

“The Future of Creation: Foundations for a Just and Sustainable World”
New Course Offered By LSTC and the Zygon Center

This course is offered jointly by the Lutheran School of Theology and the Zygon Center for Religion and Science. It stands fully on its own in its design. Yet it can also be considered a companion course for those who have taken or wish to take the well-established course, “The Epic of Creation.” While the Epic of Creation class focuses on the past development of creation, this course will focus on the prognosis for the future of our planet in light of the ecological state of the world and the human choices available on behalf of earth-community.

Course Information:

The course will be offered on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 9:30 in the spring semester 2008 (February 4 to May 9). Credit may be obtained through any of the ACTS schools. The public is invited to audit the class, for a modest fee. For auditing, please sign up with Chris Heisser at the Zygon Center (773-256-0670; zcrcs@lstc.edu).

The class will be led by Gayle Woloschak, Director of the Zygon Center and Professor of Molecular Biology at Northwestern University, and David Rhoads, Professor of New Testament at LSTC and director of the Web of Creation (www.webofcreation.org) and the Green Congregation Program. The course will feature guest speakers from local universities and seminaries on a variety of scientific and theological topics.

Course Explorations:

To live faith in today’s world, we need to face today’s problems. This course will address the challenges that environmental degradation poses for the near future. We face numerous ecological crises: climate change, ozone loss, overuse of natural resources, loss of species/ecosystems, proliferation of waste, over-population, among others. What are the basic scientific understandings of these problems? How much of this ecological state of the world is due to human activity? And how can this scientific information serve as a basis for humans to make wise decisions about our future?

Furthermore, we know that there have been great human costs and consequences to the human degradation of creation, especially upon the most vulnerable people in society and on the poorest nations. How can we find an earth ethic that takes account of the interrelationship between human injustice and the deterioration of the environment? How can we address specific instances of ecological injustice and environmental racism? What transformations in our systems—political, economic, social, and religious—do we need to make in order to turn away from our destructive patterns?

In addition, we know that our thinking about life informs the way we treat earth community. In what ways have our biblical interpretations, our theological formulations, and our patterns of spirituality either disregarded or contributed to the human exploitation of people and earth? What new biblical studies and theological constructions are leading us to think in an earth-friendly ways that can lead to environmental restoration?

The course includes a strong scientific component, with guest lecturers from the science faculties of Chicago-area universities and research centers. It also integrates theological responses to science, presented by theology professors from local seminaries,

in order to help participants make connections between the knowledge of science and their faith traditions. Class discussions will prepare participants to be conversant about the problems of theodicy and ethics related to environmental issues. The course will offer practical suggestions for personal and congregational actions and transformations. Consultation with community organizations will orient participants to the collaborative network that will facilitate congregational action.

Topics to be addressed.

- The relationship between ecology and ongoing evolution
- The concept of ecological sustainability; organisms and their habitats
- The importance of species diversity; population and extinctions
- Pollution of air and water; radioactive contamination
- An ethic for earth community; ecological justice/environmental racism
- Theology of Nature
- Biblical resources for the future of creation
- Interfaith resources for human/ societal transformations
- Spirituality of place; practical applications at home, in congregations, and with local communities

For further information

If you have questions, suggestions, or comments, please send them to Gayle Woloschak (g-wolosch@lstc.edu) or David Rhoads (drhoads@lstc.edu). For questions regarding registration, contact Chris Heisser (zcrs@lstc.edu).