

# Letters

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## Christian Cinema as National Cinema

By Anne Morey

The project that brings me to the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities is a history of Christian filmmaking in the United States. In order to offer a survey of the relationship between the American film industry and the uses of the religious text, I am examining films made by Hollywood and by filmmakers adjacent to it who have achieved national theatrical releases for their products; in the process, I consider what difference it makes that manifestations of religious belief converge with both economic behavior and with entertainment, and what consequences this convergence has for religion, Hollywood, and our understanding of the place of each in public life. Some parts of this story of the twinning of film and Christianity are well known, but there is no book-length survey that looks at the history of American filmmaking through the lens of its relationship with Christianity as both a narrative and social force. The most fruitful examinations of Christian creativity in contemporary American public life have hitherto focused on broadcasting, music recording, and publishing. This study focuses on film because it has historically been a unified industry with a small coterie of producers confronting high economic barriers to entry and consequently desirous of addressing a national audience. The economics of film, in other words, mandate participation in a national discourse in ways that the niche marketing possible to publishing and broadcasting does not. In short, my book argues that the history of the American film industry may be told in miniature through its relations with American Christianity.

Perhaps unexpectedly, Christianity also appears to be a recurring element at moments of institutional crisis within the American film industry. As William Uricchio and Roberta Pear-



H.B. Warner as Jesus Christ in Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927), courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

son demonstrate in their examination of Vitagraph's *The Life of Moses* (1910), the religious film simultaneously justified film attendance on the sabbath and created appreciation for the assimilationist desires of America's Jews at the moment that the success of the nickelodeon was generating a kind of urban backlash against film attendance among the young. The 1915 *Mutual v. Ohio* Supreme Court decision that determined that film was an imitative art that deserved no protections against prior restraint is bookended by two D. W. Griffith films that manipulate religious rhetoric, *The Birth of a Nation* (whose conclusion invokes the figure of Christ) and *Intolerance* (which contains an extended sequence set at the time of Christ). Later, another religious film, Roberto Rossellini's *The Miracle*, incited the suit that overturned the *Mutual* decision in 1952. Cecil B. DeMille's *King of Kings* (1927), as Richard Maltby has observed, appeared when

opposition to the American film industry was created by the industry's ability to retail big-city values where they were not wanted; in other words, religion helped to naturalize the movement of film into small-town American life, as it

### Inside

Christian Cinema as National Cinema.....	1-4
The Future of the Humanities.....	5
External Grants and Fellowships.....	6
What We Are Writing.....	7
Graduate Fellows Lecture Series.....	8
Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture.....	9
Sesquicentennial of the Civil War.....	10
Theory, Interdisciplinarity, and the Humanities.....	11
Building Community in the 21st Century.....	12

had earlier in urban settings.

Perhaps above all, the narrative of the installation of enforcement mechanisms by 1934 for the Production Code (the film industry's self-censorship organization) can be read as one in which religion was the solution to an institutional crisis in the film industry. The Production Code represented the failure of liberal Protestant attitudes toward the film industry and the triumph of Catholic approaches to textual regulation, as both Maltby and Francis Couvares have noted. Religion's utility to Hollywood continued into the 1960s, with the biblical spectacular forming a reliable product at a moment when audiences had declined by half, as they did between 1948 and 1958, making the economic penalties for misjudging public sentiment considerable. Religious filmmaking even combines with technological innovation; for example, CinemaScope, the widescreen format that was designed to lure adult audiences back into theaters in 1953 debuted in the religious blockbuster *The Robe*.

Religious filmmaking in America thus possesses a lengthy tradition, one substantial enough to permit the development of a number of different subgenres: the action/adventure religious picture such as Matthew Crouch's Revelation-based *The Omega Code* (1999) and *Megiddo* (2001); the Christian musical such as *Godspell* (David Greene, 1973) and *Jesus Christ, Superstar* (Norman Jewison, 1973); the Jesus biopic such as *From the Manger to the Cross* (Sidney Olcott, 1912), *King of Kings* (Nicholas Ray, 1961), *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (George Stevens, 1965), and *Joshua* (Jon Purdy, 2002); the Christian art film such as *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Martin Scorsese, 1988), which might be classed with European art films that explore religious life and belief in unconventional ways, along the lines of Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964), and Jean-Luc Godard's *Hail Mary* (1985); and the religious horror film such as *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968) and *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), to name only a few. While the religious spectacular of the type of *Ben-Hur* (Fred Niblo, 1925; William Wyler, 1959) has become relatively uncommon since the 1960s, other forms have crowded in to take its place. Moreover, the religious film's debt to secular genres has led to a wide variety of narrative and archetypal styles, so that if *The Sign of the Cross* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1933), say, bears a close affinity to *King Kong* (1933), Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) resembles an assortment of non-Christian films that similarly expose the heroic protagonist to unbearable physical suffering, such as *Mad Max*, *Brave-*

*heart*, or the second *Terminator* film.

A brief history of Hollywood's relations with the religious film—and, to some extent, with the religious filmmaker—makes more obvious the continuities and breaks in the film industry's own tradition of religious filmmaking. Religious outsiders, as I have argued in another context, have historically hoped for access to the bully pulpit of Hollywood. The history of denominational filmmaking is more complex than can be explored here, but it embraced mainline Protestant denominations such as the Methodists, for example, who noticed declining membership in the 1910s and 1920s particularly among young people. Methodists consequently parlayed a history of the illustrated, improving lecture into a brief flirtation with feature filmmaking. Such attempts at religious filmmaking by religious groups remained by and large outside the mainstream and never spoke to Americans in large numbers. Despite the apparent weakness of such filmmaking, however, religious pressure groups were at intervals able to call Hollywood's attention to the usefulness of the mainstream religious narrative with films such as DeMille's *The King of Kings*, which was something of a milestone in church/film industry cooperation.

It appears, somewhat unexpectedly, that with the installation of the Catholic-influenced Production Code, big-budget religious spectacles such as *Ben-Hur* and *The Ten Commandments* (DeMille, 1923), which had been a recurrent feature of super-A picture production in Hollywood in the 1920s, disappeared. It is something of a cliché in histories of American religion to say that the Scopes trial (1925) caused evangelical Protestants to withdraw from the public sphere for twenty years or more. Whether or not that was the case, at more or less the same moment the leadership of a variety of mainline Protestant denominations was discredited because of its too close dealings with the Hays Office, which oversaw film industry self-regulation. Into the gap created by the absence of a Protestant presence capable of shaping film narratives or film institutions stepped a newly energized and visible Catholicism. This vigorous Catholicism not only provided a rationale for the Production Code, but also took narrative shape in the guise of the numerous sympathetic portraits of priests in films such as *Boys Town* (1938) and *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938). Such films present the priest as rescuer of a broken society just as Father Daniel Lord, one of the authors of the Production Code, might be construed as the clerical savior of a broken film industry.

Hollywood revived the big-budget religious spectacular in the very changed economic and

social climate of the late 1940s and 1950s, a span of fifteen or so years that brings us the surfeit of riches constituted by the second *Ten Commandments* (DeMille, 1956), the second *Ben-Hur*, *The Robe* (Henry Koster, 1953), *Quo Vadis?* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1951), and other similar works. The fit between the film industry's changed economic structure and the usefulness of the biblical narrative structure has been well explored by film scholars, who see a host of reasons for the vigorous return to religious filmmaking (see Pauly and Sobchack). Causes range from the desire to find pre-sold narratives that will take advantage of the differences between film and television (such as the widescreen process introduced in *The Robe*), to a desire to continue to make films that will travel well to the hinterlands even as the Production Code's authority was clearly in decline (a return to the 1920s formula of sexual explicitness contained within the Trojan horse of suitably pious subject matter), to a desire to use the Holy Land as the backdrop to Cold War allegories or to an exploration of the new post-1948 political realities in the Middle East. So dominant was the formula, in fact, that an unsigned editorial in *The Christian Century* eventually observed that these films, while often recommended from the pulpit, were serving the interests of the industry rather more than they served the interests of believers, commenting that "father has not seen as much to excite him elsewhere as he has at movies which the churches tell him to see" ("Bible" 1235). The later 1950s and 1960s didn't see an abandonment of religious filmmaking, but the fit between the religious narrative and the film industry became less cozy as Hollywood adjusted to significant new institutional realities. Indeed, the Paramount Decree of 1948 set up the legal and economic structures that reduced barriers to entry into the film exhibition and distributions markets, which in turn began to undo the framework of the Production Code, permitting more foreign and more risqué films access to America's screens. The film industry also gradually made its peace with television. One might argue that television became the natural home of the religious film from the 1960s onward, with annual revivals of films such as *Ben-Hur* (typically programmed for Easter Week) and productions such as Franco Zeffirelli's 1977 *Jesus of Nazareth*, a made-for-television mini-series.

One of the striking aspects of current religious filmmaking is an alteration in the sociology of the filmmakers involved. No longer do we have, as the ur-religious film director, the gentlemanly if pathological DeMille, whose Episcopalianism was less important to him than

the successful deployment of a formula of sex, sin, and redemption (or, as his niece Agnes DeMille pithily termed it, “women rolling around on bulls”). In the late 1990s, successful entrepreneurs from religious broadcasting began to move into larger-budget filmmaking; Crouch, whose father runs Trinity Broadcasting Network, is an important example here. Gibson, needless to say, was in 2004 the consummate Hollywood insider who elected to deploy his earnings from previous films in the making of *The Passion of the Christ*. Often, the creators of religious films today are committed evangelical Christians; Gibson represents something of an exception to this trend as a devout Catholic of a rather radical stripe, inasmuch as he and his father, a former priest, evidently adhere to a brand of Catholicism that rejects most liturgical and social reforms within the Church since the Council of Trent (Noxon 52). Notably, his *Passion* was nonetheless an extraordinary crossover success with evangelical Protestant audiences.

What appears to have changed in the past sixty years in the sociology of makers of Christian films, then, is that the filmmakers are now Christians first and filmmakers second. Nor is publicly proclaimed belief a bar to prominence in industries that previously had little time for committed Christians. In keeping with the changed demography of American Christians as explored by scholars such as D. Michael Lindsay, now when evangelicals acquire wealth and prestige, they no longer forsake the denominations they started in, in striking contrast to the practices of successful citizens of a hundred years or more ago, when achievement of social position urged its possessor to move on from, say, Assemblies of God to Presbyterianism as a mark of social rise. The major consequence of this change may be a decline in ecumenism in religious film narratives. Indeed, *King of Kings* was far more ecumenical in production and sentiment than is Gibson's *The Passion*—rabbis, among other religious leaders, were consulted, and the tone of the film was as inclusive as possible. The two *Ben-Hurs* are similarly philo-Semitic, again in contrast with the divisive climate created by *The Passion*. Franklin Foer reports of the 1979 Warner Bros. release *Jesus* (Peter Sykes and John Krish) that, even though it was manufactured by an evangelical for use in converting unbelievers to Christianity, it tends to be presented via lecturers to audiences in ways that attempt to demonstrate the continuities or similarities between Christianity and the faiths practiced in the regions where converts are being sought.

Another way of characterizing the change in successful religious filmmaking is to suggest that

the religious film hoping to reach a national audience can afford to be more narrowly denominational in its address than hitherto. Writing in 2007, Frances FitzGerald estimated that 75 million Americans, roughly 25 percent of the population, could be described as evangelical Protestants, a term that covers an admittedly wide spectrum of belief and practice, from Mennonites to Charismatic Episcopalians (31). Nonetheless, this 25 percent may represent a relatively cohesive set of taste cultures and expectations where certain kinds of popular religious narratives, such as adaptations of the Narnia series, are concerned. The economics of this market are clearly well worth serving, as Walden Media's repeated investment in the Narnia franchise has demonstrated.

In an intensely American slippage between commercial behavior and electoral behavior, the very strength of the Christian market must be seen in the light of what I have elsewhere termed “the plebiscite at the box office.” I have argued of the 1920s and 1930s that outsiders wishing to colonize Hollywood tended to figure such efforts precisely in terms of an election whose results were to be measured by ticket sales. The history of subcultures vis-à-vis mainstream popular culture in the United States has been, to some extent, one of the market place as polling place, in which commercial clout translates to political power. In Crouch's words, “I truly believe that once the Christian community understands that they have a vote by buying a ticket, they will become the country's largest single market” (Peyser 45). It is, of course, precisely this electoral rhetoric that suggests that Christian cinema might serve as a national cinema on some level, partly because the assumption that the devout buy movie tickets for the right narrative has always been a means of identifying stories acceptable nearly everywhere within the nation, and partly because religion itself has been a means of disciplining the film industry in ways that assisted its project of maintaining a national audience. As Maltby observes, the Production Code, which substituted Catholic *textual* regulation for the Protestant preference for *economic* regulation of the industry, also obviated audience research, effectively serving as a contract with moral preceptors in communities all over the country, promising that Hollywood's products would not, in the main, corrupt or debase. One might note further that Holly-

wood's more pluralistic approaches to religion-infused narratives before the 1970s was itself a way of binding up the nation. Consider *Boys Town* again, which is detached from the specific doctrines of Catholic belief but attached to the person of the sympathetic priest. While it is obvious that *Boys Town* is the expression of the vision of a Catholic priest, Edward Flanagan, his biggest backer is a Jewish pawnbroker, and the film makes clear that the organization permits every boy to worship in his own fashion.

There is another sense in which the “national” label needs to be explored with refer-

ence to Hollywood's Christian products. When film scholars use the term in conjunction with geographical or social designations such as Britain or Japan, they are signaling that they wish to organize a discussion of that cinema so as to explore long-term narrative, technological, or formal preoccupations or strategies, or the specific political economy of a particular film-producing nation as it might bear on what gets produced and how, or the institutional structures particular to the film industry

in question. The American film industry may be the world's most studied, but it is not necessarily discussed as a national cinema in a limited sense because its reach, historically, has been global. It was arguably the world's only global cinema between the First World War and the 1960s, when a variety of Asian cinemas began to extend their range, at least economically, beyond their national borders. However defined, any national cinema is nonetheless capable of scooping up a story from a different “national” tradition and indigenizing it. If one wants an example of this productive cross-fertilization, one need look no further than the transcultural permutations of Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954), which was westernized in two senses as *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) and Bollywoodized as *Sholay* (1975), among the highest-grossing Indian films, before returning, most recently in the American context, as *A Bug's Life* (1998).

The prospect of examining film narratives from the Bible in a national/transnational context has been, to say the least, daunting because many national cinemas can obviously claim these narratives as part of their patrimony. But not all narratives, or perhaps better put, not all renditions of these familiar narratives, will be recognized as operating within the national vein. I have been fascinated for some time by



Anne Morey

the survival into the 1960s of somewhat creaky nineteenth-century chestnuts as a dominant feature of mainstream religious filmmaking, which tends to be stylistically conservative at the same time that it requires stories that exceed the confines of the canon of Biblical tales. So, for example, *Ben-Hur*, *The Sign of the Cross*, and *Quo Vadis*, which were published respectively in 1880, 1895, and 1896, become the models for what we might call the New Testament historical novel, in which fictional characters interact with Christ or with figures who knew Christ. This narrative strand is not narrowly national—consider the origins of each work's author, again respectively: American (Lew Wallace), British (Wilson Barrett), and Polish (Henryk Sienkiewicz). Moreover, adaptations of these works begin to circulate in both Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century, when the film industry was without doubt at its most international. What then is particularly American about these narratives, beyond the establishment and persistence of an idiom that continued to be practiced in the United States well into the 1950s with the publication and filming of Lloyd C. Douglas's *The Robe* (1942/1953)?

A provisional answer would suggest that these works came to represent what a New Testament historical narrative should be, to the exclusion of other kinds of storytelling. When the American public was offered narratives such as *The Miracle* or *The Last Temptation of Christ* that emerged out of a different tradition of filmmaking, one less dependent upon linear plot structure and the delineation of a character whose motivations were clearly articulated and sympathetic, religious audiences found the products blasphemous. Behind the rejection of these films may be a preference for a different kind of storytelling as much as a loathing for the specific kind of content they offered their viewers. In other words, these nineteenth-century chestnuts proved durable because they chimed with the story-telling traditions of the American cinema—one might even say, given the large number of adaptations of these foundational texts, that they are partly constitutive of that filmmaking tradition, at least where the problem of representing divinity is concerned. Walden Media's contemporary success with the Narnia franchise may similarly mark the naturalization of a new set of religious texts with crossover appeal to evangelical audiences, and thus a new forum for the exploration of the functions of taste in this regard. Indeed, one of the questions I need to examine is the degree to which our understanding of the mainstream religious film is separable from spectacle and

the spectacular. The Christian screenwriting group Act One also confronts this problem. They oppose the spectacle-driven approach of directors such as Crouch for something a little less blood-and-thunder. Another way of expressing their aims might be to suggest that they hope to create films that might evangelize in subtle ways, without dramatizing canonical events such as the Crucifixion or the Apocalypse in order to terrify the unbeliever.

This examination of Christian cinema as national cinema is poised between the perdurable association between God and Mammon in American culture on the one hand and the changes experienced in genre and social mores on the other. Of the God and Mammon nexus, Stephen Prothero observes that the interpenetration of Christianity and popular culture (which he dates to the Second Great Awakening) has meant that "Americans have been selling Jesus stuff since the early nineteenth century" (146). The excitement of this project stems from acknowledging the continuity of that relationship while also attempting to explain the significance of new developments. The Warren Center's theme of "Representation and Social Change" is a very helpful backdrop against which to explore the problems I confront in this project. It has been exceptionally productive to talk to people outside the disciplines that I normally inhabit (film studies, English, and American studies) to see what related structural issues emerge in anthropology, history, and sociology. It has been particularly useful to discuss what constitutes evidence or which methods of analysis are most compelling across disciplines. Above all, conversation with the other Warren Center Fellows focuses my attention on the stakes of the project, meaning those questions that cluster around the issue of why scholars should care about the phenomenon of the religious film. Film still represents one of the most public arenas for struggle in popular culture, but it is more than a bellwether for the ebb and flow of the power of specific denominations in American life. It is also a set of rhetorics and business strategies that must shape and address a large and diverse public in order to have a presence in the marketplace. Addressing a public in order to have a presence in the marketplace has also been, as Randall Balmer notes, religion's task in this country since the inception of the nation. The mutual colonization of popular culture and religion should be a productive site for investigating the consequences of religious storytelling for national life.

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## Up in the Air?: The Future of the Humanities

*Edward H. Friedman*

In early September of 2010, Mona Frederick, executive director of the Warren Center, and I met with the Center's dissertation fellows to discuss Paul J. Silvia's *How To Write a Lot*, which we had read over the summer. This was the opening session of the graduate fellows program and one of the few times during the academic year that the students would not be meeting on their own. That afternoon we talked about a number of issues. I asked the students to address their major concerns, and they kindly complied. Naturally, they spoke of the pressure to complete their doctoral theses and their anxiety over the future. Some would be applying for teaching positions this year, and seeking a job during an economic crisis certainly would be anxiety-producing. There is an intrinsic vulnerability built into being a graduate student. One has to jump over many hurdles and to deal with a range of challenges, some professional and some personal. One constantly is being evaluated, judged, compared, and contrasted. And one has to learn how to write on demand, how to play to diverse audiences, and how to self-present, both in writing and "live." This is, in essence, the norm, the given.

What took me aback in the session was the students' apprehension about the future of education in general. My impression was that they, in varying degrees of pessimism and optimism, were worried not only about obtaining a position but about the future of tenure, about the fate of the humanities, and about the careers that awaited them. The comments made me sad, for a number of reasons. First, these students are dedicated scholars and high achievers, and they deserve to reap the rewards of their efforts. Second, the alarm far surpassed what I had thought would be the primary focus: the here-and-now of dissertation writing. Third, my hope is that the fellows—and all Vanderbilt graduate students—will enjoy the process of completing their degrees, despite the rigor of the enterprise, and that they will face the future with positive (albeit reasonable) expectations. Fourth, they forced upon me a reality check, the results of which might not be pleasant to confront.

Over the past decades, the profession obviously has changed. Some forty years ago, by my count, working conditions improved, salaries became more competitive, opportunities became more equal, spouses became part

of the equation, and so forth. Canons expanded and were revised, and new areas of teaching and research were validated: ethnic studies, gender studies, area studies, interdisciplinary studies, film, popular culture, etc. The boom in theory caused scholars and their students to think differently, to reevaluate the past, and to approach their work with a decided self-consciousness. Structuralism, post-structuralism, cultural studies, and other phenomena have rewritten the script for the liberal arts, for curricula, for departments, for programs, and for individual scholars and course designs. Titles of dissertations from previous years seem to be worlds apart from current topics under investigation and objects under scrutiny. Although there have always been advocates of pure pragmatism, with emphasis on practicality and materialism, the humanities have held their own, in some cases more convincingly than in others. Progress—and it might be possible to cite globalization in this context—should promote the humanities, but there is a tendency to favor the present and the future over the past. The humanities disciplines start at the beginning, as it were, and those that go far back, such as classical studies, risk falling into disrepute in some circles for their supposed lack of relevance. Professors are not only the victims here, but also at times the instigators, as when we allow students to avoid courses that deal with the "old stuff," and thereby elide the interrelations that come from movements and transitions. This is a question that is very much open to debate and to opposing positions, yet it is a question that encompasses the crucial points of where we are and where we want to be. There is no doubt that we have to be prepared to redesign at both the macro- and micro-levels, in order to ensure that we are giving our students, our colleagues, and our disciplines a maximum effort, and, hyperbole aside, to ensure the survival of the humanities. There is a struggle at hand, but it is worth pursuing by those who believe in knowledge for its own sake, who find strength in a familiarity with the past, who equate the study of the humanities with critical thinking and tolerance, and who discover values beyond reality principles and dollar signs.

It is significantly more difficult to be an administrator now than it was forty years ago. The scholar/teacher-turned administrator must also be a financial manager and must face

many other tasks that likely were not taught in graduate school. Universities are businesses, if not prototypical businesses, and there is little point in fighting the inevitable in that regard. Still, we need to preserve what needs to be preserved, cost-effectiveness notwithstanding, for the greater good of education and service to society. Training young minds is, in the parlance of one company's ad agency, "priceless." When I was a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University in the 1970s, I taught several Spanish language classes, and I remember that some of my students, many of whom were pre-med, informed me that what I was planning to do with my life (teaching literature) was inferior, or less generous of spirit, to what they hoped to contribute to humanity. (Provost Richard McCarty was studying at Hopkins at the same time, but his field was biobehavioral sciences, considerably higher on the "list" than Romance languages.) Those comments made me think carefully about how I could endeavor to make a difference to the students whom I would teach over the years and to the readers who might come upon something that I had published. I still firmly believe in the well-rounded student, and one of the beauties of teaching at Vanderbilt University has been that the well-rounded student holds the default position. Among the students who do brilliant work in Spanish literature classes are language majors, but also majors in the humanities, the social sciences, and, yes, most resoundingly, the sciences. And, I might add, the pre-med students seem to understand perfectly why it helps to have incorporated language and literature into their academic programs.

There are real challenges in store for the humanities, but I hope that we can think of them as problems to be solved rather than as cause for despair. Rethinking and retooling are probably in order. Those of us at the Warren Center invite anyone in the Vanderbilt community to discuss the state of the humanities—here and elsewhere—and we hope to organize some sessions with participants from across the disciplines. It is important that we reflect, continually, on how we educate students and how we encourage and calm those who are about to begin their professional careers. Needless to say, we want those careers to be rich, fulfilling, and, to the extent possible, free of angst.

## External Grants and Fellowships

We extend congratulations to our colleagues in the humanities and social sciences in the College of Arts and Science for receiving the following external grants and fellowships for their scholarly research as a result of applications submitted in the 2009 calendar year. We rely on departments to provide us with this information.

### **William Caferro**

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation  
Fellowship  
*Research on Effects of the Plague on the Medieval Economy*

### **David L. Carlton**

Global Research Institute at the University of North Carolina,  
Chapel Hill  
Research Fellowship  
*Strategies of Southern Development: The Case of North Carolina*

### **Julia P. Cohen**

National Endowment for the Humanities  
Scholarly Edition and Translations Award  
*The Sephardic Studies Reader, 1730-1950*

### **Humberto Garcia**

American Philosophical Society  
Franklin Research Grant  
*Romanticism Re-Oriented: Indo-Muslim Travelers and English Literary Culture, 1760-1820*

Clark Library/Center for Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies  
Short-Term Fellowship  
*Romanticism Re-Oriented: Indo-Muslim Travelers and English Literary Culture, 1760-1820*

### **Thomas Gregor**

National Endowment for the Humanities  
Fellowship  
*Mehinaku Art: Social Change and the Evolution of an Aesthetic Tradition*

### **Leor Halevi**

American Council of Learned Societies  
Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship  
*Forbidden Goods: Cross-Cultural Trade in Islamic Law*

### **Rick Hilles**

The Brecht's House  
Writer's Residency

### **Carlos Jauregi**

National Endowment for the Humanities  
Fellowship  
*Going Native and Becoming Other in Latin American Literature and Film*

### **Vera M. Kutzinski**

National Endowment for the Humanities  
Scholarly Edition and Translations Award  
*Alexander von Humboldt in English: New Translations of His Major Writings on North and South America*

### **Ling Hon Lam**

Newhouse Center for the Humanities at Wellesley College  
Fellowship  
*From Exteriority to Theatricality: Exploring the Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China*

Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University  
An Wang Postdoctoral Fellowship  
*From Exteriority to Theatricality: Exploring the Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China*

### **Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation**

Scholar Grant  
*From Exteriority to Theatricality: Exploring the Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China*

### **Jane G. Landers**

National Endowment for the Humanities  
Fellowship  
*African Kingdoms, Black Republics, and Free Black Towns in Colonial Spanish America*

### **Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History**

Research Fellowship  
*African Kingdoms, Black Republics and Free Black Towns in Iberian Atlantic*

### **Larry May**

Australian Research Council  
Discovery Grant  
*Morality, "Jus Post Bellum," and International Law*

### **José Medina**

Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain  
Research Grant  
*Identity, Memory, and Experience*

### **Jonathan Rattner**

Imagining America  
Critical Exchange Grant  
*Imagining America Vanderbilt University/University of Iowa Critical Exchange Grant*

### **Kathryn Schwarz**

Folger Shakespeare Library  
Short-Term Fellowship  
*Counterfactual Women: Femininity and Teleology in Early Modern England*

### **Bronwen Wickkiser**

American School of Classical Studies at Athens NEH Fellowship  
*New Approaches to Asklepios*

## What We Are Writing

What books are our colleagues in the College of Arts and Science writing and editing? *LETTERS* has asked Vanderbilt University's humanities and social sciences departments to share their faculty members' 2010 publications. Their answers show an active and diverse mix of scholarly interests.

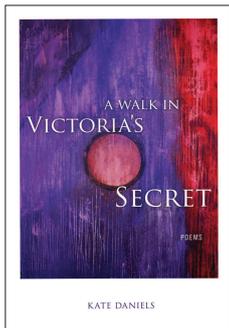
**Lewis V. Baldwin.** *Never to Leave Us Alone: The Prayer Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Fortress Press.

**Lewis V. Baldwin.** *The Voice of Conscience: The Church in the Mind of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Oxford University Press.

**Jerome Brillaud.** *Sombres Lumières, essai sur le retour à l'antique et la tragédie grecque au XVI-II<sup>e</sup> siècle.* Presses de l'Université Laval, Les Collections de la République des Lettres.

**William Caferro.** *Contesting the Renaissance.* Wiley-Blackwell.

**Katherine B. Crawford.** *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance.* Cambridge University Press.



**Kate Daniels.** *A Walk In Victoria's Secret.* Louisiana State University Press.

**Carolyn M. Dever** and **Lisa M. Niles**, co-editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*

(*Cambridge Companions to Literature*). Cambridge University Press.

**Dennis C. Dickerson.** *African American Preachers and Politics: The Careys of Chicago.* University Press of Mississippi.

**Tom D. Dillehay.** *From Foraging to Farming in the Andes: New Perspectives on Food Production and Social Organization.* Cambridge University Press.

**Edward H. Friedman.** *The Little Woman. A Liberal Translation of Leandro Fernández de Moratín's El sí de las niñas.* Juan de la Cuesta.

**Sam B. Girgus.** *Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption: Time, Ethics, and the Feminine.* Columbia University Press.

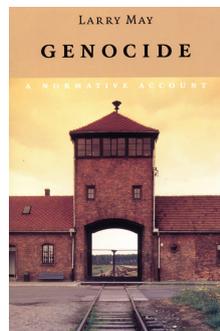
**Lenn E. Goodman.** *Creation and Evolution.* Routledge.

**Robin M. Jensen.** *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism.* Brill Publishers.

**Shaul Kelner.** *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage and Israeli Birthright Tourism.* New York University Press.

**Michael P. Kreyling.** *The South That Wasn't There.* Louisiana State University Press.

**Jane G. Landers.** *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions.* Cambridge University Press.



**Larry May.** *Genocide: A Normative Account.* Cambridge University Press.

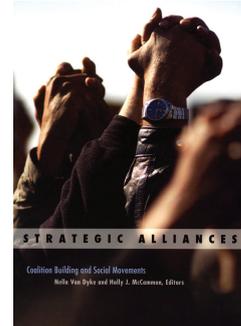
**Nella Van Dyke** and **Holly J. McGamon**, co-editors. *Strategic Alliances: Coalition Building and Social Movements.*

University of Minnesota Press.

**Paul B. Miller.** *Elusive Origins: The Enlightenment in the Modern Caribbean Historical Imagination.* University of Virginia Press, New World Studies Series.

**Daniel M. Patte**, editor. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity.* Cambridge University Press.

**Nicole Duran**, **Teresa Okure**, and **Daniel M. Patte**, co-editors. *Mark: Texts @ Contexts.* Fortress Press.



**Walter Blue**, **Nina Dulin-Mallory**, **Virginie Greene**, **Stacy Hahn**, **Lynn T. Ramey**, and **Elizabeth Willingham**, co-editors. *La Queste del Saint Graal: From the Illustrated Lancelot Prose of Yale 229.* Brepols.

**Virginia M. Scott.** *Double Talk: Deconstructing Monolingualism in Classroom Language Learning.* Prentice Hall.

**Dieter H. Sevin.** *Trotzdem Schreiben. Beiträge zur deutschsprachigen Literatur der Moderne.* Hildesheim.

**Samira Sheikh.** *Forging a Region: Sultans, Traders and Pilgrims in Gujarat, 1200-1500.* Oxford University Press.

**Scott F. Aikin** and **Robert B. Talisse**, co-editors. *The Pragmatism Reader: From Peirce Through to the Present.* Princeton University Press.

**Steven M. Cahn** and **Robert B. Talisse**, co-editors. *Political Problems.* Prentice Hall.

**Scott F. Aikin**, **Steven M. Cahn**, and **Robert B. Talisse**, co-editors. *Thinking About Logic: Classic Essays.* Westview Press.

**Herbert Kitschelt**, **Kirk A. Hawkins**, **Juan Pablo Luna**, **Guillermo Rosas**, and **Elizabeth J. Zechmeister**, coauthors. *Latin American Party Systems.* Cambridge University Press.

## 2010/2011 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows Lecture Series

**N**ow in its fifth year, the Warren Center's annual Graduate Student Fellows Program currently sponsors eight outstanding Vanderbilt graduate students in the humanities and qualitative social sciences in a yearlong fellowship program. These awards are designed to support innovation and excellence in graduate student research and allow the students a service-free year of support to enable full-time work on the dissertation. It is expected that students who receive this award will complete the dissertation during the fellowship term. Additionally, one graduate student from Queen's University in Belfast is selected to participate in the Graduate Student Fellows Program.

As part of their affiliation with the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, Fellows are integrated into the center's interdisciplinary scholarly community through participation in a weekly seminar, occasional seminars with visiting speakers, and special events. The capstone of the fellowship is the delivery of a public lecture during the spring term. The Graduate Student Fellows Lecture Series is an intellectually invigorating time at the Warren Center and we encourage you to plan to attend one or more of these talks by these outstanding young scholars.

Below is the schedule for this year's talks which **will all take place at 4:10 p.m. in the Warren Center's conference room**. Lecture titles will be posted soon on the Warren Center's website; the listing at right includes the titles of the Fellows' dissertations.

- March 23 **Christina Dickerson**  
Department of History  
"A Death in the Woods: The Infamous Jumonville Affair of 1754"
- March 28 **Sarah Tyson**, Ethel Mae Wilson Fellow  
Department of Philosophy  
"Can Diotima Be Reclaimed? The Problem of Women in the History of Philosophy"
- April 5 **Stacy Clifford**, George J. Graham, Jr., Fellow  
Department of Political Science  
"Indispensable Idiocy: Social Contract Theory and Cognitive Disability"
- April 8 **Jason Parker**, Joe and Mary Harper Fellow  
Department of Spanish and Portuguese  
"¿Qué dirá mañana esa Prensa canalla?: Ramón del Valle-Inclán's Theatrical Critique of Mass Media"
- April 14 **Elizabeth Covington**, Elizabeth E. Fleming Fellow  
Department of English  
"Memories Bought, Sold, and Stolen: The War Between Literature and Science for Control of the Past"
- April 18 **Jennifer Foley**  
Department of Anthropology  
"Ancient Maya Identity and Imagined Community at La Sufricaya, Guatemala"
- April 20 **Elizabeth Zagatta**  
Department of Religion  
"The Potential and Peril of Pleasure in Christian Sexual Ethics"
- April 25 **Sarah Glynn**, American Studies Fellow  
Department of Sociology  
"I am tattooed therefore I am': Meaning Making in the Tattoo Encounter"
- April 27 **Clive Hunter**, Queen's University (Belfast)  
Department of French,  
"Troping Legba: Dany Laferrière and the Politics of Polyrythm"

## Historian David Blight to Present Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture

David Blight, Class of 1954 Professor of American History and Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University, will present this year's Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture at 4:10 p.m. on March 24th, location to be announced. Professor Blight's talk is titled "Gods and Devils Aplenty: Robert Penn Warren's Civil War."

A prolific writer, Professor Blight is most recently the author of *A Slave No More: Two Men Who Escaped to Freedom, Including Their Narratives of Emancipation* (Harcourt, 2007). In 2001, he published *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Harvard University Press), which received eight book awards, including the Bancroft Prize, the Abraham Lincoln Prize, and the Frederick Douglass Prize. Other publications include *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War* (University of Massachu-

setts Press, 2002); and *Frederick Douglass's Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (LSU Press, 1989). Professor Blight is currently writing a book related to the Civil War sesquicentennial that is rooted in the work of Robert Penn Warren, comparing the 100th anniversary of America's most pivotal event to its 150th. He is also working on a new biography of Frederick Douglass that will be published by Simon and Schuster by 2013.

Professor Blight was elected as a member of the Society of American Historians in 2002. Since 2004, he has served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the New York Historical Society and the Board for African American Programs at Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia. He also serves on the Board of Advisors to the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and is involved in planning numerous conferences and events to commemorate both the Lincoln anniversary and

the sesquicentennial of the U.S. Civil War. In his capacity as director of the Gilder Lehrman Center at Yale, Blight organizes conferences, working groups, lectures, the administering of the annual Frederick Douglass Book Prize, and many public outreach programs regarding the history of slavery and its abolition. In 2009, Blight chaired the jury for nonfiction for the National Book Award. Currently, Professor Blight holds the Rogers Distinguished Fellowship in 19th-Century American History at the Huntington Library.

The Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture Series was established in 1994 through the endowment of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Nash Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. George Renfro, all of Asheville, North Carolina. The lecture honors Harry C. Howard Jr. (B.A., 1951) and allows the Warren Center to bring an outstanding scholar to Vanderbilt annually to deliver a lecture on a significant topic in the humanities.



2010/2011 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows. From left: Elizabeth R. Zagatta, Sarah J. Glynn, Elizabeth R. Covington, Sarah Tyson, Stacy A. Clifford, Christina M. Dickerson, Clive Hunter, Jennifer M. Foley, Jason T. Parker

## Sesquicentennial of the U.S. Civil War: Spring 2011 Courses and Events

April 12, 2011, will mark the 150th anniversary of the start of the U.S. Civil War. Across the country, this national anniversary will be marked in various ways by a range of interest groups. Many of the contentious topics that divided the American public in 1861 continue to trouble our nation today, including the role of race in our society, the debate between states rights and federal authority, the role of government in our daily lives, and talk of secession by various groups across the United States.

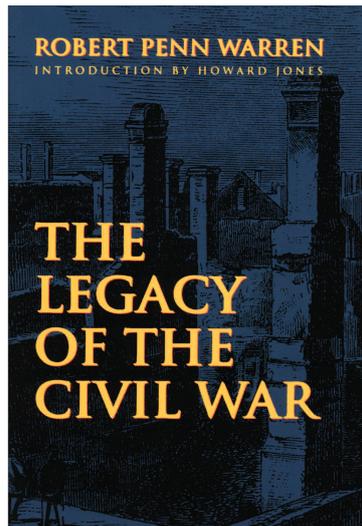
Vanderbilt University will provide a number of opportunities—through classes, public lectures, and discussion groups—for our students and our community to reflect upon the significance of this sesquicentennial anniversary. These events will allow us to engage with this seminal historical period in the development of the United States and will give our campus and our community occasions to think critically about past and current conflicts in our society.

### Courses Offered

*American Studies 100W.* Professor of English Michael Kreyling will teach this introductory course on the theme of memory studies, focusing on Robert Penn Warren's *The Legacy of the Civil War* (1961) and Warren's novel *Wilderness*. Kreyling will also use various history texts, including works by C. Vann Woodward, Bruce Catton, and Shelby Foote.

*American Studies 297—American Studies Senior Project.* Teresa Goddu, Associate Professor of English and Director of American Studies, will focus this course on commemorations and memorializations of the U.S. Civil War, specifically in and around Nashville. The course will culminate with an American Studies Road Trip to various Civil War memorial sites in the region.

*Commons Course: Black Women Freedom Fighters.* Assistant Professor of History Brandi Brimmer will lead an examination of the life and labor of Callie House—an African American laundress who lived much of her life less



than a mile from the Vanderbilt Commons—and the ex-slave pension movement, a poor people's movement that sought pension from the U.S. government as compensation for slavery.

*English 288-02—The American Civil War.* Taught by Senior Lecturer Rory Dicker, this course will examine literature about the Civil War, including texts such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's*

*Cabin*, John William DeForest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*, and Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*.

*History of Art 295—Race, Gender, and Sexuality in 19th Century American Art.* Professor Vivien Green Fryd of the History of Art department will examine ways in which gender and race are constructed in nineteenth-century American visual art and culture. Professor Fryd's class will meet with visiting speaker Charmaine A. Nelson, who is Associate Professor of Art History at McGill University. Professor Nelson is most recently the author of *The Color of Stone: Sculpting Black Female Subjects in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) and *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

*Humanities 161—The American Civil War.* Team-taught by Richard Blackett, Andrew Jackson Professor of History, and Michael Kreyling, Gertrude Conaway Professor of English, the course will trace the main political, social, and economic events associated with the war. A number of experts on the U.S. Civil War have been invited as guest speakers; they will also be giving lectures which will be open to the public.

### Schedule of Events

Events marked with an asterisk (\*) are part of the Humanities 161 lecture series and will occur at 4:10 p.m. in 101 Buttrick Hall.

Thursday, January 27

**Stanley Harrold**, Professor of History, South Carolina State University  
**Abolitionism and the Coming of the Civil War\***

Wednesday, February 2

**"Thinking Outside the Lunchbox," Discussion of Robert Penn Warren's 1961 book *The Legacy of the Civil War***, led by Professors Michael Kreyling and Richard Blackett, noon at the downtown Nashville Public Library. This event is sponsored by the Warren Center and the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area Center for Historic Preservation, in conjunction with Vanderbilt's Office of Community, Neighborhood, and Government Relations. Registrants for the luncheon are encouraged to read the volume prior to attending the lunch time conversation. More details can be found at the website: [www.vanderbilt.edu/lunchbox/upcoming.html](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lunchbox/upcoming.html).

Tuesday, February 8

**Joseph Glatthaar**, Stephenson Distinguished Professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

**Why the Confederacy Lost: the Experiences of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia\***

Thursday, February 17

**George Rable**, Professor and Charles G. Summersell Chair in Southern History, University of Alabama

**The Civil War as a Political Crisis\***

Thursday, February 24

**Thavolia Glymph**, Associate Professor of History, Duke University

**'Disappeared Without Any Account Being Had of Them': Enslaved Women and the Armies of the Civil War\***

## The Object of Study: Theory, Interdisciplinarity, and the State of the Humanities

Thursday, March 3

**Charmaine A. Nelson**, Associate Professor of Art History, McGill University

**Sugar Cane, Slave and Ships: The Tropical Picturesque and Pro-Slavery Discourse in Nineteenth-Century Jamaican Landscapes**

4:10 p.m., Cohen Hall 203. History of Art 295 speaker.

Thursday, March 17

**Stephanie McMurry**, Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania

**Antigone's Claim: Gender and Treason in the American Civil War\***

Thursday, March 24

**2010/2011 Harry Howard Jr. Lecture David Blight**, Class of 1954 Professor of American History and Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University  
**Gods and Devils Aplenty: Robert Penn Warren's Civil War**

4:10 p.m., location to be announced. See *Letters* article on page 9.

Thursday, April 7

**Bobby Lovett**, Professor of History, Tennessee State University

**Nashville and the Civil War, 1860–1866 and the Economic, Social and Political Transformations\***

Thursday, April 21

**Stephen Ash**, Professor of History, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

**William G. Brownlow, Saint or Sinner? A Fresh Look at One of Tennessee's Most Controversial Civil War Figures\***

The Program in American Studies and the Warren Center plan to host a roundtable discussion late in the spring term on issues related to secessionist movements across multiple time spans and geographical and cultural locations. More details on this roundtable will be announced soon.

The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities is hosting a conference on “The Object of Study: Theory, Interdisciplinarity, and the State of the Humanities” on March 18 and 19, 2011. The conference sessions will feature speakers from different disciplines addressing their views of the current state of theory within their disciplines and in general. Each session will also include Vanderbilt faculty members as moderators and as respondents. Visiting speakers for the conference are David Gies (University of Virginia), David Theo Goldberg (University of California, Irvine), and Valerie Traub (University of Michigan).

The conference sessions will take place in the auditorium of the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center. The conference schedule follows.

### Friday, March 18

#### 1:30 OPENING

*Welcome:*

Carolyn M. Dever, Dean, College of Arts and Science and Professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies

*Introduction:*

Edward H. Friedman, Chancellor's Professor of Spanish, Professor of Comparative Literature, and Director, Warren Center

#### 2:00 SESSION ONE

*Introduction:*

Mark Schoenfield, Professor and Chair of English

*Visiting Speaker:*

**Valerie Traub**, Professor of English and Women's Studies, University of Michigan  
**The New Unhistoricism (and Early Modern Futures)**

*Respondent:*

Ellen Armour, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Chair in Feminist Theology and Director, Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality; Interim Chair, Department of Religious Studies

3:15–3:30 Break

#### 3:30 SESSION TWO

*Introduction:*

John Sloop, Senior Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, and Professor of Communication Studies

*Visiting Speaker:*

**David Gies**, Commonwealth Professor of Spanish, University of Virginia

**The State of the Arte: Hispanism and Literary Theory**

*Respondent:*

William Luis, Chancellor's Professor of Spanish

*A reception will follow the sessions.*

### Saturday, March 19

#### 10:30 SESSION THREE

*Introduction:*

Barbara Hahn, Distinguished Professor of German

*Visiting Speaker:*

**David Theo Goldberg**, Director, University of California Humanities Research Institute; Professor of Comparative Literature and Criminology, Law and Society, University of California, Irvine

**Living in a Critical Condition:**

**Poor Theory and the Post-humanities**

*Respondent:*

Dana Nelson, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English

11:45–12:00 Break

12:00–12:30

Speakers' Roundtable:

Closing Comments and Questions



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## Building Community in the 21st Century: Perspectives on Civility and Democracy October 8–9, 2010

As part of the 2010 Southern Festival of Books, the Warren Center joined together with Humanities Tennessee to host a series of sessions at the book festival to bring greater public consciousness to the nature of some of the divisions in our culture and to suggest ways that we might rethink those divisions and transform the discord caused by those divisions within the context of our nation's, state's, and community's need for a more civil democracy. Additional support for the program was provided by Vanderbilt's Cal Turner Program for Moral Leadership in the Professions.

The Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Jim Leach, has a special interest in the issue of civility and has

recently launched a fifty-state "Civility Tour." As part of his tour, he participated in the first session on this topic at the Southern Festival of Books, "A Conversation on Civility and Democracy," on Friday October 8 from noon to 1:00 p.m. in the Tennessee Capitol Building's House Chambers. John Seigenthaler, founder of Vanderbilt's First Amendment Center, and Carl Pierce, Executive Director of the Howard Baker Center at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, also joined Chairman Leach on this first panel. Following his presentation at the book festival in downtown Nashville, Chairman Leach delivered a second address at Vanderbilt University later that afternoon on "Civility in a Fractured Society."

On Saturday, October 9, the following speakers presented remarks as part of the series "Building Community in the 21st Century: Perspectives on Civility and Democracy." Each session was moderated by a Vanderbilt University representative.



*NEH Chairman Jim Leach*

**Janet Flammang**  
Political Science, Santa Clara University  
"The Taste for Civilization: Food, Politics, and a Civil Society"  
*Moderator:* C. J. Sentell, Philosophy, Vanderbilt University

**Hiroshi Motomura**  
School of Law, UCLA  
"Americans in Waiting: The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States"  
*Moderator:* Daniel B. Cornfield, Sociology, Vanderbilt University

**David E. Campbell**  
Political Science, University of Notre Dame

**Robert Putnam**  
Public Policy, Harvard University  
"American Grace: How Religion Divides Us and Unites Us"  
*Moderator:* Vanessa Beasley, Communication Studies, Vanderbilt University

**Matthew Hindman**  
Media and Public Affairs, George Washington University  
"The Myth of Digital Democracy"  
*Moderator:* Joe Bandy, Teaching Center, Vanderbilt University

**Patrick Johnson**  
African American Studies, Northwestern University  
"Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South"  
*Moderator:* Dana Nelson, English, Vanderbilt University

**John Kasson**  
University of North Carolina  
"Rudeness and Civility: Manners in the 19th-Century Urban America"  
*Moderator:* Mona Frederick, Warren Center, Vanderbilt University

**Diana Mutz**  
Pennsylvania State University  
"Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative vs. Participatory Democracy"  
*Moderator:* Mark Hetherington, Political Science, Vanderbilt University