Consecrating Science
Wonder, Ethics, and the New Cosmology

Roundtable with Dr. Lisa Sideris
Friday, December 5, 1:30 p.m.
IUPUI University Library 4115P
755 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis

What is the role of wonder in contemporary environmental discourse? Come join Dr. Lisa Sideris as she examines a constellation of movements referred to as the New Story/Universe Story/Epic of Evolution/Big History—forms of science-based ecospirituality that have emerged in recent decades. One of her central claims is that these narratives encourage awe and wonder at scientific information and expert knowledge as that which is most “real,” over and above lived encounters with the natural world. She questions whether these new myths are likely to engender the environmental values and ethics they seek to cultivate. This privileging of abstract information is pronounced in iterations of the new cosmology that take inspiration from the work of E. O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins—who promote a mythopoetic rendering of science as a superior rival to religion—but many of the same criticisms can be made of the new cosmology as it has come to dominate the broad discipline of “religion and ecology.” Dr. Sideris’s talk will draw comparisons between the forms (and objects) of wonder celebrated in these movements and accounts of wonder as an enduring orientation, such as Rachel Carson defends in The Sense of Wonder and other writings.

Lisa Sideris is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the IU Consortium for the Study of Religion, Ethics, and Society (CSRES) at Indiana University Bloomington. Her research interests include environmental ethics, religion and nature, and the science-religion interface. She is author of Environmental Ethics, Ecological Theology, and Natural Selection (Columbia, 2003) and editor of Rachel Carson: Legacy and Challenge (SUNY, 2008). Her current research focuses on the role played by wonder in discourse at the intersection of science, religion, and nature, and the turn to science for a common sacred narrative.

This is a public program open to all. An RSVP to Abby Gitlitz <agitlitz@indiana.edu> is appreciated but not required. Religion and Ethics Roundtables highlight the work of scholars at IUB, IUPUI, and beyond, with the goal of engaging the IU community and the public in dialogue about important issues at the intersection of religion, ethics, and society.