generation of scholar-practitioners. Ultimately, the goal of this dialogue is to create a robust conversation and regional network around religious education, spirituality, and environmental practice in the Bay Area, which will help to build a field of professional discourse and effective, impactful practice.

The conference and network will advance graduate students' intellectual and professional growth by encouraging engagement with emerging scholarship and the real-world lessons of spiritually informed environmental activism. As they help to organize the conference and subsequent networking, students will gain practical professional skills and build relationships that will serve them long after graduation.

Panelists will have the opportunity to present their work to a diverse group of engaged local peers who are at various stages of their careers. All conference attendees and network

participants – many of whom are AAR members – will explore current research and activism with likeminded colleagues. The conference and subsequent networking will create a community of scholar-practitioners who can bridge the approaches of different fields to craft effective strategies for the advancement of spiritually engaged and religiously sensitive environmental activism. Establishing a sustainable network of teacher-scholars can positively impact environmental policy development in the Bay Area and beyond.

The project is region-specific in that it will be informed by the specific context of the San Francisco Bay Area: a culture of technological and artistic innovation, the proximity of dense urban areas to public open space, and a rich history of political progressivism. These elements are not unique to the Bay Area, of course, and it is anticipated that the conference and networking model will be easily adaptable to other AAR regions. CIIS looks forward to sharing information and insights with organizers of similarly themed future conferences and regional networks.

TIMELINE

From September 2015 to February 2016, ESR students and faculty will conduct outreach and plan the conference, which will be held in March 2016. From April 2016 to August 2016, organizers will establish and manage the post-conference listserv.

BUDGET

CIIS respectfully requests \$4,000 to host the conference and to organize and manage a listserv for post-conference networking. Please find a brief budget below:

Speaker honoraria <i>\$ honoraria for six presenters</i>	
Student worker <i>100 hours at \$/hour</i>	
Lunch and refreshments <i>For 60 attendees at \$/person</i>	
Copying and printing	
World Café facilitation <i>One hour of preparation and two hours of facilitation at \$/hour</i>	
Total	
Total requested from AAR	\$4,000

AAR funding will eliminate the need to charge a conference registration fee. Reducing the cost of attendance will allow participation from a broader spectrum of scholars and activists across the San Francisco Bay Area. CIIS will host the conference at its campus, and will provide administrative and logistical support. The university is committed to covering costs that exceed AAR funding.