

***Nature and the Human Spirit:***  
**The Eighth Annual Humanities Symposium**

**September 13-21, 2009**  
**Belmont University**

**Sunday, September 13**

**“Student Reading of Selected Poetry and Prose on Nature and the Human Spirit”**

Join us in Belmont's beautiful greenscape for an alfresco reading of prose and poetry featuring Humanities Symposium Writing Competition winners. (AL)  
Patio, Belmont Bell Tower (rain location, LCVA 117)  
6:30- 8:00 pm

**Monday, September 14**

**“Reverdie: the eternal rebirth of the human spirit in nature”**

***Dr. Maggie Monteverde, Department of English, Belmont U***

One of my favorite conventions in medieval literature is reverdie, the representation of spring as the moment in which all elements of the universe, natural and social, human and divine, are linked in the eternal cycle of rebirth. How have we, particularly in America, allowed ourselves to become so cut off from the cycles of the natural world and why is it so important for us to reforge these connections? In this, the opening talk of the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Humanities Symposium, I will consider these questions, linking them to the importance of noticing the world around us in order to understand not just that world but art, literature, and even our own nature as human creatures; in the process I will also provide ties designed to entice you to many other events throughout the week. (AL)

Massey Board Room  
10:00-10:50 am

**“Deep into the thicket...: Nature Writing, Holy Writing”**

***Dr. Robbie Pinter, Department of English, Belmont U***

Contemporary American thought has lost Walden in the same way it lost Eden, but the idea of their pristine beauty and unvanquished potential remains embedded in the cultural imagination, beckoning us to something living deep within ourselves. This is a deeply spiritual and vexing problem—the search for a haven dismissed by our intellectual minds. In the 1500s, St. John of the Cross offered his view when he wrote . . . “To the mountain and to the hill/To where the pure water flows/And further, deep into the thicket. . . .” As was the case for European and American transcendentalists, nature was a metaphor for the soul that “transcended” the ordinary but was manifest to humans only through the ordinary. This talk addresses how spiritual writing faces the loss of the ideal represented by Eden and Walden, while at the same time, longing for it. (AL)

Massey Board Room  
12:00-12:50 pm

**“Bringing Nature to the Classroom, Bringing the Classroom to Nature”**

***A Panel with Dr. Jimmy Davis (Communications, Liberal Studies), Dr. Darlene Panvini (Biology), and Dr. Bonnie Smith (English), Belmont U***

Three professors from varied disciplines will discuss how they have in past and current semesters integrated the symposium's themes into their classes. The faculty members will discuss course design, course questions, assignments, readings, trips, and the challenges and joys that accompany a class focused on and situated in the natural world. Panelists will question one another and will take questions from the audience. (AL)

Massey Board Room  
2:00-2:50 pm

**“The Preservation of Nature: The Book Arts and the Natural World”**

***A Presentation with Professor Teresa Van Hatten-Granath (Art) and Dr. Danielle Alexander (English), Belmont U***

Professor Teresa Van Hatten and Dr. Danielle Alexander will explore how the book arts blur the boundaries between nature, manufactured object, visual representation, and text, from their respective points of view of as visual artist and creative writer. The presentation will focus especially on Van Hatten's altered books, which make extensive use of natural and manufactured materials and which comment on the human impulse to classify and preserve natural objects, as well as the ways we use books to construct, classify, and preserve our "selves." (C&A)

LCVA 117  
4:00-5:30 pm

**Tuesday, September 15**

**“Landscape and National Identities”**

***Dr. Doug Murray, Department of English, Belmont U***

This illustrated talk will trace the use of particular landscapes as metonyms for national identity: Blake's "green and pleasant land" of England, the "forty shades of green" of Ireland, the "amber waves of grain" of the provocatively-named American "heartland." We will examine patriotic songs, landscape poetry, landscape painting and the iconographic meanings of Monument Valley, used in Westerns to symbolize the heroic American character. (AL)

Massey Board Room  
11:00-11:50 am

**“Nature as Conscience and Consciousness: The Pastoral Hero and the Sympathetic Imagination”**

***Dr. Annette Sisson, Department of English, Belmont U***

Why is Wendell Berry's eponymous character Jayber Crow reading Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders*, which he pronounces to be "a good book"? And why does Hardy insist that the hedonistic, sentimental Edred Fitzpiers, in his novel *The Woodlanders*, doesn't have the depth of character to grasp the ideas of P. B. Shelley, of whom he fancies himself a disciple? The history of the British pastoral tradition is long and deeply indebted to classical literature, but the use of Nature as an occasion to reflect on "the mind of Man" and as a catalyst for the development of the "sympathetic imagination," as William Wordsworth evinced, gives it new life and social relevance. The pastoral hero's efforts to resist the encroachments of modern life and its dehumanizing effects distinguished nineteenth-century British Romanticism and influenced not only the Victorians and American transcendentalists who followed them, but even the Modernists and, more recently, contemporary Agrarian writers, such as Wendell Berry, who return and celebrate them—and, yes, recycle them in new ways for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (AL)

Massey Board Room  
2:00-2:50 pm

**“Finding Common Ground: An Eco-Feminist Reading of Christa Wolf's Work”**

***Dr. Deborah Janson, Department of Foreign Languages, West Virginia U***

Many ideas expressed in the work of the German author Christa Wolf can be compared fruitfully with central tenets of American eco-feminism. Wolf, arguably the former GDR's best known writer, often posited in her texts a socialist vision for a future society that was based on cooperation, community, and recognition of the intrinsic value of each individual. Such a vision corresponds closely to the eco-feminist concept of a partnership-based society that advances communication and mutual respect; pursues the development of life-sustaining rather than life-destroying technologies; embraces life's connecting spirit; and emphasizes relationships rather than hierarchies, linking rather than ranking. In my presentation, I will examine works that Wolf has written over a span of more than thirty years--including several penned since German unification--thereby demonstrating the ongoing relevance that her ideas hold for eco-feminism today. (AL)

Deborah Janson is an associate professor of German in West Virginia University's Department of Foreign Languages. Her current scholarly interests focus on GDR and post-Wende literature, including the theme of national and personal identity in works by minority and East German writers. She is also currently writing about Christa Wolf and has published articles on works from the German Enlightenment and Romantic periods and on German literature from an ecofeminist perspective.

Massey Board Room

5:30-6:30 pm

REFRESHMENTS TO FOLLOW, 6:30-7:15 pm

### **Folk Music Concert**

#### ***Adrienne Young, Alumna, Belmont U***

Adrienne Young offers tightly crafted songs that, like the feel of her home and the flow of her conversation, infuse her love for American tradition with high contemporary energy. In her compelling performances, she asks probing questions—about love, responsibility, idealism, stewardship—but the person she's interrogating is herself. (C&A)

Nashville-based singer-songwriter and Belmont alumna Adrienne Young is an ardent supporter of sustainable agriculture. Young bundled seed packets into the liner notes of her Grammy-nominated first album *Plow to the End of the Row* (2003). *The Art of Virtue* (2005) continued her success, and the reception for her newest release, *Room to Grow* (2007), has been highly enthusiastic. In fact, the *Los Angeles Times* has proclaimed her “the Americana find of the year.”

Curb Café

7:30-9:00 pm

### **Wednesday, September 16**

#### **NIA Dance: "Creative Flow through Conscious Movement"**

##### ***Adrienne Young, Alumna, Belmont U***

"Arising from stillness come the sounds of the earth. To the open ear, these sounds are music. This music invites us to move." **NIA (Neuromuscular Integrative Action)** is a cardiovascular blend of dance arts, martial arts and the healing arts. It integrates these movements, concepts, and philosophies by embracing the gifts of the healing arts; the power and mindfulness of the martial arts and meditative techniques; the grace and fluidity of the dance techniques; and the awareness and alignment through integrative body therapies. Movement becomes self-empowering, fostering personal growth and well-being. This class is for everyone—dancers and non-dancers alike. (C&A)

Black Box, Troutt Theater

11:00-11:50 am

#### **Art Exhibit: "Snake Handlers and Redemption"**

##### ***Gary Monroe, Artist***

Unlike journalistic presentations of snake handling, Gary Monroe—who mixes modern and traditional elements in his drawings—presents a spiritual practice filtered through the whole history of western art. We are reminded of the enduring power of religious belief and the unusual forms that worship can take. We are also made aware that the search for religious transport may bring both pleasure and pain. Blurring the line between art and religion, Monroe reminds us that both hold out the promise of spiritual transcendence, and both may cost their practitioners more than they expected.

Bunch Library, Leu Art Gallery

On exhibit through September 24, 2009

#### **"Seeds: A Story of Self-Cultivation"**

##### ***Micah Stover, Alumna, Belmont U***

“*To see things in the seed, that is genius,*” teaches Lao Tzu. My first spirit seeds were harvested somewhere in a field of Chinese sunflowers, against a backdrop of the Himalayan Mountains. Nature spoke to me. And I listened. An excerpt taken from this travel memoir catalogues the experiences of a single female traveling throughout Mainland China and into Tibet. In particular, the selections for tonight’s reading examine the ways in which “the sublime” reveals itself best in the hands and work of nature and through her staggering landscapes as well as her cycle of creation and destruction, a cycle which mirrors the human landscape and experience. (AL)

Bunch Library, Leu Art Gallery  
3:00-3:50 pm

### **“Invisible Landscapes: Learning from Nature in the City”**

***Dr. John Tallmadge***

John Tallmadge’s 2004 book, *The Cincinnati Arch: Learning from Nature in the City*, recounts how a wilderness lover relocates to the Rust Belt and learns from his children and his neighborhood how to value urban nature as a scene of delight and instruction. The “arch” of the book’s title is richly resonant: as the name of a geologic formation molding the urban landscape that Tallmadge comes to love; as an archetypal building form; and, in its parabolic shape, as a metaphor for life’s journey. Filled with luminous lessons of mindfulness, attentiveness, and other spiritual practices, this book is a hopeful guide for finding nature and balance in unlikely places. Please join us for Dr. Tallmadge’s presentation as he reads from and speaks about his teaching and his book. (AL)

John Tallmadge has dedicated his career to writing and teaching about the environment, pedagogy, and sustainability. He is the author of three books—*The Cincinnati Arch*, *Meeting the Tree of Life: A Teacher’s Path*, and *Reading under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*—as well as numerous articles in journals such as *Orion*, *Utne Reader*, and *Audubon*. Filled with luminous lessons of mindfulness, attentiveness, and other spiritual practices, his most recent book, *The Cincinnati Arch*, is a hopeful guide for finding nature and balance in unlikely places.

Bunch Library, Multimedia Hall  
4:30-5:30 pm

REFRESHMENTS TO FOLLOW, LEU ART GALLERY (BUNCH LIBRARY), 5:30-6:15 pm

### **“Religion, Politics, and Public Good: A Buddhist Perspective”**

***Dr. Peter Hershock, East-West Center***

Professor Hershock will apply Buddhist thought to reflect on the challenges to public good, created by emerging social, economic, and political realities associated with increasingly complex global interdependence. (AL)

Peter Hershock, from The East-West Center, is Coordinator of the Asian Studies Development Program. He has earned degrees from Yale University (B.A., Philosophy) and the University of Hawai‘i (Ph.D., Asian and Comparative Philosophy). His primary scholarly interests lie in investigating the philosophical implications of Buddhist practice, especially the Chan tradition, and on making use of Buddhist conceptual resources to address contemporary issues. In addition to publishing in such academic journals as *Philosophy East and West* and the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, he is the author of: *Liberating Intimacy: Enlightenment and Social Virtuosity in Chan Buddhism*; *Reinventing the Wheel: A Buddhist Response to the Information Age*; an edited volume *Technology and Cultural Values: On the Edge of the Third Millennium*; and *Chan Buddhism*.

Bunch Library, Multimedia Hall  
7:00-8:30 pm

## **Thursday, September 17**

### **“Wildness at Heart – The Predator/Prey Relationship: what humans can learn from horses about being whole”**

***Dr. Judy Skeen, School of Religion, Belmont U***

As we find ourselves more and more separated from the rhythms of nature and the power of our own embodied living, are we losing some of our ability to be restored by the world and the creatures around us? Are bounds

possible between species that can teach us about ourselves and our world? Come explore the possibilities through focus on the relationships between horses and humans. (AL)

Bunch Library, Leu Art Gallery  
11:00-11:50 am

### **Campus Nature Walk: “Learning to See the Unseen”**

***Dr. John Tallmadge***

Dr. Tallmadge will lead us on a campus “nature walk.” In doing so, he will help us learn to observe and appreciate the active presence of nature within this urban “built” environment that is wonderfully self-sustaining and that can also be, when noticed and valued, sustaining to its human co-habitants. (C&A)

Begins at the Belmont Bell Tower  
3:30-4:30 pm

### **“Nature, Community, and the Life We Dream”**

***Janisse Ray***

The most vital challenge we humans face in the 21st century is figuring out, individually and collectively, how to lead whole lives—how to live well despite the destruction and fragmentation around us. Here's a poetic and visionary look at wholeness and at what being "fully human" means. The work of community organizing, environmental protection, and restoration is holy work, that of restoring the magnanimity of our humanity. (AL)

Writer, naturalist, and activist Janisse Ray is author of three books of literary nonfiction. *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* (2000), a memoir about growing up in a junkyard in the ruined longleaf pine ecosystem of the Southeast, was chosen as a *New York Times* Notable Book. She has also written *Wild Card Quilt: Taking a Chance on Home*, as well as *Pinhook: Finding Wholeness in a Fragmented Land*. Ray believes the most vital challenge we humans face in the 21st century is figuring out, individually and collectively, how to lead whole lives—how to live well despite the destruction and fragmentation around us. Tony Horwitz from the *New York Times Book Review* writes, "What sets *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* apart is the ambitious and arresting mission implied in its title. . . . Ray's passion for preserving and restoring this unsung landscape is heartfelt and refreshing."

Bunch Library, Multimedia Hall  
5:00-6:00 pm

### **Reception with the Symposium Speakers**

This offering of light hors d'oeuvres and beverages, sponsored by the School of Humanities, provides an opportunity for many of the Symposium speakers to meet and talk with audience members.

Lower Foyer, Troutt Theater  
6:00-6:45 pm

### **A Reading by Poet Mary Oliver**

***Mary Oliver***

Mary Oliver's poetry, with her lyrical connection to the natural world, has firmly established her in the highest realm of American poets. She is renowned for her evocative and precise imagery, which brings nature into clear focus, transforming the everyday world into a place of magic and discovery. As poet Stanley Kunitz has said, “Mary Oliver's poetry is fine and deep; it reads like a blessing. Her special gift is to connect us with our sources in the natural world, its beauties and terrors and mysteries and consolations.” Please join Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver as she shares her joyous, accessible, and intimate observations of the natural world. (AL)

Mary Oliver is the celebrated author of more than a dozen books of poetry and prose. With her lyrical connection to the natural world, Oliver's poetry has firmly established her in the highest realm of American poets. Oliver has been honored with the National Book Award for Poetry, the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, among others.

Belmont Heights Baptist Church  
7:00-8:00 pm

### **Friday, September 18**

#### **“What a Tangled Web We Weave”**

***Dr. Abigail Jahiel, Illinois Wesleyan University***

As Americans we are accustomed to thinking of our country’s military, political, economic, and cultural influence throughout the world. As much as we might also try to consider the implications of American policies and lifestyles for peoples and ecosystems elsewhere, the web we weave is indeed a tangled one, both geographically and temporally, and the strands that compose it are often invisible. Focusing on the US and China, this talk aims to unravel the global web of consumption, production, and destruction, and reveal the ecological and social interdependencies and trans-boundary implications that lie within it. (AL)

Abigail Jahiel, Illinois Wesleyan University, is Director of Environmental Studies and Associate Professor of Environmental and International Studies. A political scientist and China specialist by training, Dr. Jahiel has published several articles on environmental issues in China in such journals as *The China Quarterly*, *China Rights Forum*, and *Environmental Politics*. Over the past decade, she has also devoted her energies to developing environmental studies curricula; promoting campus sustainability, and organizing workshops on integrating environmental sustainability throughout higher education. Her early sustainability work was published in the edited volume *Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change (2004)*.

Massey Business Center 104  
8:30-10:00 am

#### **“Nature and the Human Spirit” Symposium Panel**

***Featured speakers Mary Oliver, Janisse Ray, John Tallmadge, and guest publisher, Helene Atwan***

Please join our speakers as they share ideas, answer questions, and continue the discussion in a panel on the symposium’s themes. (AL)

Troutt Theatre  
10:00-10:50 am

#### **“As China Goes, So Goes the Planet: The Transboundary Implications of Chinese Environmental Challenges”**

***Dr. Judith Shapiro, American University***

China's enormous environmental challenges have received great publicity. But less well-known are the implications that these problems have for the future of the planet. This talk argues that some of these challenges have great international importance, including climate change, biodiversity loss, fossil fuel competition, air and water pollution, deforestation, and so on. Dr. Shapiro will explore concepts of "displacement of environmental harms" and "environmental security" as lenses for understanding the political ecology of China's environmental crisis. (AL)

Dr. Judith Shapiro is the Director of the Global Environmental Politics Programs at American University. Her courses include Environment and Politics, Advanced Studies and Research in Environmental Policy, Contemplation and Political Change, and Cross-Cultural Communication. A China specialist, she is co-author of *Son of the Revolution*, *After the Nightmare*, *Cold Winds*, *Warm Winds*, and numerous articles on freedom of expression and historical memory. Her current research is in the political and social dynamics of environmental degradation, and sustainable development in China. Her latest book is *Mao's War against the Environment: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Among other courses, she teaches Contemplation and Political Change, Global Environmental Politics in the Public Imagination, and Environmental Security in Asia.

Massey Business Center 103  
1:00-1:50 pm

**Documentary Films: *Manufactured Landscapes and Shifting Nature***

*Manufactured Landscapes* works triple-time as a documentary portrait, a tone poem, and a work of protest. Director Jennifer Baichwal (*The True Meaning of Pictures: Shelby Lee Adams' Appalachia*). In the spirit of such environmentally enlightening hits as *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Rivers and Tides*, *Manufactured Landscapes* powerfully shifts our consciousness about the world and the way we live in it. The film follows internationally acclaimed photographer Edward Burtynsky whose large-scale photographs of manufactured landscapes, quarries, recycling yards, factories, mines, and dams create stunningly beautiful art from civilization's materials and debris. The film follows him through China, as he shoots the evidence and effects of that country's massive industrial revolution. Burtynsky's photographs allow us to meditate on our impact on the planet and witness both the epicenters of industrial endeavor and the dumping grounds of its waste. (C&A)

Bunch Library, Multimedia Hall  
7:30-9:00 pm

## **Saturday, September 19**

### **Hike at Radnor Lake**

***Candice Ethridge, Native Plant Enthusiast, and Kevin Bowden, "Bird Walk" Leader for Tennessee Ornithological Society***

Comprising over 1,200 acres of hard wood forest in the middle of the city, Radnor Lake offers easy access to the non-human world. Join Kevin Bowden, bird walk leader for Tennessee Ornithological Society, and Candice Ethridge, a native plant enthusiast, to explore why so many Nashvillians find solace at Radnor. Resident as well as migrating birds may appear. Even leaf litter can reveal nature underfoot. (C&A)

Radnor Lake (will begin at the Visitors Center, Granny White Pike entrance to the park)  
8:00 am

### **"Rethinking the Environment, Politics, Development, and Culture Nexus"**

***Dr. Kavita Philip, University of California, Irvine***

Transnational knowledge is an important factor in rethinking the environment. While giving attention to environmental challenges and issues faced in the cultural nexus of India, Dr. Philip will focus particularly on matters of tactical biopolitics in a global context. (AL)

Kavita Philip is Director of the Critical Theory Institute and Associate Professor of Women's Studies at University of California, Irvine. She is the author of *Civilizing Natures: Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India*; author and editor of *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience*; and co-editor of *Homeland Securities, Multiple Contentions*; and *Constructing Human Rights in the Age of Globalization*. Philip is also the author of a number of book chapters and articles, and she teaches courses in the areas of Gender and Science; Gender and the Politics of Nature; Gender, Biology, and Environmental Ethics; and Cultural Geography.

Massey Business Center 103  
9:30-11:00 am

### **"Environments, Diversity, and Equity: A Buddhist Perspective"**

***Dr. Peter Hershock, East-West Center***

The fact that humanity is mostly getting things right is scant consolation to those living in absolute poverty or to those surviving on less than what \$2 a day might buy in the United States today. Dr. Hershock explores what must be done to open spaces of hope for greater global equity by drawing on resources from Buddhism as one of the world's great global worldviews. (AL)

Please see Wednesday, September 16 for author's note about Dr. Hershock.

Massey Business Center 103  
1:15-2:45 pm

## **Sunday, September 20**

### **Film Viewing and Discussion: *Into the Wild* Moderated by Ken Roberts, Alumnus, Belmont U**

Does “Nature” (whatever that is...) really DO anything? Does it actually free us, transform us, urge us happily on to an authentic sense of self, or is it all in our heads? If Thoreau is correct and “in wildness is the preservation of the world,” where does one go in a world that seems to have few wild places left? If as William Cronon suggests, nature is “profoundly a human creation” and one in which “we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires,” then does nature really exist outside of our own imaginings of it? What are we to make then of a young man that ceremoniously cuts himself off from the world, thumbs his nose at conventional society, and embarks on an idyllic quest into nature, into the wild, only to wind up dead—two years later—in an abandoned bus in the backcountry of Alaska? Does our myth of nature, of *wildness*, destroy us, bring us “home,” or perhaps something altogether different? (C&A)

LCVA 117  
2:30-5:00 pm

## **Monday, September 21**

### **“Nature and the Human Spirit—Reciprocity and Relationship”: A Wrap-Up Session Moderated by Dr. Stover and Dr. Sisson**

Dr. Sisson and Dr. Stover will lead faculty panelists and students in a conversation about what we’ve learned from our symposium and where we might go from here. (AL)

Massey Business Center 100  
10:00-10:50 am

***Beyond the Symposium: “Nature and the Human Spirit” Lives On at Belmont . . .***

## **Wednesday, September 23**

### **“Illustration on Location”**

#### ***Robert J. Blake***

Award-winning author and illustrator Robert J. Blake travels on location to research, sketch, and paint his picture books. Destinations have included the Iditarod Race in Alaska, the Havasupai Native American Reservation in the Grand Canyon, and Marawah, Tasmania. Creator of twenty-four picture books, Blake will offer a presentation about his children’s books, including slides of his illustrations; he will talk specifically about his process of working on location in remote areas of the world.

LCVA 117  
5:00-7:00 p.m.

## **September 16-October 24**

### **“Illustration on Location” Art Exhibit**

#### ***Robert J. Blake***

Robert J. Blake’s books and illustrations (see above) will be on exhibit September 16-October 24.

LCVA, Gallery 121

Thank you for participating in  
*“Nature and the Human Spirit”*

We hope you will join us  
next year for the  
**Ninth Annual Fall Humanities Symposium**