SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

CHRISTIAN VISIONS OF SELF AND NATURE
Religion 36 § Fall 2009
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:55-11:10

Prof. Ellen ROSS
Pearson Hall 215
Office Hours: T, 9:00-9:45; Th, 11:15-12:00 and by appointment
Telephone: 610-328-8691
E-mail: eross1@swarthmore.edu

Course Description:

How do Christians understand God? The self? The relationship between humans and the earth? What is the role of Jesus in Christian narratives about transformation, compassion, and justice? In this thematic introduction to Christianity, readings from historical and contemporary Christian writers will focus on the relationship between creation and the Sacred. Course will include participation in a community-engaged learning project with students in an after-school program in the nearby community of Chester. Readings include Hildegard of Bingen, Francis of Assisi, Galileo Galilei, Charles Darwin, Henry David Thoreau, Terry Tempest Williams, and Sallie McFague.

Required Books:

David Orr, Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment and the Human Prospect
Larry L. Rasmussen, Earth Community Earth Ethics
Terry Tempest Williams, Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place

Course Requirements:

This is a one-credit course designed to provide a forum for informed and constructive group discussion and an opportunity for participation in a community-based learning project. Course requirements include completion of reading assignments; class participation; two in-class presentations; weekly reflection papers; two five-page papers (one connected with the community-based learning project); participation in the community-engaged learning component of the course; and a final take-home examination.

Syllabus:

SEPTEMBER 1: Introduction

Reading:

SEPTEMBER 8: Book of Job, Psalms

Reading:
The *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, selections.
Rasmussen, *Earth Community Earth Ethics*, 227-270.

SEPTEMBER 10: New Testament

Reading:
The *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, selections.

SEPTEMBER 15: Celtic Christianity (Brendan, d. 575; Columba d. 597)

Reading:

SEPTEMBER 17: Dream of the Rood (late 10th c.) and the Tree of Life

Reading:
SEPTEMBER 22: Trees

Reading:
Nalini Nadkarni, “When Preaching to the Choir Isn’t Preaching to the Choir: Communicating the Importance of Forest Conservation to Non-Traditional Audiences,” unpub. ms.
Orr, Earth in Mind, 64-69.
Rasmussen, Earth Community Earth Ethics, 188-226.

SEPTEMBER 24: The Great Chain of Being

Reading:
Rasmussen, Earth Community Earth Ethics, 270-281.

SEPTEMBER 29: Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Reading:

OCTOBER 1: Francis of Assisi (c. 1182-1226)

Reading:
OCTOBER 6: Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)

Reading:

OCTOBER 8: Swarthmore College; Celebrations and Lamentations, Presentations I

Reading:

OCTOBER 20: Chester, Pennsylvania

Reading:
Orr, Earth in Mind, 35-40.

OCTOBER 22: Chester, Pennsylvania

Reading:
OCTOBER 27: Joshua Evans (1731-1798)

Reading:

OCTOBER 29: William Bartram (1739-1823); Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862); John Muir (1838-1914)

Reading:

NOVEMBER 3: Charles Darwin (1809-1882); Graceanna Lewis (1821-1912)

Reading:

NOVEMBER 5: Terry Tempest Williams

Reading:

NOVEMBER 10: Terry Tempest Williams

Reading:

NOVEMBER 12: Sallie McFague; Celebrations and Lamentations, Presentations II

Reading:
McFague, Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature
(Minneapolis: Fortress Pr., 1997), 91-117.

**NOVEMBER 17: Roman Catholic Traditions**

**Reading:**

**NOVEMBER 19: Larry Rasmussen; Evangelical Protestantism**

**Reading:**

**NOVEMBER 24: Larry Rasmussen**

**Reading:**

**DECEMBER 1: Larry Rasmussen**

**Reading:**
Rasmussen, *Earth Community Earth Ethics*, 227-247; 270-316.

**DECEMBER 3: Larry Rasmussen**

**Reading:**

**DECEMBER 8: Conclusion**