

September 2024 | Version 2

# Training on Religions and Development Research Course

## Module 1:

Topics in Religions and Development

## Session 2:

Climate Change, Religions, and Development



Joint Learning Initiative  
on Faith & Local Communities

# Homework (pre-session)



## Essential reading

(everyone is required to read this)

- Students are to read chapter 3 (Religions and the Environment) of the JLI State of the Evidence report: [SoE-chapter-3.pdf](#) and summarise what they think are key points in one page or under (this can be in bullet points).

Students must also know the following definitions and understand that they refer to related but distinct concepts.

- Climate Change – “Climate change refers to the increasing changes in the measures of climate over a long period – including precipitation, temperature, and wind patterns.”
- Global Warming – “Global warming refers to the rise in global temperatures due mainly to the increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.”
- Ecology – “Ecology is the study of how organisms interact with each other and their environment in order to maintain a stable system. The central idea behind ecology is that everything living on earth exists together, not as separate entities fighting for survival but as a whole – a complex ecosystem – that must be understood in order to survive.”
- Environment and environmental studies – this is a broader field than ecology and focuses on the interactions between humans and the natural world. “Environmental studies is a far broader field encompassing scientists, geographers, assessors, analysts, and many other professionals. Environmental science is an interdisciplinary field focused on humans’ impact on the environment. Environmental science seeks to protect both human beings and the environment from negative factors such as climate change, pollution, and other things.”

If students want to know more about climate change, we recommend the Crash Course video series “[Climate + Energy](#).” available at:

<https://thecrashcourse.com/topic/climate/>



## Optional readings I

(advanced readings)

- Jenkins, W., Berry, E. and Kreider, L. B. (2018) "Religion and Climate Change," Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 43:1, pp. 85-108.  
[https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-environ-102017-025855#\\_i4](https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-environ-102017-025855#_i4)
- Chitando, E., Conradie, E.M. and Kilonzo, S.M. (Eds.) (2022), African Perspectives on Religion and Climate Change (1st ed.), Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003147909>
- Öhlmann, P. and Swart, I. (2022), "Religion and Environment: Exploring the Ecological Turn in Religious Traditions, the Religion and Development Debate and Beyond," Religion and Theology, 29:3-4, pp. 292-321.  
<https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/91376>
- Peracullo, J. C., and Quindoza, R. B. (2022), "The Environmental Activism of a Filipino Catholic Faith Community: Re-Imagining Ecological Care for the Flourishing of All," Religions, 13:1, p. 56. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010056>
- Sponsel, Leslie E. (2020), "Introduction to Religious Environmental Activism in Asia: Case Studies in Spiritual Ecology," Religions, 11:2, p. 77.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11020077>
- Stork, J. and Öhlmann, P. (2021), Religious Communities as Actors for Ecological Sustainability in Southern Africa and Beyond (Report), Research Programme on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development, Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/handle/18452/24330>
- Köhrsen, J., Blanc, J. and Huber, F. (Eds.) (2022), Religious Environmental Activism: Emerging Conflicts and Tensions in Earth Stewardship (1st ed.), Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003017967>



## Optional readings II

(easy/short readings)

- Öhlmann, P. and Swart, I. (2023), 'The State of the Evidence in Religions, Development, and the Environment.' <https://jiliflc.com/2023/07/state-of-evidence-environment/>
- VIDEO: State of the Evidence Chapter 3 "Religions and the Environment" - Summary Conversation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ey7dpHMnn60>
- Aylwin, E., et al. (2023), 'From Ethiopia's Highlands to India's Villages, How Faith Organizations Are Restoring the World's Forests.' <https://www.wri.org/insights/faith-organizations-forest-restoration>
- Dagle, R. M. (2023), 'Filipino faith leaders to rich countries: 'Scale up' action vs climate change.' <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/filipino-faith-leaders-rich-countries-scale-up-action-vs-climate-change/>
- Müller, T. and Özyürek, E. (2021), 'Religious communities can make the difference in winning the fight against climate change' <https://theconversation.com/religious-communities-can-make-the-difference-in-winning-the-fight-against-climate-change-172192>
- Pacholl, G. (2024), 'Building Bridges of Faith: Interfaith Climate Activism at the United Nations Climate Conference.' <https://ansari.nd.edu/news-events/news/building-bridges-of-faith-interfaith-climate-activism-at-the-united-nations-climate-conference/>

# Engaging with the readings

(1 hour)

*This part of the session aims to engage with the readings that the students did as part of their homework in more detail. It aims to give the students a chance to discuss the readings, share their reflections, and consolidate their understanding of the texts.*

- 1. Individual reflection (5 min):** The instructor asks all students to individually reflect on the following three questions and write down their answers. Students do this on their own without consulting others. They are allowed to consult the text if they find it helpful.
  - One thing I learned from this chapter that I did not know before
  - One thing I read in the chapter that I already knew
  - One thing that was mentioned in the chapter that I did not understand/that I would like to know more about
- 2. Small group work (25 min):** small groups work together to answer the following questions. The groups should designate a note-taker and a presenter.
  - Should religions, at least partly, take responsibility for the climate crisis? Why or why not?
  - What is the “ecological turn” among religions? Are religions becoming “greener”?
  - What is “eco-theology” for you? What is “spiritual ecology” to you? What is “stewardship” to you? Can you give examples of eco-theology you know of or have heard from others?
- 3. Group Feedback and Big Group Debate (30 min):** The instructor brings the full group together and asks each group to report back on their discussions. The presenter from each group should summarise their small group’s answers to the questions. The big group can ask each other questions about the main points arising from their discussions. Once each group has reported back, the instructor should facilitate a whole group debate. If debate is not forthcoming, the instructor can use these questions to prompt the students:
  - Are religions doing enough to respond to the climate crisis?
  - What more could religions do to respond to the climate crisis?
  - What surprises you about how other denominations and religions respond to the climate crisis? Where do religions have similar beliefs and practices in relation to the environment and climate change? Where do they have different beliefs and practices in relation to the environment and climate change?

- Are religious beliefs and practices a very important or less important influence on people's attitudes on climate change? Why or why not are they important?
- Who is the most influential in climate action: high-level religious leaders, local religious leaders, lay leaders, local faith communities, global faith networks, or any other faith group you can define? Why is this group influential? Why are the other groups less influential? Or how are they influential in different ways?

# Contextualising the learning

(1 hour)

*The aim of this part of the session is for students to apply what they learned from the readings and the first part of the session to their local contexts. It encourages them to think critically about the extent to which the debates from the readings are relevant to their everyday lives, studies, or work.*

## 1. Break (5 min)

2. **World Cafe (3 x 15 min = 45 min total)**: This activity uses the World Café Method. Set up the classroom to have three small groups of chairs clustered together around tables, as if the classroom was a café and groups of people were clustered around café tables. Break the class into groups three groups. Each group should go to a “café” table. At each café table, there should be one question written on a piece of paper. The questions are listed below. The instructor will need to prepare the questions on paper ahead of time. The groups sit around the table and have 15 minutes to discuss the questions. One person from the group should be the “host” – that person will stay at the table for the whole 45 minutes and should take notes about the conversation with each group. After the 15 minutes is up, the instructor should call for each group to rotate and move to the next table until all the groups have answered all the questions.

### World Café Questions:

- What is the biggest environmental issue in your community right now? What are the effects of that environmental issue?
- In what ways have nature and the environment affected your religious beliefs and practices? How do you relate your religious beliefs and practices to the environment? What do you think your religious beliefs/religious teachings say about climate change and environmental exploitation?
- Have you discussed the environment and climate change in your religious community? Have you heard about environmental issues in your place of worship? Has your religious community undertaken any environmental action? Would you like your religious community to speak about the environment more or less? What would you like your religious community to do on environmental issues?

3. **Group Feedback (10 min)**: Each of the three “hosts” should then present the main points that they heard from the group conversation back to the room, thus summarising the class’s answers to the questions.

# Creative task

(1 hour)

*The third part of the session is aimed at engaging with the content covered in parts 1 and 2 of the session in a creative manner. This part of the session acknowledges the fact that there are different types of learners. It also aims to expose students to creative and arts-based forms of learning and teaching.*

1. Break (5 min)
2. Watch the video (5 min): watch the video from the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_wr6jzhsYuo&t=313s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wr6jzhsYuo&t=313s)
3. Small groups plan a climate change strategy for a religious community (i.e., their church community) (30 min): Small groups should work on designing a full climate change strategy for a religious community. They can choose either one of their own religious communities or an imagined one. The strategy should include\*:
  - Awareness raising among the religious community members – how will you help the congregants learn more about climate change, including theological reflection?
  - Advocacy from the religious community to the wider society – how will the church advocate for climate-aware policies and contribute towards environmental activism?
  - Institutional sustainability – how will the church reduce its energy use, waste generation, and water use, as well as plant trees, use eco-friendly products, and support local farmers?
  - Inter- and Intra-faith cooperation on environmental issues – how will the church work with other denominations and faiths on climate change?
  - Climate change adaptation in the wider community – how will the church support people’s adaptations to respond to climate change in their communities, e.g. farmers?
4. Group presentations (25 min): each group should present their strategy to the rest of the group. The instructor should divide the time equally between the groups, leaving time for questions and answers at the end of each presentation.

\*Earth.org: <https://earth.org/faith-in-action-how-religious-communities-can-lead-the-fight-against-climate-change/>



