“Green Christians? An empirical examination of environmental beliefs, attitudes and behaviors”

John Clements
Sociology
Environmental Science & Policy Program

Wednesday, December 7
8 a.m. - 9 a.m.
273 Giltner Hall

Abstract
In earlier decades, a good number of scholars characterized Western Christianity—with its anthropocentric claim of humans’ dominion over the Earth—at odds with environmentalism as a movement and ecological worldviews more broadly. Since the early 2000s there has been a good deal of attention to what some have claimed to be “the greening of Christianity” in the United States. At the same time, prominent Christian figures and organizations in the United States have engaged in activities to integrate environmental values and Christian values—or, more accurately, demonstrate how the former are demanded by the latter. While these efforts have captured public attention, they nonetheless fall short of generalizable evidence of a significantly greener Christianity in the United States. To provide this evidence we need to examine how pro-environmental rank-and-file Christians are within the U.S. general public. Using newly released nationally representative data from the 2010 General Social Survey, we analyze how “green” self-identified Christians are in their attitudes, beliefs, and reported behaviors. While we cannot assess the full “greening of Christianity” thesis—which implies increasing environmentalism over time, we are able to determine how environmental self-identified Christians are in 2010—several years into this alleged greening trend. Further, we also examine cross-denomination variation in environmental attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to determine if some Christians are greener than others.