

For immediate release.



From Benedictine University

Seminars focus on how women can maximize talents, build personal brand

Lisle, Illinois - What makes you special? What can help you differentiate yourself from your peers and competitors?

The Women's Institute for Global Leadership at Benedictine University and Fifth Third Bank want to help women discover the gifts that make them special, and how to market those talents in a competitive work environment.

The Women's Institute and Fifth Third Bank will present "Defining and Valuing Your Gifts and Talents" from 8:00-10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 21, and "Building and Maximizing Your Brand" on from 8:00-10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 28 in the 32nd Floor Conference Room of the Fifth Third Center, 222 S. Riverside Plaza, Chicago.

The cost is \$25 for each session.

"Defining and Valuing Your Gifts and Talents" is designed to help individuals develop greater self-awareness, express personal authenticity, awaken talents and create a map for becoming an effective leader of their lives. Participants will be led to discover, better define and value their gifts and talents, which can be utilized for a more gratifying purpose personally and professionally.

A person's personal brand can distinguish them from their peers and give them a competitive edge in the workplace. "Building and Maximizing Your Brand" will teach people how to create a personal brand and capitalize on their unique qualities,

The Women's Institute for Global Leadership at Benedictine University was established to provide women around the world access to unparalleled educational opportunities to grow, advance and lead while sustaining and expanding the gains they have already made in the workplace and society.

The Institute seeks to cultivate an appreciation of the distinctive needs and matters concerning women; empower women with academic, practical and inspirational knowledge and understanding; foster greater collaborative efforts among women worldwide; and advocate for women via executive sponsorships of students and Institute members.

The event is open to the public. To register, go to www.ben.edu/wi.

Vatican astronomer talks metaphysics, Pluto as part of visiting scholar series

Lisle, Illinois ~ Benedictine University espouses the belief that religion and science are both central to solving the world's most urgent problems. Religious faith and science are both directed toward the pursuit of truth, and both are strengthened through research and study.

On Wednesday and Thursday, February 15-16, Benedictine University will host Br. Guy Consolmagno, SJ, Ph.D., an astronomer at the Vatican Observatory, who will lecture at Benedictine University as part of Benedictine University's "Visiting Scholar in Catholic Thought" lecture series.

Consolmagno, who curates the Vatican's meteorite collection, conducts scientific research which explores the connections between meteorites, asteroids and the evolution of small solar system bodies. He also conducts surveys using the Vatican's 1.8-meter Advanced Technology Telescope in Arizona.

Consolmagno will present two lectures in Birck Hall, Room 112 (Tellabs Lecture Hall) during his visit to Benedictine University. He will present "The New Physics and the Old Metaphysics" at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 15, and "Pluto and the Vatican" at 12:20 p.m. on Thursday, February 16. The lectures are free and open to the public.

Earning bachelor's and master's degrees from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a Ph.D. in Planetary Science from the University of Arizona, Consolmagno researched at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has published many scholarly articles and several popular books, including "Turn Left at Orion: Hundreds of Night Objects to See in a Home Telescope" with Dan Davis, "Brother Astronomer" and "God's Mechanics."

Consolmagno serves on the governing boards of numerous international scientific organizations, including the International Astronomical Union, the Meteoritical Society and the Division for Planetary Sciences of the American Astronomical Society.

The "Visiting Scholar in Catholic Thought" series heightens awareness and appreciation of the distinctive contributions the Catholic intellectual tradition has made and continues to make to all branches of knowledge and creativity.

For more information about this event, contact Rita George-Tvrtkovic, Ph.D., at rgeorge-tvrtkovic@ben.edu.

“Lent at the Abbey” provides food for the soul, sustenance for the mind

Lisle, Illinois ~ The Lenten season is traditionally one of fasting for Catholics. Fasting – which requires abstinence from meat and partaking of only one full meal – was required by Canon Law on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Fridays during the Lenten season.

While the strict rules regarding feeding the body have been redefined and somewhat loosened in recent years, the need to feed the soul and the mind remains as strong as ever. Feeding the soul and the mind during the Lenten season require holy reading.

“Reading is mandatory for St. Benedict’s monks,” said Fr. Becket Franks, O.S.B. “Everyone has to be literate. The Rule of Benedict 48:16 states, ‘...in these days of Lent they shall each receive a book from the library, which they shall read straight through from the beginning. These books are to be given out at the beginning of Lent.’”

Benedictine University and St. Procopius Abbey invite the public to attend “Lent at the Abbey” from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 17. The theme of the event is “Holy Reading in Lent: Food for the Soul and the Mind.”

Speakers will include Fr. Becket of St. Procopius Abbey and Christine M. Fletcher, Ph.D., assistant professor of Theology at Benedictine University. Lent at the Abbey will reflect upon holy reading as food for the soul and the mind – one of the most important parts of the Lenten journey.

The schedule includes arrival and coffee, a morning prayer, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, readings, Mass, lunch in the monastic refectory, a reflection, and a closing prayer and blessing. There is no fee for this day, but a free will offering will be taken.

For more information or to RSVP, contact Fr. Becket at (630) 829-9253 or email bfranks@procopius.org.

Heritage lecture to provide prayer, counsel for a “wounded” planet

Lisle, Illinois ~ Within the combative dissidence over global warming and other real or perceived damage to the environment, the impact of prayer on our world is lost in the conversation.

The effectiveness of prayer coupled with properly contemplated action will be discussed during a lecture celebrating Benedictine Catholic heritage and Benedictine University’s 125th anniversary.

Sr. Judith Sutera, O.S.B., of the monastery of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kan., will present the Benedictine Heritage lecture at 7:00 p.m. on March 8 in Birck Hall, Room 112 (Tellabs Lecture Hall). She will present “One in the One: Contemplative Life on a Wounded Planet” during her visit to the University as part of Founders’ week.

Because a dedication to responsible stewardship of the earth is a core Benedictine value that is shared across religions, Sr. Sutera, an expert on monasticism who is heavily involved in interreligious dialogue, was a perfect fit to present the Heritage lecture, said Christine Fletcher, Ph.D., assistant professor of Theology at Benedictine University.

“Prayer and the world are always going to be intertwined,” Fletcher said. “We believe prayer is effective. There is a real link between our heritage and how we live.”

Sr. Sutera will discuss how to thoughtfully balance daily life with care for the planet.

Sr. Sutera is the author of numerous books and articles on Benedictine spirituality and edits *The American Monastic Newsletter* and *Magistra: A Journal of Women's Spirituality in History*. She is a popular retreat director and speaker for both monastic and lay groups and is a member of the North American commission of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue – an international monastic group coordinated with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Sr. Sutera has been involved in interreligious dialogue activities with Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims, including a dialogue on monasticism and the environment, and the study of the contemplative tradition across world religions. She earned master's degrees in counseling and monastic studies.

The Benedictine Heritage lecture is held annually during Founders' week. The lecture is free and open to the public.

For more information about this event, contact Christine Fletcher, Ph.D., at cfletcher@ben.edu or (630) 829-6263.

Iowa caucuses reveal unpredictable nature of politics to visiting Benedictine students

Lisle, Illinois ~ Imagine having the chance to hobnob with the who's who of national media, political insiders and powerful lobbyists. Such engagements are usually relegated to the likes of celebrities or the rich – statuses that are often intertwined.

A few weeks ago, five Benedictine students entered this elite world during an educational exploration of the 2012 Republican Party Iowa caucuses – leaving with not only an insider's viewpoint of a unique and somewhat convoluted form of voting but also with an indelible memory of the behind-the-scenes power plays involved in presidential politics.

Since 1972, the Iowa caucuses have become more influential due to political reforms. Traditionally, winners of these caucuses go on to become their party's nominee for candidate for president of the United States.

“It was important for students to see the nature of the caucus's function versus a primary,” said Phil Hardy, Ph.D., assistant professor of Political Science at Benedictine University. “It was interesting for students to see the artificial and manufactured nature of news media and the way they conduct interviews and the way a company tries to use media.”

Hardy, who led the expedition, said the hands-on experience students received from the political event provided invaluable insight for students, allowing them to examine concepts studied in class while learning about the unspoken politics that play out during such events.

“I attended the Iowa caucuses because I’m a bit of a political junkie, and I felt that it would be a rare opportunity to be a part of history. Also, as a Political Science major, I thought it would be a great chance for me to observe the political process and gain insight on any possible careers in the political field,” said Benedictine junior Chris Follert.

Benedictine students hobnobbed with major media journalists including David Gregory of *NBC*’s “Meet the Press” and Bob Schieffer of *CBS*’s “Face the Nation.” Students also attended Republican candidates Ron Paul’s press conference and Mitt Romney’s “victory” party – which is a term applied loosely after Iowa caucus officials re-tallied votes and announced weeks later that fellow Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum won by a narrow margin over Mitt Romney.

Some students felt the Iowa caucuses were like a blowout during the Super Bowl – where the media hype around the event does not live up to its billing.

“In my opinion the process was messy,” said Thais Molina, a senior Political Science and International Business major at Benedictine. “People seemed confused, since they were approached by candidates and representatives that were campaigning at the caucus location.”

Students agreed that learning hands-on about the differences between primary elections and caucuses was valuable. However, also learning that many decisions are made before votes are even cast was very frustrating for some.

“I learned that the political establishment runs a little too much,” said Plainfield resident Abdon Madrigal, a recent Benedictine Political Science graduate who attended the January caucus. “I am a Ron Paul supporter and I had to grit my teeth more than a few times. For example, we were at a Politico event hosted by a number of political anchors, reporters and the governor of Iowa.

“It was so frustrating to hear things like ‘Even if Ron Paul won first place, it would be a victory for Romney,’” Madrigal added. “It was so hard for me to hold back my tongue to yell ‘this is not democracy!’...Before any votes were cast, every member of the establishment is writing my guy off, calling all of his supporters libertarians and displeased Obama supporters. Talk about stereotyping. It was clear that powerful people wanted Romney to win.”

Students were surprised that they were actually able to meet candidates directly, and although learning about the differences between primary elections and caucuses was the focus of the students’ trip to Iowa, the social aspect of the trip was the big winner for the students, particularly with “meeting (CNN anchor) Anderson Cooper, since I am a big fan,” Molina said. “He was very nice and posed for a photo with us.”

Benedictine consistently strives to provide students with hands-on world experience that will better prepare them for the job market. Recently, University educators conducted a research study (<http://bit.ly/sNeowK>) with students on the Chicago Occupy movement.

Want to learn how to use watercolors? Uncertain what to do in an emergency?

Lisle, Illinois ~ Do you want to learn how to sketch with pencil and watercolors? Interested in impact of women in the Civil War? How to prepare for emergencies?

The Center for Lifelong Learning at Benedictine University's Moser College of Adult and Professional Studies - which offers non-credit courses of interest for adults ages 55 and over - is offering classes in sketching, the influence of women during the Civil war, and how to prepare for possible emergencies.

Wendy Finch, who earned a bachelor's degree in Studio Art and a master's degree in Printmaking from Eastern Illinois University, will present "Sketching with Pencil and Watercolor" from 2:00-4:00 p.m. on the Saturdays of February 11, 18 and 25 and March 3.

Participants ranging in all skill levels will learn to apply basic sketching techniques using pencil and watercolors. The cost is \$25, which does not include material costs.

James Weren, a retired commercial artist who uses illustrations to enhance the impact of history, will present "Women of the Civil War" from 2:00-3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 14.

Participants will study select women of the Civil War era to learn the impact that women had on the conduct and outcome of the war and its influence on the future of women in America. The cost is \$10.

Because emergencies can always be around the corner, it is beneficial to play it safe by taking a course in how to prepare for sudden and devastating emergencies. Michi Dubes, the Emergency Preparedness Manager at Benedictine University who is certified in disaster management and advanced safety, will present "Preparing for Emergencies" from 2:00-3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 15.

By taking some simple steps to prepare for possible emergency situations, one can minimize the impact and make a significant difference in ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals, families, businesses and communities. The cost is \$10.

The Center for Lifelong Learning requires no tests and there are no grades or admission requirements in this non-credit program. The courses are highly interactive discussions of intriguing topics led by Benedictine University and Moser College faculty, visiting experts and center members.

To register online, visit the website at <http://www.ben.edu/LifeLongLearning/>.

For more information or to register by phone, please contact Natalia Poniatowska at (630) 829-1384 or Stephen Nunes at (630) 829-1372. People can also visit the Moser Center at 1832 Centre Point Circle, Suite 102 in Naperville.