

## Announcing the Second Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture

The Second Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture is slated for June 2-5, 2011, at the new JW Marriott Hotel in downtown Indianapolis.

Sponsored by the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture and *Religion & American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, the purpose of the biennial conference series is to combine the insights of those working from different perspectives to help create new and better understandings of religion’s role in American life. The first Conference on Religion and American Culture, held in Indianapolis June 4-7, 2009, laid the foundation for the series, with a focus on recognizing disciplinary boundaries and exploring how scholars within those disciplines might learn from each other. Proceedings of those sessions are available for free on the Center’s website.

The overarching theme of this second conference will be “change.” Changing understandings of both religion and culture, as well as the effects these changes have on ways of thinking about religion’s role in American culture, will be the focus. “Most crucial is the change over the past few decades toward thinking about religion as it is expressed in everyday life, religion as lived experience,” said Philip Goff, Executive Director of the CSRAC. Mirroring gradual changes in public perception—‘spiritual but not religious’—new definitions of religion challenge older, top-down models in which religion is defined by large institutions and the ideas, practices, and organizations embedded within them.



JW Marriott Indianapolis

“The conference will have three parts,” continued Goff. “Two opening sessions on changing definitions of religion and what this means for its study, four topical sessions where we play out this question

in specific research areas, and then two sessions on what the future holds (or may hold). While certainly related to our 2009 agenda, this meeting has a much clearer focus. The 2009 conference was primarily about bringing together senior people from different disciplines to discuss the field broadly, and we succeeded. The meeting in 2011 is about bringing a similarly strong group together with much greater attention to what religion is coming to mean in America, and how this affects any effort to understand it.”

The conference will open June 2 with a reception in Osteria Pronto at the JW Marriott. The hotel, which opened in February, is Indianapolis’s newest and largest, with 1005 guest rooms in 34 stories and 104,000 square feet of meeting, banquet, and exhibit space. A special conference rate of \$74.50 has been made available for a block of rooms thanks to a grant from Lilly Endowment. Once that block of rooms is sold out, the rate will be \$149 per night. To receive our special conference rate, please make your reservations here as soon as possible: [www.raac.iupui.edu](http://www.raac.iupui.edu).

Online conference registration is also available through our website. Registration before May 5 is recommended; registration fees increase from \$85 professional and \$45 student to \$110 professional and \$65 student after May 5. Onsite registration will be \$130 professional and \$80 student. For the full conference schedule, please see pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter.

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# R&AC

*Religion & American Culture:  
 a Journal of Interpretation*

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**Rachel Wheeler**, Editor  
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## Center Hosts Multi-Media Exhibit at IUPUI

The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, along with the IUPUI Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, is pleased to present “Golden States of Grace: Prayers of the Disinherited,” a multimedia exhibit featuring the photography of Rick Nahmias. The exhibit is on display in the IUPUI Campus Center’s Cultural Arts Gallery through February 28, 2011.

Nahmias is an internationally acclaimed photographer, writer, and filmmaker whose work documents the lives and struggles of marginalized communities. His documentary on migrant farm workers in California earned a U.S. Congressional Citation, and his photographs are included in the Smithsonian’s permanent collection.

“Golden States of Grace” aims to give image and voice to some of those who are active parts of our nation’s diverse religious landscape, but who because of the world, society, or their own actions, may have been silenced, and now worship as a means of finding refuge, family, or of forging community. For more information about the exhibit, please visit [www.goldenstatesofgrace.com/](http://www.goldenstatesofgrace.com/)

The IUPUI Campus Center is located at 420 University Blvd., Indianapolis, IN, and the Cultural Arts Gallery is in Room 240. Its hours are Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. and Sunday, 1 p.m.-7 p.m. Admission to the exhibit is free and open to the general public.



*Leslie, one of the subjects from “Golden States of Grace”  
 (photo © Rick Nahmias)*

# NEH Summer Institute 2010

This past summer, twenty-five teachers assembled from all over the nation to participate in a three-week National Endowment of the Humanities summer institute entitled, “The Many and the One: Religion, Pluralism, and American History.” The institute focused on religion’s interaction with American history and every day life. The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture received a grant of \$145,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to host the institute.

“Our [visiting] teachers ran the gamut from elementary to high school, though most were high school teachers,” said Arthur Farnsley II, Associate Director of CSRAC. “And of course, some of them teach AP in private high schools and some teach general courses in large public schools, so their experiences were incredibly varied.”

A typical institute day was divided into four sessions with lunch in between. The institute’s core faculty—Farnsley and his Religious Studies colleagues, Professor and CSRAC Executive Director Philip Goff and Associate Professor Rachel Wheeler—provided context and continuity during the sessions, but the daily seminars were directed by content area experts from across the country.

Douglas Winiarski from the University of Richmond led seminars on early American topics ranging from mound-builders at Cahokia to the Pueblo Indian revolt. IUPUI’s Sheila Kennedy talked about religion and the Constitution in a discussion that ranged from the Founders to the present.

Indiana University Bloomington’s Sylvester Johnson led a day on slavery, race, and religion, which included a visit to the Frederick Douglass Papers project at IUPUI. John Stauffer of Harvard continued in this vein with discussions of Douglass, Nat Turner, John Brown, and related material.

Darren Dochuk of Purdue University used the Scopes Trial to make the transition to modernity. Amanda Porterfield of Florida State University led discussions of 20th century change, including immigration and the Age of Aquarius, followed by a discussion of the New Christian Right led by Laura Olson of Clemson.

Field trips included the Eiteljorg Museum to look at American Indians and the development of the American West, Conner Prairie Living History Museum, the Indiana Historical Society, the Islamic Society of North America, and a Buddhist temple.

Teachers presented unit plans at the end of the institute that ranged from the role religion and race played in the lead-up to the Civil War to how religious ideas are expressed in history and literature.

The NEH Summer Institute highlighted the Center’s concern that religious history could be better implemented in high school classrooms. Said Farnsley, “We have noted three main obstacles to teaching about religion: sectarian parents will object, uncertainty about what the law allows in terms of teaching about religion, and teachers may come from educational backgrounds where religion’s role in history or literature, for example, was not emphasized. We believe these can all be overcome with proper training and attention to fairness and objectivity.”

“We hope people will see religion as an important part of American culture and American history,” Farnsley said. “We’re not arguing that everything is all about religion—religion exists alongside other kinds of ideas and institutions. We’re just stating it’s part of the story and telling that full story has to begin somewhere, so we’re making our small contribution by helping these teachers do a better job.”

This is the first NEH Summer Institute held at IUPUI. “This is a major national program held annually, so we’re very excited,” he said.

The summer institute was designated a “We The People” program by the NEH. “‘We The People’ initially focused on programs about the Constitution, but now has expanded for programs that demonstrate strength in teaching, understanding, and the study of American culture,” Farnsley said, adding, “That’s really what we’re all about.”



*NEH Summer Institute 2010 participants*

*Back row, from (l), Susan Yolmeh, Matthew Wahlert, Kimberly Brooks, Judith McDonald, Andy Marchal, Christina Baulch, Jeremy Luke, Dwight Simon, Staci Garner, Andrew French, Paul Fisher, and Colleen Eddy. Front row, from (l), Becky Martin, Irene Hall, Jillian DePew, Ioana Bercea, Hannah Brumer, Wendy Youngblood, Sarah Shmitt, Cheryl Whitaker, Cindy Kanczuzewski, David Howard, Peter Lewek, and David Migliaccio*

# Second Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture

June 2-5, 2011

**J.W. Marriott Hotel**  
**Indianapolis, IN**

To register and make your hotel reservations,  
 please visit [www.raac.iupui.edu](http://www.raac.iupui.edu)

## Thursday, June 2

3:00-7:00pm Arrival and Registration  
 6:00-8:00pm Opening Reception

## Friday, June 3

### Changing What "Religion" Means

8:30-10:00 am **Session 1:** *What are our academic assumptions about religion?*

Bringing together people who work on religious experience with people who study lived religion and social scientists who do work on individual choice. Our goal is to consider the effect of newer, "from the ground up" approaches to religious study on older, more traditional models that emphasize organizations and ideology.

Panelists: **Penny Edgell** (Sociology, University of Minnesota)  
**Robert Orsi** (Religious Studies, Northwestern University)  
**Ann Taves** (Religious Studies, UC Santa Barbara)

10:00-10:30 Morning Break

10:30-12:00 **Session 2:** *Revisiting the secularity/secularization question.*

Nowhere in the study of religion does the approach one take have a greater impact on the conclusions one reaches. Defined as institutions, organizations, and ideology, secularization seems apparent. Seen from the level of everyday life, religion is all around us. This is an excellent place to focus the conversation about what religion is and what this means to how we think about it.

Panelists: **Tracy Fessenden** (Religious Studies, Arizona State University)  
**Paul Froese** (Sociology, Baylor University)  
**Rhys Williams** (Sociology, Loyola University Chicago)

12:00-1:30 Break for Lunch

### Changing Religion in a Changing Culture

1:30-3:00 **Session 3:** *Religion's role in political identity.*

This session is intentionally broad and those that follow are not mutually exclusive. But recent political battles over sexuality issues or Islam and the Koran or heated partisan rhetoric need to be considered in terms of changing understandings of religion in American society.

Panelists: **Edward Curtis** (Religious Studies, Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis)  
**Paul Djupe** (Political Science, Denison University)  
**Clyde Wilcox** (Government, Georgetown University)

3:00-3:30 Afternoon Break

3:30-5:00 **Session 4:** *Religion's role in immigration and globalization.*

In some ways a subset of Session 3, we want to focus the conversation on questions about the religious components of movement, particularly immigration, integration, and the impact of globalization on religion in American culture.

Panelists: **Gerardo Marti** (Sociology, Davidson College)  
**Timothy Matovina** (Theology, University of Notre Dame)  
**Fenggang Yang** (Sociology, Purdue University)

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## Saturday, June 4

8:30-10:00 **Session 5:** *Religion's role in personal identity.*

This conversation was left hanging in 2009 and we want to re-focus attention specifically on new understandings of religion and what this says about shifting personal identities (including class, race, ethnicity, and gender).

Panelists: **Sylvester Johnson** (Religious Studies, Indiana University-Bloomington)  
**Sally Gallagher** (Sociology, Oregon State University)  
**Laurie Maffly-Kipp** (Religious Studies, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill)

10:00-10:30 Morning Break

10:30-12:00 **Session 6:** *Market models for understanding religion.*

Somewhat of an outlier in this group, we believe economic models are now so widely used across the social sciences (and as an unquestioned metaphor in the humanities) that it would be impossible for us to ignore this as a key factor in changing definitions of religion in a world increasingly shaped by economic models.

Panelists: **Roger Finke** (Sociology, Pennsylvania State University)  
**James Hudnut-Beumler** (Vanderbilt Divinity School)  
**Kathryn Lofton** (American Studies and Religious Studies, Yale University)

12:00-1:30 Break for Lunch

## Changes in the Future, Real and Imagined

1:30-3:00 **Session 7:** *Changes in the understanding and uses of scripture.*

In 2011, the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible, we hope to use this session to forward the Center's interest in changing attitudes toward scripture. Scripture, especially the Bible, continues to play a formative role in American life. If understandings of religion are changing, it stands to reason understandings of scripture are changing too. We want to think about why and how.

Panelists: **Charles Cohen** (History and Religious Studies, University of Wisconsin)  
**Kathleen Flake** (Vanderbilt Divinity School)  
**Charles Hambrick-Stowe** (First Congregational Church, Ridgefield, CT)

3:00-3:30 Afternoon Break

3:30-5:00 **Session 8:** *The future of religion in America.*

This is a big question, but what is the point of assembling a group like this unless it is to take a step back and ask the big-picture questions from a variety of perspectives? Here we want to think about not only how the study of American religion is changing, but about how religious belief and practice are changing at the broadest level. How will technology change religion, or be changed by it? What sacred domains exist beyond what has traditionally been called religion? How will civil religion relate to traditional religion? At its core, this session is concerned with how people will be religious in the coming years.

Panelists: **David Daniels** (Church History, McCormick Theological Seminary)  
**Mark Silk** (Religion, Trinity College)  
**Julie Byrne** (Religion, Hofstra University)

5:00-8:00 Concluding Reception



# YSAR 2010-2012 Meet in Indianapolis



*Young Scholars in American Religion 2010-2012*  
 Front row (l-r), Lauren Winner, Ann Braude, Jeff Wilson, Adrian Weimer, Linford Fisher, John Hayes. Back row (l-r), Elaine Pena, Kevin O'Neill, Matt Hedstrom, Quincy Newell, Anna Lawrence, Joshua Paddison, Mark Valeri, and Michael Pasquier

A new contingent of participants in the Young Scholars in American Religion program gathered in Indianapolis this past October for their first seminar. "Selected from a pool of almost 100 applicants, these impressive early-career scholars have backgrounds in history, religious studies, seminaries, and American studies, and come from a variety of teaching environments," said Philip Goff, executive director of the Center.

Led by faculty mentors Ann Braude of Harvard Divinity School and Mark Valeri of Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Education, the 2010-2012 group will meet on four more occasions through October 2012.

"Our first meeting displayed a high level of energy and, perhaps most impressive, an enthusiasm for collegial conversation," said Valeri. "We have a wonderfully diverse group of young scholars with various interests: colonial Protestantism, contemporary Buddhism, race and liberalism, music and southern religion, to name just a few. Yet our discussions have turned helpfully to common interests and concerns. They reflect the dynamic interactions among scholars of religion and American culture. We are off to an encouraging start."

Participants will develop new course syllabi, which will eventually become part of the database located at the Center's website. Each year, over 100,000 searches are made in the online database. "A large portion of the web searches come from foreign addresses. What we say and do in this program influences the teaching of American religious studies in classrooms across the country and around the world," said Goff. Later seminars will be devoted to research topics and to professional matters such as tenure and promotion. By the end of the seminar series, each participant will present a publishable research project to the larger group.

Sponsored by Lilly Endowment, the Young Scholars in American Religion program dates back to 1991. Over one hundred scholars have so far participated in the program, which is designed to help new faculty excel in the areas of teaching and research and to form a community of colleagues that will last into the future.

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## religion and american culture

*Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* is devoted to promoting the ongoing scholarly discussion of the nature, terms, and dynamics of religion in America. Embracing a diversity of theoretical perspectives, this semi-annual publication explores the interplay between religion and other spheres of American Culture.

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# The Journal at Twenty: A Look Back

The inaugural issue of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* launched just over twenty years ago (January 1991). Of course, a lot of work preceded that first issue. The journal's office officially opened for manuscript submissions in July 1989, and plans for publication of the journal went back a few more years. The original co-editors—Conrad Cherry, Rowland A. (Tony) Sherrill, and Jan Shipps—engaged a wide array of scholars in American religion in conversation, holding consultations on both the need and the difficulties of starting yet another scholarly journal. In the end, all agreed the journal would, indeed, fill a niche that no other journal quite covered. Thus, a vision of the type of journal *Religion and American Culture* would be was born, and the work of making it a reality started. Thomas J. Davis was hired as Managing Editor, and then, almost twenty-two years ago, the details and protocols of the journal began to be worked out.

First, the editors developed a statement of purpose that would embody the vision for the journal held by them and their panel of consultants. It was—and is—the measure by which every article is judged in terms of its appropriateness for publication, for the niche it sought to fill: “*Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* explores the interplay between religion and other spheres of American culture. The journal embraces a diversity of methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives. Although concentrated on specific topics, articles illuminate larger patterns, implications, or contexts of American life. *Religion and American Culture* is, thus, devoted to promoting the ongoing scholarly discussion of the nature, terms, and dynamics of religion in America.” Many fine submissions come to the journal, but, unless it is clear that the primary thrust of the article is to “illuminate larger patterns, implications,

or contexts of American life,” they are not published. So if, for example, the real interest of a manuscript seems to be the exploration of an individual primarily for the sake of understanding that individual better (in other words, a piece with a strong biographical slant), then it is not a good fit for *Religion and American Culture*. If the journal publishes a piece on an individual, it is because the thrust of the essay is to show how that individual is illustrative of larger cultural patterns and reveals something new about the role of religion in American life.

Second, the editors crafted a double-blind review process, one which applied to them as well as to external readers. When a manuscript comes to the editorial offices, it is stripped of identifying markers—obviously, a person's name is removed from the manuscript if it is there, but care is also taken to remove references to the author's institution, or to where the piece might have been presented as a paper, or to colleagues being thanked for their reviews of previous drafts of the manuscript. If there is an obvious connection, self-referencing in the notes is eliminated. Thus, the editors read the piece blind, and decisions are made without knowing who the author is. The same, of course, holds true for when the manuscript is sent to external readers. The reverse is, then, also true—authors do not know who has read the manuscript. Though this is not a perfect process—no single process would be—it has helped the journal maintain a commitment to the highest quality of scholarship. No one is ever published just because of the reputation they hold; no one is ever denied publication because of junior status. This speaks volumes toward intent—to publish the best material regardless of the standing, or lack thereof, of its author.

Finally, the “third rail” of the journal—a policy that has never been breached, nor has

ever really come under reconsideration—is that the editors of the journal are not allowed to publish their own work therein. Of course, some of *Religion and American Culture's* editors have been published in the journal, but that came before their tenure as editors (indeed, before their association with IUPUI). In all cases, publication came before there was even any possibility of association with IUPUI and its Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, the sponsor of the journal.

In addition to the above guiding principles of *Religion and American Culture*, credit must go to the original editors for the way they thought through the special features that would go into each volume. The first issue of every new volume contains a forum, wherein several contributors address an issue related to the study of religion in its American context. Based on both oral accounts from readers and statistics from the online services, the forum is the journal's most popular feature.

The second special feature is the review essay that appears in issue two of each volume year. As with the forum, the review essays are crafted by the editors as they explore topics and approaches of interest to those who study American religion. This feature, as well, is extremely popular, with certain review essays ranking at the top of electronic retrieval and usage.

It is with a great sense of pride that we at the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture can look back on the first twenty years of publication. And we look forward to the years ahead, as we work with all of you to explore that most fascinating of topics—religion in America.

## *Religion & American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*

### Submission Guidelines

Address all manuscripts and editorial correspondence to Thomas J. Davis, Managing Editor, Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, Cavanaugh Hall 417, 425 University Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46202-5140. All manuscript submissions, four copies of each typescript, should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Typescripts should be 25-35 pages in length.

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### **Newsletter moving to electronic format**

In the coming months, the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture will collect e-mail addresses for migration to an e-newsletter format in 2012. If you wish to continue receiving *News from the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture*, including announcements of upcoming YSAR programs, conferences, and lectures, please send your e-mail address now to: [raac@iupui.edu](mailto:raac@iupui.edu).