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| <b>Module Title:</b>            | <b>Franciscan Theology and Philosophy of the Environment</b> |
| <b>Module Code:</b>             | <b>707 FTPE</b>  |
| <b>Level:</b>                   | <b>7</b>   |
| <b>Credit rating:</b>           | <b>20 credits</b>  |
| <b>Duration:</b>                | <b>Student Learning Time: 200 hours</b>                      |
| <b>Teaching Hours:</b>          | <b>20</b>  |
| <b>Academic Responsibility:</b> | <b>Séamus Mulholland OFM, PhD</b>                            |

### **Module Aims:**

This module seeks to:

1. engender an in depth knowledge of the Franciscan theological and philosophical tradition and its implications for the environmental concerns that predominate contemporary ecological reflection.
2. critically assess and demonstrate the theological and philosophical contribution that Franciscan thought can make to environmental ethics
3. show that the Franciscan tradition exemplified in Bonaventure and Duns Scotus' theological, metaphysical and ethical understanding of creation offers a solidly grounded approach to modern ecological/environmental concerns.

### **Learning outcomes:**

By the end of this module, students should be able to:

1. Show a detailed knowledge of both the theological and metaphysical basis for a Franciscan approach to environmental ethics, especially through Bonaventure's emanationism, and Univocity of Being and differentiation of common natures in Duns Scotus' ontology.
2. Have a deeper insight into the way in which the theological/philosophical writings of the Franciscan intellectual tradition have reflected on environmental and ecological issues through their approaches to creation.
3. Critically approach and reflect on how environmentalists use the Biblical texts, especially Genesis and Psalms through an examination of key Hebrew terms

### **Indicative Module Content:**

Drawing largely on the spiritual tradition inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, the module examines current environmental and ecological issues through the application of the theological and philosophical style developed by Franciscan theologians who drew their important insights from that spirituality. The module begins with a reflection on the biblical sources, primarily the creation myths of Genesis, and Ps.8; 29 and seeks to confront head on the use of Genesis by Lynn White and the misunderstandings that has arisen from it. From there, the module examines the concerns for and approaches to understandings of nature and the environment in the writings of St. Francis, the theology of St. Bonaventure, the metaphysics of Duns Scotus, and the environmental theological/philosophical reflections of contemporary Franciscan eco-theologians/philosophers that are emerging in the area of approaches to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation as well as their contribution to Environmental Ethics.

### **Learning and Teaching Strategies:**

The basic format of presentation will be weekly lectures systematically treating the subject matter as

described in the Indicative Module Content. Students are given specific weekly reading assignments as well as directed toward extra-curricular reading proposed by the instructor. Research interests are quickly identified and tutorial sessions, depending on individual needs of the students, arranged for clarification and direction, inclusive of suggested extra-curricular reading. Students are required to work in teams to prepare and deliver in class a presentation outlining a response from within the tradition of Franciscan Philosophy and Theology of the Environment to identified ecological challenges facing the world today. Within the classroom context of lectures, active participation of students in terms of questions and, especially, discussion is strongly encouraged as a primary way of developing analytical skills, critical thinking, and clarity of expression.

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed by the writing of one essay of 5,000 words.

**Indicative Essay Questions:**

1. Examine and explore Bonaventure's theology of the Trinity and the Word and its relationship to his understanding of creation and assess whether Bonaventure may have something valuable to contribute to the formulation of a theology of Deep Ecology.
2. The primary base of Dun's Scotus's metaphysical architecture is his doctrine of *Being* as a univocal concept. By using this Scotistic concept examine in what ways this medieval metaphysician's ontological thought can be used today to demonstrate that a contemporary Franciscan approach to ecological/environmental issues needs to be reclassified and expressed as an *econtology* rather than simply another contribution to environmental philosophy.
3. While Lynn White proposed a religious solution [St. Francis] to ecological crisis caused by religion [the Judaeo-Christian interpretation of Genesis] examine whether his understanding of St. Francis as a radical 'green' figure is justified.
4. Carefully examine the 'rights' issue in relation to environmental ethics and examine whether Duns Scotus's notion of *haecceitas* has anything to contribute to a deeper understanding of the debate beyond notions of what constitutes a 'right' for creation and how these rights are determined as a matter of 'environmental justice' rather than simply whether or not sentient [animal] and non-sentient creation has such rights

**Illustrative Bibliography:**

|                                     |  |                      |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Eric Doyle OFM, (1981)              | <i>The Canticle of Brother Sun and the Value of Creation</i> | Franciscan Institute |
| Eric Doyle, (2002)                  | <i>St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood</i>               | Reprint New York     |
| Laurencin, Melissa Charmaine (1999) | <i>A Franciscan Ethic for Justice in Creation</i>            | London               |
| Passmore, J. (1980)<br>Duckworth    | <i>Man's Responsibility for Nature</i>                       | London:              |

Seamus Mulholland OFM  
(2003)

*Duns Scotus as the Foundation for a  
Franciscan Environmental Ethic*

Canterbury

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*The Canticle of Creation and Duns Scotus*

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Schmidtz, D.  
and Willott, E.(2002)  
Press.

*Environmental Ethics: What Really  
Matters, What Really Works*

Oxford University

Varner, G.  
(1998)  
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*In Nature's Interests? Interests, Animal  
Rights, and Environmental Ethics*

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Witoszek, N. and  
Brennan, A. eds.(1999)

*Philosophical Dialogues: Arne Næss  
and the Progress of Eco-Philosophy*

Rowan and  
Littlefield.