

"Hydrocarbon Spiritualities: Religion, Climate Change, and Fossil Fuels"

A talk by Evan Berry

February 9, 5:30pm

Hoagy Carmichael Room, Morrison Hall

When religion and climate change are discussed together, two prominent examples typically dominate: the high rates of climate denialism among white American Evangelicals and Pope Francis's recent encyclical about The Earth as Our Common Home. These two cases are wielded as blunt instruments in the recurring disagreements as to whether institutionalized, monotheistic religions, Christianity in particular, are "good" or "bad" for the environment. Together, Evangelical denial and *Laudato Si'* hardly establish an adequate picture of the multidimensional interaction between religion and climate change. This lecture surveys the broader landscape at the intersection of religion and climate change and outlines a more multidimensional theoretical approach. Any substantive account of religion and climate change cannot attend only to the impact of theology on environmental attitudes, but must also attend to the material impact of global climate change on religious dynamics, including the political economy of fossil fuels, patterns of energy use by religious agents, and changing environmental conditions for various cultures and communities.

Evan Berry is Associate Professor and Graduate Programs Director in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at American University. His research examines the relationship between religion and the public sphere in contemporary societies, with special attention to environmental issues and international relations. Berry has written a number of journal articles on these themes, though they are most fully taken up in *Devoted to Nature: The Religious Roots of American Environmentalism* (University of California Press, 2015), which traces the influence of Christian theology on the environmental movement in the United States. In collaboration with American University's Center for Latin American and Latino Studies, Berry is the primary investigator of a Henry Luce Foundation funded project on "Religion and Climate Change in Cross-Regional Comparison."