The award-winning essayist Amy Leach was on campus during the week of September 22nd for a series of events celebrating her genre-defying book *Things That Are*. All events were free and open to the public.

The book, a collection of 28 essays and meditations on the natural world, combines science, nature, philosophy, and cosmology with Leach’s wild imagination on subjects ranging from the tiniest Earth dwellers to far-flung celestial bodies. *The Guardian* newspaper in London said the book was written with “mad, magical exuberance and whimsy” as it attempts to “slowly, methodically, thoughtfully, digest the universe for you.”

Leach has been recognized with the Whiting Writers’ Award, *Best American Essays* selections, a Rona Jaffe Foundation Award, and a Pushcart Prize. Her work has been published in *A Public Space, Tin House, Orion*, the *Los Angeles Review*, and many others.

Leach’s visit is sponsored by the ACTC Visiting Writers Series and the UST English Department’s Common Context Program. This year’s common context theme is “Illumination.” Illumination begins with an invitation to both see more than what is immediately apparent, and also believe that most subjects deserve such an effort. Whether considering science or philosophy, business or art, the act of illumination both sheds and discovers light in its subject. The tradition of illumination can be literal, however, as in the act of brightening a room, or drawing an illustration, and it can of course be figurative, as in the intellectual or spiritual act of bringing oneself or another to greater understanding. Similarly, when considering illumination in texts, one might consider the very traditional illuminated texts such as the Book of Kells, as well as their modern inheritors, the graphic novel, and then all the other limitless texts in between that drive us toward illumination.

Leach’s book engages with this theme by attempting to understand & illuminate existence from a point of view outside the self. The central question the book asks is: What would it be like to experience the world as something other than me?
Fall 2014 Events

Tuesday, September 23, 2014
Amy Leach Reading and Book Signing
7:30pm, Anderson Student Center, Woulfe Alumni Hall North

Author Amy Leach read selections from her nonfiction book *Things That Are: Essays*, published by Milkweed Editions in 2012. A book signing was held immediately following the reading.

Wednesday, September 24, 2014
Amy Leach Common Context Lecture for English Students
7:30pm, Anderson Student Center, Woulfe Alumni Hall North

ACTC Visiting Writer Amy Leach lectured on the theme of illumination and discussed how she incorporates her own sense of illumination into her lyric essays. A streaming video of her lecture can be found [HERE](#).

Thursday, September 25, 2014
Student Q & A with Amy Leach
11:45am, OEC Auditorium

Students had an opportunity to ask author Amy Leach questions about her writing process and her book *Things That Are*.

Thursday, September 25, 2014
Panel Presentation: The Making of *Things That Are*
7:30pm, Owens Science Hall, 3M Auditorium (OWS 150)

Amy Leach, Patrick Thomas (Milkweed Editions Managing Editor), and illustrator Nate Christopherson discussed the business and artistic processes that went into creating and publishing Leach's *Things That Are*. 