Albion Area

Lifelong Learners

Albion College

Winter 2013 Newsletter

2013 Winter Assembly

January 17, 2013 - First United Methodist Church, (Fellowship Lounge)

10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Dave Seely, Ph.D., Professor of Physics, Albion College

Subject: Nuclear Power: Pros and Cons

Proponents of nuclear power argue that nuclear energy is economical, safe, and good for the environment. Critics maintain that fission reactors are neither safe nor clean, and cite the Fukushima Daiichi and Chernobyl power plant disasters, among others, along with problems that are associated with the disposal of nuclear waste. Some also argue that nuclear power plants that reprocess spent fuel may contribute to the proliferation of fissile material for use in weaponry ("dirty bombs") and that nuclear power plants are a public health risk, at least to people living in their vicinity. In this talk, we will take a brief look at the physics of nuclear energy and then examine the pro and con debate. If there is time and interest, we will also take a brief look at some next-generation nuclear energy technology such as the Next Generation Nuclear Plant (NGNP) project at the Idaho National Laboratory and/or the ITER experimental fusion reactor.

Biographical Information:

Dave Seely is Professor of Physics at Albion College. He grew up in southern Minnesota and attended Gustavus Adolphus College where he earned a B.A. degree in Physics. He subsequently received a PhD degree from the University of Missouri at Rolla (now the Missouri University of Science and Technology), where he did experimental research in the physics of atomic collisions. He currently collaborates with a research group at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) in Tennessee which investigates low-energy charge-changing interactions between hydrogen ions and atoms and photon emission in collisions between highly charged ions and simple atoms. This research is relevant to the understanding of electron dynamics on the periphery of hot fusion plasmas.

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