

Conference on Religion and American Culture held in Indianapolis

The first biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture was held in Indianapolis at the Omni Severin Hotel June 4-7, 2009. Serving as something of a summit, this first meeting consisted of a series of roundtable discussions with presentations by top scholars from a variety of perspectives. Nationally known scholars from different backgrounds participated in each session. The panelists sat, quite literally, at a round table in the center of the room, surrounded by over one hundred scholars on risers so everyone could not only learn from the conversation but also participate in it.



Carol Duncan of Wilfrid Laurier University

The first day of the conference centered on the theoretical and practical issues that perplex those working in American religious studies from various perspectives. Session one focused on how we arrived at our current disciplinary divides and what they mean for us. Historians then discussed such issues as the rise of American religious history and its relation to denomination studies, ethnography, and the slow demise of monographs, as well as the future of grand narratives. In the day's final session, social scientists conferred on the various divides within their disciplines, how these differences have influenced the study of religion in North America, as well as the potential and questionable efficacy of "interdisciplinarity."

Sessions on day two tightened the focus of the conference. The opening session considered how the various disciplines rely on each other's work, as well as what we consider the strengths and weaknesses of the various disciplines. The afternoon sessions concentrated on two nexus points where considerable time is being spent by scholars from various disciplines: politics, secularization, and the public square; and race, ethnicity, and religious pluralism. The final hour was spent considering how the larger field should move forward as well as discussing ideas for the second Conference on Religion and American Culture in 2011.



David Hall, Harvard Divinity School

Now available from the Center's Web site, *Proceedings* from the conference include all of the papers that were read at the conference. What is missing, however, are the lively and spirited conversations that marked each session. Indeed, the discussions continued over coffee breaks, lunches, and dinners. New friends were made and fresh ideas were discovered. While there is room for growth and improvement, the conference began a new conversation that will only gain strength as more disciplines and backgrounds are brought to the table.

We look forward to that in 2011.

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Center will host reception in Montreal

The Center will host a reception at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion on Sunday, November 8 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in Salon Joyce of the La Centre Sheraton, 1201 Boulevard Rene-Levesque West, Montreal. All those attending the meeting are invited to the reception.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE

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Arthur E. Farnsley II, Associate Director
Peter J. Thuesen, Director of Research
Rachel Wheeler, Project Director
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R&AC

Religion & American Culture:
a Journal of Interpretation

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Peter J. Thuesen, Editor
Rachel Wheeler, Editor

Changes at the Center

Dr. Philip Goff, Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Center, has been named Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs in the School of Liberal Arts. The appointment will take effect November 1, 2009.

Goff has served as Director of the Center since coming to IUPUI in 2000. Under his leadership, it has grown in national and international stature and become one of IUPUI's Signature Centers. Over the past nine years, Dr. Goff has also helped obtain nearly \$3 million in grants and awards.

Goff will assume his new role upon the retirement of current Associate Dean, Sociology Professor David Ford. Goff will continue to teach courses in religious studies and will serve as Executive Director of the Center.

Dr. Arthur E. Farnsley II will become Associate Director of the Center and Visiting Professor of Religious Studies at IUPUI. Farnsley is Executive Officer of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR), which has been housed within the Center since 2006. He has worked at IUPUI since 1994, first as Assistant Dean in the Graduate Office and later as Research Director of The Polis Center's *Project on Religion and Urban Culture*. He has written books on politics in the Southern Baptist Convention, faith-based welfare reform, and the social role of urban religion, as well as essays for *Christian Century* and *Christianity Today* in addition to academic articles. Farnsley edits an Indiana University Press series on urban religion and was research director for the video series, *Faith and Community: The Public Role of Religion*.



Arthur E. Farnsley, II

Center Celebrates Twentieth Anniversary

In the early 1980s it was apparent that modern American life had drastically changed since World War II. Robert Wood Lynn, then Vice-President of the Religion Division at Lilly Endowment, met with Jan Shipp (director of American Studies) and Rowland A. Sherrill (chair of Religious Studies) of IUPUI to plan a series of conferences in Indianapolis to study what these changes indicated about American culture. After several conferences, they determined to use religion as a lens to study the transformations of our culture across the centuries in order to better understand America. These meetings gathered scores of top scholars from across the country and became known as the “Religion in American Culture Project.” In 1989 it became the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture thanks to a start-up grant from Lilly Endowment. Conrad Cherry, the director of Scholars Press and a leading thinker in American religious history, was hired as the Center’s first director.



Edward Linenthal

Speed ahead to June 6, 2009. Gathered in the opulent Severin Ballroom of the Omni Severin Hotel in downtown Indianapolis, decrees by the mayor of the city and the governor of Indiana were read declaring it “Religion and American Culture Day.” An evening of celebration ensued that both closed out the first Conference on Religion and American Culture and honored the first twenty years of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture. Letters by leading scholars were read congratulating the Center and its journal on two decades of service to the field. Speakers included Philip Goff, Director of the Center, Bill Blomquist, Dean of the School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI, Edward Linenthal of IU-Bloomington, and Jan Shipp and Conrad Cherry of IUPUI. The keynote speaker was Daniel Walker Howe, of UCLA and Oxford University, winner of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in History for his book *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*.



Daniel Walker Howe

“It was a wonderful evening—a fitting commemoration of the foresight of the founders of the Center and the journal,” said Philip Goff. “Linking that initial generation of scholars to the young faces of new professors in the crowd was very special to me. I realized the ongoing importance of an institution such as this, which keeps different generations, different methodologies, even different disciplines in conversation with one another.”



Jan Shipp



Philip Goff



Conrad Cherry

Proceedings: First Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture

Courtney Bender
Rudy V. Busto
Jon Butler
John Corrigan
Jay Demerath
Dennis C. Dickerson
Carol Duncan
Helen Rose Ebaugh
Penny Edgell
David D. Hall

Daniel Walker Howe
Paula Kane
James Lewis
Robert Orsi
Jerry Park
Amanda Porterfield
Mark Silk
Winifred Sullivan
Rhys H. Williams
David W. Wills

available in PDF from the Center’s
Web site: www.raac.iupui.edu

Center receives NEH Funding to Conduct Summer Institute

The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture has been awarded \$144,637 by the National Endowment of the Humanities to conduct a three-week summer institute for high school teachers on the role of religion in American history and life.

Twenty-five teachers will be selected to participate in the institute in July, 2010, the goal of which will be to provide vital, embodied examples teachers can use to make religion's role come alive in their classrooms alongside other important topics.

"It is not possible to understand American culture without understanding religion's social role," said Art Farnsley, co-director of the project with Philip Goff and Rachel Wheeler. "This grant gives us a tremendous opportunity to leverage our academic leadership in the study of American religion by allowing us to

extend our work to high school teachers and, through them, to students all over the country."

The project has additionally been designated a National Endowment for the Humanities "We the People" project and is being supported in part by funds the agency has set aside for this special initiative.

"The goal of the 'We the People' initiative is to encourage and strengthen the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture through the support of projects that explore significant events and themes in our nation's history and culture and that advance knowledge of the principles that define America," said Carole M. Watson, NEH Acting Chairman.

**National Endowment for the Humanities
2010 Summer Institute for High School Teachers
July 12-30, 2010
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis**

The Many and the One: Religion, Pluralism, and American History

Faculty

Sylvester Johnson, Department of Religious Studies, IU Bloomington

Sheila Suess Kennedy, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, IUPUI

Darren Dochuk, Department of History, Purdue University

Laura Olson, Department of Political Science, Clemson University

Douglas Winiarski, Department of Religion, University of Richmond

Amanda Porterfield, Department of Religious Studies, Florida State University

Philip Goff, Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, IUPUI

Arthur E. Farnsley II, Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, IUPUI

Rachel Wheeler, Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, IUPUI

YSAR 2007-09 Draws to a Close

The tenth “class” of Young Scholars in American Religion drew to a close in mid-October as the ten participants met for the last time in Indianapolis with their mentors, Amanda Porterfield of Florida State University and Paul Harvey of the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Having spent sessions on teaching, syllabi, tenure, and balancing their personal and professional lives, this weekend of meetings centered on research. Each participant presented articles or chapters they had written for critique by the group.

Sponsored by Lilly Endowment, the Young Scholars in American Religion Program dates back to 1991. Over one hundred scholars have been through the program, which is geared to help new faculty excel in their jobs and find fulfillment in teaching about religion in North America.

This contingent of Young Scholars included Edward Blum (San Diego State University), Darren Dochuk (Purdue University), Katherine Engel (Texas A&M University), Spencer Fluhman (Brigham Young University), Rebecca Goetz (Rice University),



Young Scholars in American Religion 2007-2009
From (l) to (r), back row: Randall Stephens, Charles Irons, Spencer Fluhman, Edward Blum, Matthew Sutton, Darren Dochuk, and Paul Harvey. From (l) to (r), front row: Katherine Carte Engel, Kathryn Lofton, Tisa Wenger, Amanda Porterfield, and Rebecca Goetz.

Charles Irons (Elon University), Kathryn Lofton (Yale University, previously at IU-Bloomington), Randall Stephens (Eastern Nazarene College), Matthew Sutton (Washington State University, previously at Oakland University), and Tisa Wenger (Yale Divinity School, previously at Arizona State University).

“YSAR is an absolutely phenomenal program and has been the most rewarding experience of my career,” said Matt Sutton. “Building relationships with great ‘young’ scholars in American religion and getting feedback, criticism, and support from them on my teaching methods and research has made me a much better teacher and historian.”

Charles Irons agreed and extended its influence in his life. “It’s difficult to evaluate whether the professional or personal dimensions of the Young Scholars program have been more rewarding – mentors and scholars in our cohort formed very quickly a rich, mutually supportive community.”

Paul Harvey, one of the two mentors for this group and alum of the program (1994-96), concluded, “Being a YSAR mentor has given me the unique opportunity to connect with the best of the best in American religious history and studies. Our group tore into our collective project with gusto, personal fearlessness,

Remember the best conversation you ever had in graduate school? That is what Young Scholars is. Again you can think together with incredibly smart people about every aspect of intellectual practice. From archival sources to theoretical preferences, from obscure historiography to life-work balance, the topics addressed over your two years in Indianapolis remind you that this is more than a career. It is a way of life, improved and sustained by excellent companions to the journey.

Kathryn Lofton, YSAR 2009-2011

and with a strong sense of a collective project. This has been the best academic experience of my career, and a profound personal experience of growth as well.”

The current (2009-11) cohort of Young Scholars is mentored by Clark Gilpin of the University of Chicago Divinity School and Tracy Fessenden of Arizona State University. The next group will be chosen this winter and meet for the first time next fall in Indianapolis. The mentors of that newest group will be Ann Braude of Harvard Divinity School and Mark Valeri of Union Theological Seminary.

“Among all of its ongoing projects, the Young Scholars program is perhaps my favorite,” said Philip Goff, executive director of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture. “The participants take very seriously their roles as teaching scholars and they dedicate themselves to the task before them. At the same time, they come to trust each other, let down their guard, and truly learn from each others’ successes and failures. Their attitudes have much to teach the rest of us who work in American religious studies.”

Perhaps Kathryn Lofton, one of the “graduating” participants, best placed the program in its larger context: “One of the reasons the subfield of American religions is so thriving is because this program exists.”

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<http://www.ucpressjournals.com>

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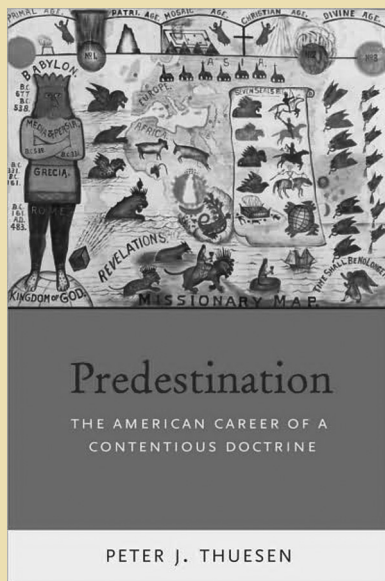
religion and american culture

Upcoming Issue

Volume 19, Number 2

Luis Murillo, *Tamales on the Fourth of July: Reflections on the Transnational Parish of Coeneo, Michoacan*Mark Chancey, *The Bible, the First Amendment, and the Public Schools in Odessa, Texas*James Brown, *The Zen of Anarchy: Japanese Nationalism and the Anarchist Roots of the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance*Amy Kittelstrom, *The International Social Turn: Unity and Brotherhood at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893*Harry S. Stout, *Review Essay: War and Religion*

university of california press



"[Predestination] is commendably concise and accessible, filled with insight, and leavened with the occasional flash of dry wit . . . The great virtue of the book is that, without taking sides among the combatants, Mr. Thuesen manages to capture the significance of their enterprise. It is nothing less than an unflinching commitment to living always mindful of the eye of eternity. Ultimately Mr. Thuesen mourns the decline of mystery in modern life; "Predestination" pays noble tribute to that sense of awe before the divine that theology captures only through a glass darkly."

--The Wall Street Journal

"Whatever your views on predestination, you will profit greatly from this thoughtful book . . . Peter Thuesen brings fresh perspectives to bear on this much-contested subject."

--Christianity Today

Young Scholars in American Religion

The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at IUPUI announces a program for early career scholars in American Religion. Beginning in October 2010, a series of seminars devoted to the enhancement of teaching and research for younger scholars in American Religion will be offered in Indianapolis. The aims of all sessions of the program are to develop ideas and methods of instruction in a supportive workshop environment, stimulate scholarly research and writing, and create a community of scholars that will continue into the future.

Dates: Session I: October 14-17, 2010
 Session II: April 28-May 1, 2011
 Session III: October 13-16, 2011
 Session IV: April 26-29, 2012
 Session V: October 11-14, 2012

Seminar Leaders:

Ann D. Braude is Director of the Women's Studies in Religion Program and Senior Lecturer in American Religious History at Harvard Divinity School. In addition to directing the WSRP, she teaches courses on the religious history of American women. Her first book, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in 19th-Century America*, is now in its second edition, and she is the author of *Women and Religion in America*, the first history of the religion of American women for a general audience. She has published many articles on women in Judaism, Christian Science, and American religious life, and served as co-editor of *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women*. Dr. Braude's most recent book is *Saints and Sisters: Women and Religion in America*.

Mark Valeri is the Ernest Trice Thompson Professor of Church History at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education. His areas of specialization include eighteenth century American religion, religion and social thought in America, Puritanism, and Reformation theology and the social history of Calvinism. Dr. Valeri's works include *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630-1965* (with Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp and Leigh E. Schmidt); *Law and Providence in Joseph Ballamy's New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* (Mackemie Prize, Presbyterian Historical Society, 1995); *Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy* (with Douglas A. Hicks); and, most recently, *Heavenly Merchandise: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America*.

Eligibility: Scholars eligible to apply are those who have launched their careers within the last seven years and who are working in a subfield of the area of religion in North America, broadly understood. Ten scholars will be selected, with the understanding that they will commit to the program for all dates. Each participant will be expected to produce a course syllabus, with justification of teaching approach, and a publishable research article. All costs for transportation, lodging, and meals for the seminars will be covered, and there is no application fee.

To Apply: Applicants must submit a curriculum vitae with three letters of reference directly supporting their application to the program (do not send portfolios with generic reference letters) as well as a 500-word essay indicating 1) why they are interested in participating, and 2) their current and projected research and teaching interests. The deadline for applications is 15 February 2010. Essays, CVs, and letters of reference should be sent to:

YSAR
Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, IUPUI
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-5140



THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS

*invites you to a reception
celebrating its programs and activities
Sunday, November 8, 2009
7:00-8:30 p.m.
Salon Joyce
La Centre Sheraton Hotel
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