

**TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES:  
INTERRELIGIOUS, INTERDISCIPLINARY RESPONSES**  
DATE: APRIL 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>

*SPONSORED BY THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION*

&

*THE GTU MIRA AND AJAY SHINGAL CENTER FOR DHARMA STUDIES*

“Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone’s need, but not everyone’s greed.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

“We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.”

— Henry David Thoreau, *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods*

The devastation of the ecosphere is inextricably linked to unsustainable economic, societal, racial, geopolitical, and cultural relationships. To enable the restoration and flourishing of the ecosystems of the biosphere, human societies need to be reimagined and reordered in terms of economic, cultural, religious, racial, and social equitability. The epistemic paradigms that have led to climate change and the ravaging of the earth, are not likely to lead the healing of the same. As such, ways of knowing that are embedded in religion, culture, and tradition are essential resources for the human transformation necessary for environmental regeneration and renewal. *Sustainable nature require sustainable societies.*

**GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION &  
GTU MIRA & AJAY SHINGAL CENTER FOR DHARMA STUDIES**

**CONFERENCE: APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup> – 29<sup>TH</sup>, 2017**

**GTU: FLORA LAMSON HEWLETT LIBRARY**

**2400 RIDGE ROAD | BERKELEY | CA**

**REGISTRATION & PROGRAM**

**<https://gtu-sustainable-societies.eventbrite.com/>**



# PANELS AND THEMES

**FRIDAY | APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup>**

**Welcome Address | 9:00 AM**

**Dr. Riess Potterveld, President, Graduate Theological Union**

**Inaugural Plenary**

*The Richard S. Dinner Boardroom | GTU Library*

**Interreligious Engagement and Sustainability**



The discourse on Sustainability has gained traction globally and in an intersectoral manner. However, the transdisciplinary field of Sustainability Studies has not embraced the principles, practices, ethics, and insights of the religious worlds of humanity. Sustainability Studies has, as its three pillars, equity and justice in Social, Economic, and Environmental spheres. The conversion of current human behaviors and actions into the transformative paradigms, that will alter the currently destructive trajectory, need internal reorientations of heart and mind that are the ultimate concern of religions.

- ≈ *Arthur Holder, (GTU), Presiding*
- ≈ *Uriah Kim, Vice President & Dean, GTU*
- ≈ *Deena Aranoff (CJS)*
- ≈ *Munir Jiwa (CIS)*
- ≈ *Rita Sherma (CDS)*

**Session 1**

**10:00 AM – 11:45 PM**

*The Richard S. Dinner Boardroom | GTU Library*

***Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the USA: Empowerment and Emancipation***



A central element of social justice is inclusiveness, a consequence of which is racial and ethnic equity. The panel explores and reflects on the strategies and policies needed for the empowerment and emancipation of minority communities, and presents strategies of resistance and that have allowed oppressed communities to survive and retain creativity and hope.

- ≈ *Christopher Ocker, Presiding*
- ≈ *Aaron Grizzell (NorCal MLK Fdn.)*
- ≈ *Valerie Miles-Tribble (ABSW)*
- ≈ *Jennifer W. Davidson (ABSW)*
- ≈ *Filipe Maia (PSR)*
- ≈ *Sofia Betancourt (SKSM)*

## LUNCH

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM | *WORLD MUSIC*



### Session 2 – A

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

*The Flora Lamson Hewlett Library Lab*

❖ *Ecovillages & Environmentally Conscious Living*



The project of modernity has created urbanization as the desired norm on a global scale. This has had the effect of proliferating industrial agriculture on groundwater, air, land, and wilderness. It has also had a devastating effect on traditional patterns of life and community. Urban spaces for encountering nature and intentional communities reverse this dangerous trajectory and create alternative environmentally conscious communities that can serve as models for new interaction with nature, in rural and urban culture. The panel will explore applications and examples from fieldwork.

- ≈ *Devin P. Zuber, Presiding (CSS, GTU)*
- ≈ Deena Aranoff (CJS, GTU)
- ≈ Sarah Pike (Cal. State University, Chico)
- ≈ Munir Jiwa (CIS, GTU)
- ≈ Debashish Banerji (California Institute of Integral Studies)
- ≈ Gordon Gilmore (GTU)
- ≈ Rita Sherma (CDS, GTU)

### Session 2 – B

1:00 PM – 2:45 PM

*The Richard S. Dinner Boardroom | GTU Library*

❖ *Religion and Ethics for a Sustainable World*



Ecological living requires the reorienting of humanity's moral framework and lifestyle choices with an understanding of the interrelatedness of life forms in the biosphere. Data from science and technology is helpful in grasping the crisis faced by the planetary community but the expansive transformations in ethical orientations is the natural domain of religion. This panel examines the resources for ecologically grounded ethics arising from world theologies.

- ≈ *Andrea Vestrucci (Institute Eric Weil, University of Lille SHS, France), Presiding*
- ≈ William O'Neill (JST)
- ≈ Purushottama Bilimoria (CDS, GTU)
- ≈ Cynthia Moe-Lobeda (PLTS & CDSP)
- ≈ Veena Howard (Cal. State University, Fresno)
- ≈ Thomas Cattoi (JST)

### Session 3 A

3:00 PM – 4:45 PM

*The Richard S. Dinner Boardroom | GTU Library*

❖ *Dharma: Humanity, Nature & Right Relationships in Hindu & Buddhist Worlds*



This panel will draw from resources that are available in the Dharma Traditions from textual sources and lived religious praxis. The panel will reflect on major principles, insights, and theological perspectives that organically connect the human and natural worlds in these Dharma Traditions. Central tenets such as interrelatedness, radical non-violence, reverence, and empathic compassion will be explored for their application to the protection and restoration of the ecosphere.

- ≈ Jeffery D. Long (*Elizabethtown College*), *Presiding*
- ≈ Ramdas Lamb (*University of Hawai'i, Manoa*)
- ≈ Mugdha Yeolekar (*Loyola Marymount University, LA*)
- ≈ Thomas Calobrisi (*GTU*)
- ≈ Joseph Prabhu (*Cal. State University, Los Angeles*)

### Session 3 B

3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

*Flora Lamson Hewlett Library Lab*

❖ *Art, Literature, Praxis & Ecology*



The aesthetic and sensorial nature of being human is intrinsic for a dedicated approach to harmonious existence. This panel will bring into conversation environmental awareness and action with the emotive, aesthetic, literary, liturgical and ritual dimensions of life that can bring humans into intimate connection with the natural world.

- ≈ Elizabeth S. Peña (*Center for the Arts & Religion | CARE*), *Presiding*
- ≈ Devin Zuber (*CSS, GTU*)
- ≈ Mary McGann (*JST*)
- ≈ Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero (*GTU*)
- ≈ John Klentos (*PAOI, GTU*)
- ≈ Colette Walker (*GTU*)
- ≈ Yohana Junker (*GTU*)



FRIDAY

5:30 PM

INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCE

Pacific School of Religion Chapel



SATURDAY

APRIL 29<sup>TH</sup>

Session 4

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

*The Richard S. Dinner Boardroom | GTU Library*

❖ *Towards Interreligious Spiritual Hospitality*



The panel will examine the critical importance of Spiritual Hospitality for a sustainable society from the perspectives of different religious traditions. In an era of increasing religious conflict, the deep dimension of dialogue may need to transcend clichéd conversations towards collaborative effort at resolving the crucial joint concerns of our time.

- ≈ *Graham M. Schweig, (Christopher Newport University), Presiding*
- ≈ Christopher K. Chapple (Loyola Marymount University, CA)
- ≈ Moses Penumakka (PLTS)
- ≈ Pravina Rodrigues (GTU)
- ≈ Nargis Ali Virani (CIS, GTU)

SATURDAY PLENARY ADDRESS

10:45 – 11:15 AM

**Mary-Evelyn Tucker (Yale University)**

*Religion and Ecology: Moving Forward*



“In 20 years a new field of religion and ecology has emerged, but our environmental and social challenges are ever more pressing. How do we find ways to make a difference in our world? We will explore new directions for both research and engagement in a period of unprecedented uncertainty.” ~Mary-Evelyn Tucker



Mary Evelyn Tucker is co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale with John Grim. They organized 10 conferences on World Religions and Ecology at Harvard and edited the 10 resulting volumes. They wrote *Ecology and Religion* (Island Press, 2014). They worked closely with Thomas Berry and edited his books. With Brian Swimme Mary Evelyn wrote *Journey of the Universe* (Yale, 2011). She is the executive producer (with John Grim) of the Emmy award winning *Journey* film that aired on PBS.



## Session 5

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

*The Richard S. Dinner Boardroom | GTU Library*

❖ *Religion and the Natural Sciences: Towards a Sustainable Relationship*



Stephen Jay Gould famously advocated the theory of Non-Overlapping Majesteria. That is, science and religion need not be in conflict because they operate within different domains. However, in lived experience, there are many areas that overlap. The areas of physical reality and human life over which both have jurisdiction require the ongoing interactive engagement between Science and Religion. This is imperative in an era of Climate Change and rapid extinctions of species across the biological spectrum.

- ≈ Jay E. Johnson (Pacific School of Religion & GTU), Presiding
- ≈ Barbara Karlsen (California Institute of Integral Studies)
- ≈ Clifford Saron (Center for Mind & Brain, UC Davis)
- ≈ Parameshwaran Ramakrishnan (GTU)
- ≈ Jonathan Edelmann (University of Florida)
- ≈ Ted Peters (CTNS, GTU)

**LUNCH BREAK | 1:00 PM**

**LUNCHEON KEYNOTE ADDRESS | 1:30 PM – 2:00 PM**

**Anantanand Rambachan (St. Olaf College)**

❖ *A Theology of Human Flourishing*



Anantanand Rambachan is Professor of Religion, Philosophy and Asian Studies at Saint Olaf College, Minnesota. He has been involved in the field of interreligious relations and dialogue for over twenty-five years, and has contributed to numerous consultations and discussions convened by international organizations including the World Council of Churches, and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican as well as serving as a member of the Consultation on Population and Ethics, advisor to the Pluralism Project (Harvard University), as member of the International Advisory Council for the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, of the Theological Education Committee of the American Academy of Religion. A pioneer in the field of Hindu Theology, he has published widely on Hindu theological ethics and social engagement. Among his authored volumes are, *Accomplishing the Accomplished*, *The Limits of Scripture*, *The Ādvaita Worldview: God, World and Humanity*, *The Hindu Vision*, *Gītāmṛtam: The Essential Teachings of the Bhagavadgītā* and *A Hindu Theology of Liberation*. The British Broadcasting Corporation transmitted a series of 25 lectures by Prof. Rambachan around the world.

With nearly a four millennia tradition of thought, contemplation, ethics, and praxis, can Hindu theology offer a robust, contemporary vision of human wellbeing that affirms "liberty, equality and fraternity"? How can this be articulated in terms of the contemporary context, and what are the theological underpinnings of such a vision? Gandhi and the Indian jurist, politician, and social reformer B. R. Ambedkar famously disagreed on the specific details of such a vision. Contemporary Hindu theology needs to respond to this critical inquiry. Perhaps the responsibility of a tradition representing a billion people is to enunciate first a theology of human flourishing.

# Hindu Theology and Sustainability



## Session 6

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

*The Richard S. Dinner Boardroom | GTU Library*

❖ *Ecotheology and Ādvaita Vedanta*



Ādvaita Vedanta, as the founding structure for Hindu Systematic Philosophical Theology, is provide an expansive resource base for the development of critical-constructive engagement with the project of Sustainability. The panel will examine various philosophical-theological lineages, informed and inspired by the non-dual view of reality, towards amelioration of the human condition and the rejuvenation of the ecosphere.

- ≈ *Purushottama Bilimoria (Shingal Center for Dharma Studies, GTU), Presiding*
- ≈ Jeffery D. Long (Elizabethtown College, PA)
- ≈ Neil Dalal, (University of Alberta, Canada)
- ≈ Anand Vaidya (San Jose State University)
- ≈ Kusumita Pedersen (Saint Francis College, NY)

## Session 7

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

*The Richard S. Dinner Boardroom | GTU Library*

❖ *Vaishnava Theology and Sustainability*



Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theology provides a grounding framework for deep ecological consciousness and action rooted in the ethos of devotional love embodied by bhakti. Krishna bhakti lends itself to the translation of narrative theology into compassionate action in the world. The panel will explore the diverse ways in which Krishna bhakti accomplishes the vision of divine love in the lived space of the planetary community.

- ≈ *Rita D. Sherma (Shingal Center for Dharma Studies, GTU), Presiding*
- ≈ Graham Schweig, (Christopher Newport University, VA)
- ≈ Cogen Bohanec (GTU)
- ≈ Ravi Gupta, (Utah State University)
- ≈ Gopal Gupta, (Florida Gulf Course University)