What is Nature? (7.5 ECTS)

Level 1: First Cycle
Discipline: PHILOSOPHY and THEOLOGY (Systematic Theology and Theological Studies of Culture and Society)
Course ID: 0255

Admission requirements
General admission requirements for university studies. Students taking part in the course as part of their Bachelor’s degree program must have completed Course A, Introduction in Philosophy and Theology (30 ECTS credits). Students taking part in the course as a freestanding course are expected to have corresponding prior knowledge.

Educational goals
- To understand the complexity of the use of the term “nature” in philosophy, theology and science and to be able explain the different ways in which the concept of “nature” was used through history and is used today.
- To be able to recognize and to explain how our interpretation of nature shapes the way we relate to it.
- To show the ability to create an intellectual framework that is a help for decision making that affects nature

Course content
Nature is an ambiguous term. What it refers to is quite different in natural science, literature, philosophy, or theology. This course will explore the use of the concept of “nature” in different academic fields, trying to identify what is particular to its understanding in each context. A focus of the course will be the hermeneutics of nature, i.e. how we access knowledge on nature, how we experience it and how this experience interacts with our concepts of it. The course will also focus on where nature fits into theological texts and ideas as well as individual spirituality. The course will attempt to find a common denominator for an interdisciplinary understanding of nature as well as trying to offer an ecological outlook, re-formulating our relationship to nature.
Course outline

September 2nd: Introduction (PG): Explaining the concept of the course, especially the relationship of practical and theoretical moments within the course, literature, presentation of students etc.

September 7th: Nature: the historical development of the term in philosophy, theology and science. (EÅ)

September 14th: Nature as creation I- biblical perspectives
September 21st: Nature as creation II - Systematic perspectives
September 28th: Nature, theology and science (the intersection of science and theology exemplified with Karl Rahner's "Christology in an Evolutionary World View")

Oktober 12th (four hours): What does nature do to us? In what ways do we experience nature? Nature as the place of God's presence and absence (The experience of desert in the Church fathers, the theme of the garden as "tamed and redeemed nature" in the monastic tradition etc. (Visit to the forest)

October 19th: Romantic nature - nature in Romantic literature. Reclaiming God's presence in nature. (Helena Bodin)

October 26th (whole day): Nature as product - Forestry and its economy, nature as habitat, nature and public health (PG). This unit has been prepared beforehand (announce on September 2nd): Two groups who identify and present material on the effect of being in nature, particularly in the forest, on mental and physical health, alternatively on the interaction of animals, plants, (dead) trees and forestry in a North European forest. Morning: making an financial estimate of the value of (a part of) the Stavby- forest. Lunch in the Tipi. Afternoon: Presentation of the results of the prior research on "nature as habitat" and "nature an public health"

November 9th: Beautiful nature. The aesthetics of nature (CZ)

November 16th: Praying in nature (FHE)

November 23rd: Examen 1: Presentation of papers: a model for the sustainable use of c:a 3 ha forest land on the background of the insights of the course. The more of the issues that have been discussed in the course are reflected in the paper, the better. That means: If the student discusses the choices he/she has made in regard to beauty, a place for prayer, economic use etc. - or why things should not taken into account (for example because they can better be integrated in a landscape perspective) the higher grade he/she will receive.

December 7th: Examen 2 (written): On the theological aspects of the theme
Teaching and examination
Teaching is given by means of lectures and discussion seminars in Uppsala and during several excursions. Examination is taken in three ways: 1. Students are expected to do assigned readings, to participate actively in working sessions (20% of the final grade); 2. To write an essay of 3 pages on a topic selected in agreement with the lecturer (40% of the final grade). 3. The content of the entire course will be examined through a written exam at the end of the course (40% of the final grade).

Bibliography
- Pope Francis: *Laudato Si*
- Rahner, Karl: *Christology in an evolutionary world view*

- Compendium of selected articles that will be distributed at course start, ca. 400 pages.
- Special literature, ca. 200 pages.

See also "Kursplaner: allmänna bestämmelser” (Course plans: General rules)

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