

A dense forest scene with tall trees and a large fern in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

15. The Rights of Nature

The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement

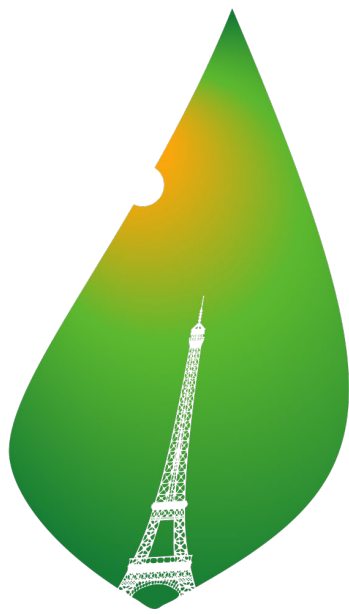
Pope Francis, “Laudato Si”

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course stuff

-Final Exam ADS accommodation reservations:

For those with ADS testing accommodations and who plan to take our final with ADS, please schedule your exam time asap and ideally by this Friday 5/9



PARIS2015
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE
COP21·CMP11

The Paris Climate Agreement (2015)

-an international treaty adopted in 2015 whose goal was to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and to limit the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels

-facilitated by the UN



Pope Francis (papacy 2013-2025), Laudato si' [Praise Be to You] (2015)

-a papal encyclical subtitled “On care for our common home”

-the pope encourages global action on climate change, while criticizing reckless development, environmental degradation and a lack of care for the world’s poor who are disproportionately affected by global warming

-encyclical?

-a public letter on church doctrine clarifying difficult theological issues

-in his entire papacy Francis only released 4 encyclicals

-audience? Not just the 1.4 billion Catholics but to everyone

The History of the Paris Climate Agreement (2015)

- ratified by all nations except for 3 (Iran, Libya, and Yemen)
- all nations must set their own greenhouse gas emission goals (nationally determined contribution aka NDCs);
- countries must report their greenhouse gas inventories and progress relative to their targets but there are no penalties for not meeting those goals
- the US ratified the accord in 2015, withdrew in 2020, rejoined in 2021, and announced its withdrawal again in Jan 2025
 - Trump's 2025 Exec order was entitled: "Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements"
- why does the US keep going in and out of this Agreement?
 - those who argue against the Paris Agreement believe that it would potentially burden the U.S. economy, lead to job losses or increase fossil-fuel energy costs
 - those who argue for the Agreement believe that climate change will have great economic and humanitarian costs in the near future unless action is taken now. Also that US needs to lead on this issue so that other nations will follow; also claims that jobs associated with clean energy will offset any job losses in fossil-fuel industry
- why does it matter if the US is in or out of the agreement?
 - the US is the second largest global emitter of greenhouse gases
 - if the US does not honor its commitments neither will other countries

2015 Paris Climate Agreement

2.1. This Agreement, in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:

- (a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;
- (b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production;
- (c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

Pope Francis, “Laudato Si” (2015)



- Francis has recently been called “perhaps the world’s greatest environmental champion”
- progressive Catholics and faith leaders embraced the encyclical as a call to action on climate change
- “Laudato si” acknowledges that the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) are significantly to blame for the current climate crisis and that these should be replaced by renewable energy sources
- under Francis’s leadership, Vatican City said that it will soon generate all of its electricity needs from a solar plant

The Opening of Francis's "Laudato Si"

-Based on Saint Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Creatures," a poem of divine praise composed in Italian in 1225

1. "*LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore*" – "Praise be to you, my Lord". In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs".

2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will.... This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

-What model of home is this? How does the language of family function?

-Personification?

-how does this language relate to premodern ideas about nature?

“Laudato Si” and Biblical Ideas about Dominion

67. We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. This allows us to respond to the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man “dominion” over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church. Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures. The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while “keeping” means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. ... Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures.

-How does this passage revise ideas about dominion in the Genesis account of creation?

-What model of care is this?

- emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living things

- an integrated ecology (more like the indigenous kinship model)

In Class Writing: How would you describe the collective voice that issues from the Paris Climate Agreement? How does this voice compare to that of the “Laudato si”?

-How would you describe the style of each document (diction, verb choice, tone, etc)? What models for care of nature have been put forward? Which language do you find to be more effective in achieving its goals?

Preamble to the Paris Climate Agreement (2015)

Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity, ...

Noting the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and noting the importance for some of the concept of “climate justice”, when taking action to address climate change,

Have agreed as follows... (pp. 20-21)

Francis, “Laudato Si” (2015)

My appeal

13. The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. ... Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. ... Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.

14. I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. (p. 4-5)