RELIGION AND THE NATURAL ELEMENTS

Northwestern University Department of Religious Studies
Graduate Conference
October 24-26, 2014

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Religious Studies Department of Northwestern University invites graduate papers for a conference on “Religion and the Natural Elements,” to be held in Evanston, Illinois on October 24-26, 2014. We request abstracts by May 16, 2014.

Through this conference, we aim to cultivate new ways of thinking about religion and the natural world. We focus on religion’s intersections with aspects of nature, from the environment, climate, flora, and fauna, to human interactions with the natural, in the form of spirits, gods and goddesses, and miracles. This conference will explore the relationships among ecosystems, religious practice, and religious thought. Conference participants will examine how people experience religion in and through nature, and they will reflect on the modes by which humans interact with the natural world, in ritual practice, in religious text, and in theological inquiry. For example, papers might engage with pressing issues of the 21st century, such as the financial and theological responses of international religious organizations to the devastation of Typhoon Hayian in the Philippines in 2013. Papers might also address contemporary and/or historical issues of environmental change, cosmology, bioethics, evolution, or natural symbolism, among other topics that contemplate the natural environment, lived religion, and religious reflection.

All of these topics deserve thorough exploration in an interdisciplinary setting, and thus the Northwestern University Religious Studies Department seeks papers from across the humanities and social sciences. The intersections of religion and the natural world offer rich points of discussion for graduate students who approach religion from a number of different fields, including religious studies, theology, philosophy, anthropology, history, gender studies, political science, sociology, and psychology.

Papers should not exceed fifteen minutes in length and may approach the topic from any discipline or methodology.

Please send a 500-word abstract, along with your name, institution, and year of study to nureligiousstudiesconference@gmail.com by May 16, 2014. Decisions will be communicated by the end of June.