

# *Debate, Dissent & Dialogue:*

The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Humanities Symposium

September 7-15, 2008

Belmont University

If you would like to be placed on an email contact list for next year's symposium or other events sponsored by the School of Humanities, please add your name to the contact book located at the entrance to each event or email us at [monteverdem@mail.belmont.edu](mailto:monteverdem@mail.belmont.edu).

## **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7**

### **“DEBATE CAMP” & “GAME ON”: A VIEWING & DISCUSSION OF TWO EPISODES OF *THE WEST WING***

Dr. Bonnie Smith and University Media Writer April Hefner (M.A. '07) will lead a discussion of two episodes of *The West Wing* that focus on preparing for a Presidential debate. We'll view “Debate Camp” and “Game On” (originally aired in October of 2002) and discuss the importance of language in political discourse, especially “the ten word answer” and the problematic prevalence of bumper sticker politics.

**2-4:30 pm, LEU CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS 117 - (AL)**

## **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8**

### **“PLEASE ARGUE WITH ME!”: A SUMMONS TO THE SYMPOSIUM**

*DR. BONNIE SMITH*

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, BELMONT UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Bonnie Smith will deliver the first address of the symposium. What is an argument? Why are we here to think and talk together about debate, dissent, and dialogue? And why are these concepts important not only in this political season but in the university, in our relationships, and in our community?

**10-10:50 am, MASSEY BOARDROOM- (AL)**

### **ONE OF THE GREATEST DEBATES IN WESTERN HISTORY: THE CONTROVERSY OF VALLADOLID**

*DR. NATALIA PELAZ*

**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, ELMONT UNIVERSITY**

In 1550, two of the most respected wise men of their time, De las Casas and Sepulveda, met at Valladolid (Spain) to debate about a topic that affected, and affects, millions of people, perhaps changing their lives forever.

**2-2:50 pm, MASSEY BOARDROOM - (AL)**

### **“THE CRITICISM OF HONEST OPPONENTS” AND OUR HERITAGE OF DISSENT**

*DR. DAVID CURTIS*

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, BELMONT UNIVERSITY**

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois asserted that “[h]onest and earnest criticism from those whose interests are most nearly touched,—criticism of writers by readers, of government by those governed, of leaders by those led,—

this is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society.” Yet many political and corporate structures in contemporary U.S. culture discourage or prevent outright these beneficial types of criticism. Citing a number of especially literary examples, Dr. Curtis will discuss how, despite these obstacles, U.S. writers have historically pursued dissent, and how the responsibility to revive and preserve this heritage is incumbent upon all who would consider themselves citizens.

**5-5:50 pm, BELMONT UNIVERSITY AMPHITHEATRE - (AL)  
(RAIN LOCATION MASSEY BOARDROOM)**

**DEBATE, DISSENT, DIALOGUE, AND INDIRECTION:  
A VIEWING OF *AMAZING GRACE***

*with DR. MAGGIE MONTEVERDE AND MICHAEL JACKSON*

Following a viewing of the film *Amazing Grace*, we will discuss the life of William Wilberforce and his fight to end the slave trade, as well as ways in which his real life differed from his reel life. In the process we will also touch on dissent in the English political scene at the end of the 18th century and, hopefully, shed some light on how debate and indirection worked in Parliament at this time.

**6:30-9:30 pm, MASSEY BOARDROOM - (AL)**

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9**

**WILLIE STARK, THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE, AND THE  
VOICES OF POWERFUL: EXECUTING CHANGE ON A LOCAL  
LEVEL IN ROBERT PENN WARREN’S *ALL THE KING’S MEN***

*PROFESSOR SUE TROUT*

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, BELMONT UNIVERSITY**

Professor Sue Trout will discuss Warren’s masterpiece, especially how Willie Stark uses the “language of the people” and the “language of power.”

**11-11:50 am, BUNCH LIBRARY, LEU ART GALLERY - (AL)**

**PANEL ON DISSENT AND DEBATE IN NASHVILLE**

Local politicians and activists Larry Woods, Representative Beth Harwell, Eric Stansell (2008 candidate for State House District 52) and WRVU talk show host Freddie O’Connell will discuss how we debate, dissent, and dialogue with one another on a variety of local issues.

**4:30-6 pm, BUNCH LIBRARY, LEU ART GALLERY - (AL)**

**6-7 pm, Refreshments**

## **EXTRA TERRESTRIAL: THE OUTSIZED INFLUENCE OF TALK RADIO IN AMERICA'S POLITICAL DISCUSSION**

*FREDDIE O'CONNELL*

**VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY**

Freddie O'Connell, WRVU talk show host, will discuss the phenomenon of talk radio, which has dramatically influenced the way American debates have been framed in recent years.

**7-8 pm, BUNCH LIBRARY, LEU ART GALLERY - (AL)**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10**

## **DISSENT IN THE NIXON ERA**

*A CONVERSATION WITH DR. JEFF COKER & DR. PETER KURYLA*

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, BELMONT UNIVERSITY**

Belmont historians Dr. Jeff Coker and Dr. Peter Kuryla will discuss dissent in the Nixon era, paying special attention to the student and black power movements.

**4:30-5:30 pm, BUNCH LIBRARY, LEU ART GALLERY, (AL)**

## **REINVENTING RICHARD NIXON: DEBATING CULTURAL VALUES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

*DR. DANIEL FRICK*

**FRANKLIN AND MARSHALL UNIVERSITY**

Conflicting stories about and images of Richard Nixon have haunted U. S. popular culture for more than half a century. But what motivates this national obsession with reinventing Richard Nixon in literature, film, cartoons, music, and other media? More than just disputing the former president's significance in U. S. history, these competing representations of Nixon battle one another in promoting certain cultural values and in defining a particular vision of national identity—what the country was, what it is, and what it should be. In other words, when we disagree about Nixon, we are debating about the meaning of America.

Dr. Daniel Frick is Director of the Writing Center and adjunct professor of English at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He teaches courses in rhetoric and American fiction, and his book, *Reinventing Richard Nixon: The Cultural History of an American Obsession*, has just been published by the University Press of Kansas.

**7-8 pm, BUNCH LIBRARY, LEU ART GALLERY - (AL)**

**REFRESHMENTS TO FOLLOW**

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11**

**JUST WAR AND THE U.S. POLICY OF PREEMPTION**

*DR. RONNIE LITTLEJOHN*

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, BELMONT UNIVERSITY**

There are central issues concerning morality and war and the most important of these is that since the 5th century, Western civilizations have taken the view that morality always requires of us a well-defined and thoughtful justification for acts of war. In this talk, Ronnie Littlejohn explores the significance of the U.S. policy change embodied in the doctrine of preemption developed in light of 9.11.2001.

**11-11:50 am, FRIST LECTURE HALL (4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR IHSB) - (AL)**

**TELLING NATIONAL STORIES: A NOVEL WAY  
TO DEBATE ARGENTINA**

*DR. PAULO BOERO*

**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, BELMONT UNIVERSITY**

As Argentina suffered and later emerged from the nightmare of its last military dictatorship, artists sought both to undermine the regime's monologic discourse of national identity and to promote more profound, humane conversations about Argentine identity and reality. In this context, the historical and fictional storyteller emerges as a transformative force whose power resides in his/her ability to help civil society re-imagine itself through dialogues.

**2-2:50 pm, FRIST LECTURE HALL (4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR IHSB) - (AL)**

**JIHAD IN ISLAM: THE CREATION OF A MUJAHID IDENTITY  
IN THE PAST AND PRESENT**

*DR. MASOOD RAJAA*

**KENT STATE UNIVERSITY AND BELMONT ALUMNUS**

The Muslim approach to the Qur'ān as a master text is highly contextual and deeply responsive to the material realities of every day existence. Jihad in these contexts is a reactionary practice; understanding this aspect of Jihad can be useful in unraveling the complexities of the Muslim politics of resistance, as opposed to a more essentialized approach that provides, in Edward Said's words, "a limited series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as, among other things, to make the [Islamic] world vulnerable to military aggression." Dr. Raja will highlight the acts of retrieval within the Islamic cultural production that articulate a specific Muslim male subjectivity of a mujahid within the colonial and neoliberal paradigms of power.

Belmont alum Dr. Masood Raja moved to the United States in 1996 after resigning his commission in the Pakistan Army. He teaches in the English department at Kent State, and he specializes in Postcolonial Literature and Theory with a special emphasis on the Literature of South Asia, the Islamic world, and global responses, popular and literary, to the neoliberal globalization.

**4:30-5:30 pm, FRIST LECTURE HALL (4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR IHSB) - (AL)**

## **RECEPTION WITH THE SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS**

This offering of light hors d'oeuvres and beverages, sponsored by the School of Humanities, provides an opportunity for many of the Symposium speakers to meet and talk with audience members.

**6-7 pm, Lobby 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR IHSB**

## **“INTERESTING POINT”: *PULP FICTION*, POSTMODERN PHILOSOPHY, AND THE FINE ART OF DISAGREEMENT**

*DR. MICHAEL BÉRUBÉ*

**PATERNO FAMILY PROFESSOR IN LITERATURE**

**AT PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Drawing on Quentin Tarantino's 1994 film, the philosophical debate between Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jurgen Habermas, and on recent political controversies ranging from the campus culture wars to the Danish Mohammed cartoons, Bérubé will ask how people can find ways to agree to disagree—and will suggest why people should agree to form societies in which such disagreement is possible.

Michael Bérubé is the author of six books to date : *Marginal Forces / Cultural Centers: Tolson, Pynchon, and the Politics of the Canon* (Cornell University Press, 1992 ); *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics* (Verso, 1994); *Life As We Know It: A Father, A Family, and an Exceptional Child* (Pantheon, 1996; paper edition, Vintage, 1998); *The Employment of English: Theory, Jobs, and the Future of Literary Studies* (New York University Press, 1998); *What's Liberal About the Liberal Arts?: Classroom Politics and "Bias" in Higher Education* (W. W. Norton, 2006) and *Rhetorical Occasions: Essays on Humans and the Humanities* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006). He is also the editor of *The Aesthetics of Cultural Studies* (Blackwell, 2004), and, with Cary Nelson, of *Higher Education Under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities* (Routledge, 1995). Bérubé has written over 150 essays for a wide variety of academic journals such as *American Quarterly*, the *Yale Journal of Criticism*, *Social Text*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, and *The Minnesota Review*,

as well as more popular venues such as *Harper's*, *the New Yorker*, *Dissent*, *The New York Times Magazine*, the *Washington Post*, the *Nation*, and the *Boston Globe*. *Life As We Know It* was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year for 1996 and was chosen as one of the best books of the year (on a list of seven) by Maureen Corrigan of National Public Radio.

**7-8 pm, FRIST LECTURE HALL (4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR IHSB) - (AL)**

## **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12**

### **DEBATE, DISSENT & DIALOGUE SYMPOSIUM PANEL**

Featured speakers Dr. Masood Raja, Dr. Daniel Frick, and Dr. Michael Bérubé will continue the discussion in a panel on the symposium's themes. Dr. Smith and Dr. Curtis will moderate.

**10-10:50 am, FRIST LECTURE HALL (4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR IHSB) - (AL)**

### **DR. MARK ANDERSON AND THE PHILOLOGOI ON THE VALUE OF DEMOCRACY**

Thinkers as diverse as Plato, Aristotle, Al-Farabi, and Nietzsche considered democracy to be one of the worst forms of political organization. This judgment is hard for many of us to understand, and almost impossible for us to accept. The Philolgoi, the Philosophy department's weekly discussion group, will examine this subject by discussing the proposition that contrary to contemporary popular sentiment, democracy is an impediment to human happiness.

**3-3:50 pm, FRIST LECTURE HALL (4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR IHSB) - (AL)**

## **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14**

### **“WE WILL NOT WALK IN FEAR OF ONE ANOTHER”: *GOOD NIGHT, AND GOOD LUCK* AND DISSENT IN THE MEDIA**

*with DR. RICH TINER, MODERATOR*

**DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA STUDIES, BELMONT UNIVERSITY**

We will screen *Good Night, and Good Luck*, and Dr. Rich Tiner will lead us in a discussion about dissent and the media. Nominated for six Oscars, *Good Night, and Good Luck* is a 2005 film about journalist Edward R. Murrow's showdown with Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy. The film stars George Clooney (who also directs), David Strathairn, and Robert Downey, Jr., and the film's tagline is “We will not walk in fear of one another.”

**2-4:30 pm, LEU CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS 117 - (AL)**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15**

**PLEASE ARGUE SOME MORE!: A WRAP-UP OF DEBATE,  
DISSENT AND DIALOGUE**

*DR. MAGGIE MONTEVERDE, MODERATOR*

Dr. Monteverde will lead faculty panelists and students in a conversation about what we've learned from our symposium and where we might go from here.

**10-10:50 am, MASSEY CENTER 100 - (AL)**

Thank you for participating in

**DEBATE, DISSENT, AND DIALOGUE**

We hope you will join us next year for the  
**Eighth Annual Fall Humanities Symposium.**