UNDERSTANDING ISLAM
an interview with Chase F. Robinson

Dancing in the Dark from the book by Morris Dickstein
Taking Dylan at His Words
FEATURES

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

In this interview, Distinguished Professor Chase F. Robinson, Graduate Center provost and his generation's leading expert on early Islamic history, suggests that one reason we in the West so often come up with the wrong answers about Islam may be because we are asking the wrong questions.

TAKING DYLAN AT HIS WORDS

At this first in the series Elebash Presents: Concerts & Conversations, the focus was on the lyrics of Bob Dylan in musical settings by other composers.

DANCING IN THE DARK

In this excerpt from his popular new cultural history of the Great Depression, Distinguished Professor Morris Dickstein takes a long look at the role an emerging national popular culture played in defining and shaping its time and ours.

SHHHH

A few words about “Silent Pictures,” an exhibition of art with the defining characteristic of wordlessness.
There's a parallel between high finance and higher education, between giant banking enterprises and great public universities. Simply stated, the wealth of the nation depends upon the health of both.

I was struck by the parallel this summer when I prepared an address on the future of American higher education for the Sun Valley Writers’ Conference. I began my remarks by noting how expanding mandates, spiking costs, and chronic underfunding threatened the well-being of public universities. I recalled how rapidly the nation had responded to the self-inflicted wounds of a fragile Wall Street. Intemperate partisan politics were suspended, and both the Bush and Obama administrations moved with uncommon alacrity to bolster a tottering financial system.

Might the nation move with similar speed and purpose, I wondered, to preserve the unique character and capacities of our great public universities? The threat to them is just as real and the long-term consequences no less devastating. That is so because the future of our economy rests on the transformative capacity of higher education. Ours is an era in which knowledge has replaced material resources as the engine of economic development. Prosperity, social stability, the very sustainability of the planet depend upon our capacity to generate new knowledge and to expand educational opportunities.

This is not to say that colleges and universities will wither away. But, faced with diminishing resources and spiraling costs, public universities, which educate more than 80 percent of the nation’s students, will lose the capacity to support the scholarship and teaching on which the future is built.

This problem is almost uniquely American. In most of the world, national governments underwrite public universities. Here, support of higher education is primarily the responsibility of the states. And, as we know all too well, states face growing financial burdens and are subject to the priorities of aging and tax-resistant populations. Consequently, per capita public investment in higher education has declined over the past two decades. Public universities have become increasingly dependent upon tuition, philanthropy, and sponsored research. As critical as these components are to the health of public universities, they are neither constant nor inexhaustible sources of revenue. The gap between income and expenditure grows ever larger.

Our nation continues to lead the world in scholarship, innovation, and academic creativity, but we are entering an era in which high-end research may be confined to a handful of wealthy private universities. Publics who seek to keep pace must do so by raising tuition and by displacing low-income students with out-of-state applicants who pay much higher fees. When one considers that the great publics have generated a disproportionately large share of American research, and further, have been the primary agents of social mobility, the problem becomes profoundly unsettling.

Given the risk to our intellectual capital, we must rethink our nation’s commitment to public higher education. We’ve done so before. The Morrill Act, the G.I. Bill, the establishment of the national academies, the Pell Grants, all yielded rich dividends. These measures were not “bailouts” but strategic investments in the American future. Ideas about how to renew and recast that strategy are plentiful, but to date, discussion has not advanced to meaningful stages at either the state or the federal level. That’s distressing, because this is not a problem that can wait.

William P. Kelly
President
The Graduate Center

“Prosperity, social stability, the very sustainability of the planet depend upon our capacity to generate new knowledge...”
Segal Center's “Prelude '09” Previews the Season's Cutting-Edge Performances

“Previews the Season’s Performances of the 2009–10 season and beyond. It’s a laboratory and a platform for ideas.” That’s how Dr. Frank Hentschker, executive director and director of programs at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, described Prelude ’09, the sixth annual Prelude Festival and Symposium, held at the GC from September 30 to October 3 and attended by 2,500 people.

The event, which highlights visionaries of New York City’s theatre and performance scene, offered an advance look at some of the most anticipated performances of the 2009–10 season and beyond. This year’s theme, Ecologies, Economies, and Engagement, coincided with co-curators Andrew Horwitz, Geoffrey Scott, and Morgan von Prellie Pecelli, asked creators to tell how their current work reflects or predicts “the new world into which we are hurtling at breakneck speed”—a world in which many of the participating artists cited social networking tools like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter as primary methods of conversing with their audience and as source material for their work.

Performances were grouped into “tracks” arranged thematically by content, form, and practice: Digital, Poetic, Political, Bricolage, and Hybrid. Each day’s program concluded with a conversation about the ways theatre is affected by such factors as the greening of performance spaces, micro- and alternative financing, and renewed political engagement.

Program participants included legendary performance artist Marina Abramović, plus the Living Theatre, Radiohole, Jay Scheib, NYC Players, David Michalek, Adrienne Truscott, Erin Courtney, and Steve Cuiffo. In addition, Prelude ’09 continued its international spotlight series, this year showcasing the works of contemporary Kosovan theatre artists.

Hentschker, who is passionate about bridging the gap between the academic and performing arts communities, emphasized how thrilled he is with the GC’s continued involvement in the festival. “It shows what an active role the university can play within the theatre community,” he noted.

The Segal Center’s fall program also includes evenings with Iranian playwright Amir Koohestani, Austrian performance and installation artist Kurt Hentschläger, and director Andrei Šerban; collaborations with the PERFORMA festival focusing on Polish Futurism and with the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts celebrating the Center’s newest publication Playwrights Before the Fall and CUNY Arts Fest ’09 (www.cuny.edu/cunystages). Initiated several years ago by the Segal Center, CUNY Arts Fest ’09 will feature over thirty CUNY performing arts events—music, dance, and theatre—in seventeen venues throughout the City’s five boroughs. For the Center’s full schedule, see http://web.gc.cuny.edu/mestc.

—Jackie Glasthal

Robert Caro Tells How His Biographies Capture “A Sense of Place”

Robert A. Caro, a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner for biographies on Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson, spoke to a packed house in the Proshansky Auditorium at the 2009 inaugural Leon Levy Biography Lecture. He focused much of his talk on the years of painstaking research needed to capture the unparalleled examples his books provide of how power works in a democracy.

A successful biography, he said, should possess many of the same qualities that we expect of fiction, particularly when it comes to placing the reader in a historical context through vivid detail.

“Part of what makes a book endure is a sense of place,” said Caro. “Once you have the facts, it’s important to make the reader see the place in which they’re happening and see the scene and be involved in the scene. Then you can understand things that the writer doesn’t have to tell you.”

Caro knows of what—and where—he speaks. He is doggedly faithful to getting things right in his books, whether by spending the night in a sleeping bag on a ranch in Texas Hill County in order to better understand Lyndon Baines Johnson’s childhood loneliness, or by interviewing former residents of East Tremont in the Bronx, whose lives were devastated by the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway, the brainchild of Caro’s first subject, the legendary urban planner Robert Moses.

Caro’s incisive scholarship and desire to communicate what he has learned to his readers has made him a pre-eminent contemporary biographer. For the past three decades, he has, along with his wife Ina, researched the life of Lyndon Baines Johnson. Before he began his work on the 36th President of the United States, Caro had already spent seven years researching and writing his 1974 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York (Random House). When he approached his publisher with the idea of writing about Johnson, he envisioned a one-volume work on Johnson’s presidency. First, though, he wanted to see where Johnson came from in order to better understand the man.

When he visited the remote Texas hill town in which Johnson grew up, Caro felt he was entering a world that he did not comprehend. Wishing to understand Johnson more fully, he took a dramatic step. Along with Ina, he moved from Manhattan to the remote village of Johnson City, Texas, population 372.

Living in Johnson City for three years, he interviewed everyone who knew Johnson as a young man and experienced firsthand the devastating isolation of the area, and, most importantly, came to understand the physical toll that life in the Hill Country exacted from Johnson and from his forebears; it was there, in the Hill Country, that he came to realize the source of the antipoverty and anti-discrimination programs that Johnson would push through Congress to create the Great Society.

Caro’s ambitious move led to thousands of interviews, which provided material for his cele-
Music in Midtown’s Season
Stays with Four Duos
and the Elebash Quartet

At the first two concerts of this fall’s Music in Midtown series, near-capacity audiences heard performances by doctoral students of the GC’s D.M.A. performance program.

“Chamber Music on Fifth: A Program of Duos” on September 24 offered works by Aaron Copland, Ludwig van Beethoven, Tōru Takemitsu, and Alban Berg, providing a balance of classical and contemporary pieces that showcased each musician's technical expertise as well as personal style.

Bonnie McAlvin on flute and Aleksandra Sarest on piano created a sense of balletic movement for Copland’s Duo. Violist Ji Hyun Son and pianist Mirna Lekic delivered Beethoven’s Notturno in D Major, op. 42 with spirit, evoking images of eighteenth-century dancing lords and ladies. For Distance de Fée, by Takemitsu, violinist Karen Rostron and pianist Emiko Sato brought to life both the action and the stillness of “the little folk.” The finale, Alban Berg’s Four Pieces, op. 5, was performed with energy and élan by clarinetist Maksim Shtrykov and pianist Alina Kiryayeva.

The October 8 concert, featuring the Elebash String Quartet, consisted of the Quartet in F Major by Maurice Ravel and the Quartet No. 8 in C Minor, op. 110 by Dmitri Shostakovich. Karen Rostron, who played in both concerts, was first violinist on the dynamic Ravel piece. Rostron has worked with modern dance companies and a ragtime orchestra and appeared on the Late Show with David Letterman. She says she also “once worked with a Dutch composer and visual artist on a piece for strings and chess piano: a chessboard on which each square was a note!”

First violinist for the surging, dramatic Shostakovich piece, Heesun Shin, is a Chancellor’s Fellow who says, “My top two composers are Bach and Beethoven, but I love most classical composers so much that I couldn’t pick a third.” Violist William Hakim, who is also a member of the award-winning String Orchestra of New York City, teaches both viola and violin at Seton Hall University. Cellist Marta Bedkowska studied at Italian conservatories before joining the D.M.A. program in music; she has performed at Milan’s La Scala Opera House, and continues to perform internationally.

Both concerts affirmed the international reputation of the D.M.A. program, which in these concerts alone featured musicians from Bosnia, Korea, Ukraine, Japan, Belarus, and Poland, as well as the United States.

—Kris DiLorenzo

Recalling the Great Days of the Grand Concourse at the Gotham Center

To mark the centennial of the Grand Concourse, the Gotham Center sponsored an illustrated presentation by Constance Rosenblum of her book Boulevard of Dreams: Heady Times, Heartbreak, and Hope along the Grand Concourse in the Bronx (New York University Press, 2009) on October 6 in Elebash Recital Hall.

Rosenblum, who has edited both the City and Arts and Leisure sections of The New York Times, currently writes the Habitats column in the paper’s Sunday Real Estate section. Her book captures the history of the four-mile Grand Boulevard and Concourse, as it was originally known, through life stories and historical vignettes. Designed to rival one of the most elegant streets in the world, Paris’s Champs Elysées, the Concourse, as Rosenblum sees it, was a “boulevard of dreams” for a mostly Jewish immigrant population striving to become part of the American mainstream. Plagued by urban blight during the 1960s and 1970s, it is currently experiencing renewal.

The program’s capacity audience was given a virtual tour of the majestic street, touching on its beginnings as a dream of the visionary engineer Louis Risse; its construction and development between 1902 and 1909; its spacious Art Deco apartment houses such as the Theodore Roosevelt, the Park Plaza, the Ginsbern, and the Fish building; Joyce Kilmer Park and the Lorelei fountain; the old Yankee stadium; the opulent Loew’s Paradise movie theatre with its starry ceiling; the grand Concourse Plaza Hotel; and the Andrew Freedman Home, which provided comfortable living for the impoverished rich in their old age.

The Gotham Center sponsors a number of events throughout the year that focus on local history. Resources available on its Web site include a timeline of the city’s history, information about preserved historical houses, and links to the city’s historical archives. The Center also hosts a digital forum where New Yorkers may record their memories of particular neighborhoods.

—Kris DiLorenzo
Capstone Volume of Ralph Bunche Institute’s UN Intellectual History Published This Fall

“When we started this in 1999, people thought I was totally mad,” said Thomas Weiss, Presidential Professor of Political Science and Director of the Ralph Bunche Institute. He was speaking of the decade-long United Nations Intellectual History Project (UNIHP), housed at the Ralph Bunche Institute.

The occasion was the launch of the project’s capstone volume, UN Ideas That Changed the World (Indiana University Press, 2009), at the UN Trusteeship Council Chamber on September 14. The book, which Weiss coauthored with UNIHP co-directors Sir Richard Jolly and Dr. Louis Emmerij, identifies nine critical areas in which the UN led the way in shaping world opinion and national policies, debunking the notion of the UN as an ineffective, rigid bureaucracy without a spark of creativity.

Although innovative thinking at the UN has been critical to good leadership and shaping global discourse, there had been no comprehensive attempt to compile the intellectual history of the world organization’s contributions to setting past, present, and future agendas for economic and social development—until the UN Intellectual History Project. The UNIHP sought to evaluate the UN at a pivotal moment in its history, assessing its successes and shortcomings.

Since the signing of the UN Charter in 1945, the UN has had a profound effect on policies at all levels even beyond its original 51, now 192, member states, not only helping to keep the peace but also shaping ongoing conversations about pressing global issues. While it would seem critical to preserve, document, and disseminate those ideas, it may come as a surprise to know that the UN’s archives and its institutional memory are at best spotty. The organization’s member states do not set aside sufficient funding for the purpose of archiving their work—an expensive undertaking—and those researchers who manage to obtain access find the papers from past secretaries-general, but scant records of other UN initiatives and policies.

Since 1999, Weiss and his collaborators have published seventeen volumes on the UN, each focused on well-defined economic or social areas of UN activity or on key ideas and norms linked to international peace and security. Several have been honored with Choice Outstanding Academic Book awards, and one was among the highly recommended University Press Books Selected for Public and Secondary School Libraries by two divisions of the American Library Association, the Public Library Association (PLA) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). A CD-ROM was also produced, in 2007, with the complete transcripts of seventy-nine in-depth interviews with persons who have made major contributions to UN thinking and action.

In 2009–10, the project is intensifying the active dissemination of its findings, and especially pertinent are lessons for strengthening the UN to better respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century. These crucial lessons are emphasized in UN Ideas That Changed the World, which documents UN leadership in gender and women’s rights, national and regional development policies, international economic relations, development ideologies, social development, sustainability, peace and human security, and human development.

It was particularly fitting that the launch of the book was held in the UN Trusteeship Council Chamber, for it was where Ralph Bunche began his UN career as the first head of this principal organ. In the opening address, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted that “UN summits and conferences have helped turn ideas into policy, and have mobilized country-by-country action.” Later that week another launch was held in Washington, DC, hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the UN Foundation, and the following week in Oslo and Stockholm.

In the coming months, the authors will be meeting with officials from governmental and non-governmental organizations and with academics throughout the world, including the United Kingdom, India, Chile, Germany, Switzerland, Thailand, and Egypt. The aim is not only to promote this final volume but also to stimulate interest in the other, more specialized volumes in the series.

The UNIHP will close in June 2010, and it is unclear whether or not another organization will take up the mantle. With the successful conclusion of an eleven-year effort fast approaching, Weiss notes, with some satisfaction, “One of our objectives was to demonstrate that it could be done, and to push the UN and governments to take seriously the legacy of the past as we move toward the future.”

There is evidence that the UNIHP’s efforts have had an effect: the International Labor Organization, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNDP have all commissioned histories to fill historical gaps. Certain governments, notably those of the UK and Norway, have been paying particular attention to archiving the papers of their own nationals who have worked with international organizations. Within the UN itself, there is now an association of UN archivists who are publicizing the dismaying state of archives.

Whatever the future, the work of Weiss and his colleagues has provided the largest contribution to date and has helped ground the UN’s efforts through a solid accounting of the past.

The UNIHP is supported by eight government grants and five private foundations, including the Carnegie, Rockefeller, MacArthur, and Ford foundations.

—KC Trommer

Bruce Saylor (Prof., Queens, Music) was the recipient of an ASCAP/LUIS award from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, which recognizes composers for their original musical works in the classical field and their recent performances. Saylor has been honored with this award annually since the early 1970s. In December Saylor will travel to Tbilisi, Georgia, to hear several performances of the theatre piece “Falling Bodies,” based on an imagined conversation between Galileo and Primo Levi, for which Saylor composed the score. The piece was workshopped at an Appalachian Summer Festival in Boone, NC, and has been presented in Miami, New York, and Capri, Italy, in an Italian translation.

Susan L. Woodward (Prof., GC, Political Science), a scholar and political adviser on Balkan, East European, and post-Soviet affairs, was nominated by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and appointed by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to a four-year term on the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), beginning in January 2010. CEPA is responsible for supporting the work of ECOSOC concerning the promotion and development of public administration and governance among member states, in connection with the UN millennium development goals.

Steven M. Cahn (Prof., GC, Philosophy, Urban Education) was honored with the publication of A Teacher’s Life: Essays for Steven M. Cahn (Lexington Press, 2009), a collection of thirteen essays by his colleagues and former students, presented on the occasion of his twenty-fifth year as professor of philosophy at CUNY. GC alumni Robert B. Talisse (Philosophy, 2001), associate professor of philosophy at Vanderbilt University, and Maureen Eckert (Philosophy, 2004), assistant professor of philosophy at University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, served as co-editors. The chapters focus on topics that have been central to Cahn’s philosophical work, such as the teaching of philosophy, the responsibilities of philosophy professors, the nature of happiness, and the concept of the “good life.”

Pam Sheingorn (Prof. Emerita, GC, Theatre) was honored on October 30 at a Princeton University symposium, Liminal Spaces: A Symposium in Honor of Pamela Sheingorn. The event featured the interdisciplinary, theoretically engaged scholarship that has been a hallmark of her work. The papers highlighted works that explore the spaces “in between,” that is, between text, image, reader, and viewer; performance and spectator; and medieval and modern theatre. Organized by Elina Gertsman and Jill Stevenson, the event was hosted by the Index of Christian Art and was made possible by the generosity of the ICA and CUNY.

Herman Berliner (Alumnus, Economics, 1970), Lawrence Herbert Distinguished Professor of Economics, provost, and senior vice president for academic affairs at Hofstra University, was honored in October 2008 by the renaming of the university’s Chemistry and Physics Building to Herman A. Berliner Hall. Funds for the hall were donated by Hofstra alumnus and trustee Alan J. Bernon to acknowledge the Hofstra provost’s positive influence on his business career.

Marnia Lazreg (Prof., Hunter, Sociology), author of Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women (2009) and Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad (2008), both with Princeton University Press, delivered a keynote address on “Sciences Sociales et Géopolitique” at a May 2009 symposium in Oran, Algeria, organized by Direction Générale de la Recherche Scientifique et du Développement Technologique.

J. Patrice McSherry (Alumna, Political Science, 1994), associate professor of political science at Long Island University and Brooklyn College and an expert on violence and repression in Latin America, received the 2009 Distinguished Alumni Award from the GC’s Ph.D. Program in Political Science in May. At the ceremony, she delivered the lecture “Counterterror Wars and Human Rights: From Operation Condor to the Present.” A Fulbright scholar in Argentina in 1992, she is the author of Incomplete Transition: Military Power and Democracy in Argentina (1997) and Predatory States: Operation Condor and Cover Wars in Latin America (2005; Spanish trans., 2009) and has been interviewed by numerous media outlets, including The New York Times, Newsweek, Jornal do Brasil, and Televisión Cataluña.

Suzanne M. Clerkin (Alumna, Psychology/Neuropsychology, 2009) et al., “Guaraní Fingertip Potentiates the Activation of Prefrontal Cortex Evoked by Warning Signals,” was published in and highlighted on the cover of the September 2009 issue of Biological Psychiatry. Dr. Clerkin completed her work in Dr. Jeffrey Halperin’s laboratory at Queens College. The article relates to her dissertation, which examined the role played by noradrenergic receptors in the prefrontal cortex during human attentional processing. The figure shows areas in the brain that had increased blood flow when participants were alerted to the fact that a target stimulus was imminent.

Richard Porterfield (Doctoral Candidate, Music / Ph.D.) was the chief music consultant for the PBS documentary The Music Instinct: Science and Song, exploring music, evolution, and the brain, which aired in June.

Nandini Sikand (Doctoral Candidate, Anthropology) has co-directed a 27-minute documentary, Soma Girls, which examines a hostel for girls who are daughters of Calcutta sex workers. The film, which is funded in part by the NYS Council on the Arts and the Center for Asian American Media, had its world premiere on November 13 at New York’s Quad Cinema as part of the Mahindra Indo-American Arts Council Film Festival.
We of the West generally see ourselves sharing the world—but few beliefs—with a Muslim population growing at a rate that will soon make Islam the largest of the world’s religions. Moreover, we are in confrontation, in various ways and places, with significant segments of this population. To help us better understand what Muslims believe and how their beliefs affect the rest of the world, Folio turned to Chase F. Robinson, provost and senior vice president of the Graduate Center and distinguished professor of history.

Considered the leading expert of his generation on early Islamic history, Dr. Robinson is a graduate of Brown University and earned his Ph.D. at Harvard University. From 1993 to 2008, he taught at Oxford University, where he was professor of Islamic history and a fellow of Wolfson College. Among the administrative posts he held at Oxford was chairman of the Faculty of Oriental Studies.
**What is most important for Americans to understand about Islam?**

When people speak of Islam they usually mean either the beliefs that Muslims hold—in other words, the *religion* of Islam—or the civilization that Muslims built. In the latter sense, Islam corresponds to the now-obsolete term Christendom. But what do we mean by religion?

The answer is not so obvious. The sense in which the term religion is commonly used today originated during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In this period, religion came to be conceptualized in Europe as a sphere of human activity that was separate from other human activities, such as political and economic life. It was, moreover, thought to be a distinct historical force responsible for specific events and developments. Of course religious beliefs and practices had long been the topic of discussion and polemic, but now religious belief and action ceased to be regarded as unquestioned aspects of public life. This development resembled, and was closely related to, the formation of modern nation-states that were, to various degrees, secular. In the industrializing West, religious beliefs and practices that had been part of the social fabric, integral aspects of society and the community, were stripped away, reified and privatized, becoming personal concerns existing outside the political realm and public life.

One result of religion’s privatization in the West is our view of Islam. Simply put, European civilization is commonly held to descend from Greece and is said to be animated by secular and progressive rationality, while Islam is held to descend from the desert or the Orient, and consequently perceived to be obstructed by a tradition-bound, regressive religiosity; we embrace the modern and the secular, while they resist it.

**How does knowing this help us to understand Islam?**

It helps in several ways. One is by understanding that simply holding beliefs—a kind of minimalist, Protestant definition of religion—hardly does justice to what anthropologists readily understand to be far more complex social phenomena. As Clifford Geertz put it, there is a world of difference between “being held by religious convictions and holding them.” If there is a global and historical norm, it is “being held” by beliefs in public rather than “holding” them in private. Europeans and North Americans chose to modernize, in part, by privatizing religion and secularizing their polities. We have presumed that this is the normative path to modernity. But, we should not be surprised when non-Europeans choose paths to modernity that differ from ours by preserving religion in the public sphere.

Laying bare our own cultural biases, we gain a clear focus. One can reasonably argue, for example, that what is commonly called Hinduism derives from a distinctly colonialist perception of discrete ideas and practices that were reified in an all-encompassing term reflecting a colonial presumption of religion. No such radical criticism can be made for our view of Islam, which emerged as a discernible body of thought, belief, and social action in the seventh century. Still, one can reasonably speak, not of a single and unitary Islam, but a multiplicity of overlapping, but distinctive traditions. To venture a linguistic metaphor: there is a large and complex *language* of Islam—a shared language of beliefs, ideals, and rituals—but these manifest themselves so distinctively that they constitute separate religious *dialects*. This is hardly surprising, since Muslims, numbering now as many as 1.5 billion, can be found the world over, often practicing their religion in highly adaptable forms, rarely guided by institutions that determine or demand exclusive forms of orthodoxy.

**What is the most common misunderstanding about Islam?**

Because of the Arabian origins of Islam and the political salience of Arabs and Iranians, Islam is often seen as an Arab or Iranian religion; the fact is that, although the majority populations in the Middle East are Muslim, a minority of the world’s Muslims live in the Middle East. Given the enormous diversity of belief and action, it makes little sense to speak of the “Islamic world,” the “Islamic street,” or “Islamic development.”

The historian and Orientalist Bernard Lewis is one of the many who conflate Islam and the Middle East. Lewis also has contributed to a more substantial misunderstanding of Islam in his book *What Went Wrong: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity*, which puts forth views of civilization, modernization, and secularization based on the flawed assumption that religion has some kind of objective reality and is given to directing the course of civilizations.

**Here again, you’re saying the real obstacle to our “understanding” Islam is not our perception of that religion but our perception of religion itself. Is this then the reason we so often come up with the wrong answers about Islam? Is it because we’re asking the wrong questions?**

Exactly. Rather than conceptualize religion as some kind of transcendent object that manifests itself in history, it is far more useful to understand it as a discursive, wide-ranging body of thought about belief and practice that are imagined, constructed, and contested by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. What needs to be emphasized is
that religions, precisely because of their discursive nature, can no more be said to break or collide with modernity than they can be said to accelerate or promote it. Jesus can be described as a feminist or an anti-feminist, as a socialist or a revolutionary; so, too, can Muhammad. Depending on perspective and history, Christianity can be said to have promoted or restrained scientific thinking; so, too, can Islam. And that’s because both traditions have proven to be as adaptable as history has required.

Islam, as Christianity or any other complex of ideas and practices that we choose to call religion, does not function as an independent causative agent. The fact that Islam, in many of its current Middle Eastern forms, prescribes and legitimizes authoritarianism and legalism is not due to some essentially reactionary or tradition-bound feature of the religion. It is explained instead by a political culture shaped by a history, whose most distinctive features have been indigenous imperialism and western colonialism.

*How has Islam, which seems so demanding a faith, become, after Mormonism, the world’s fastest-growing religion?*

It’s a mistake to think that Islam is a missionizing or proselytizing faith, as Christianity typically has been and Rabbinic Judaism has not. Nor is it true that Islam has been spread by the sword—that is, that conquest has involved forced conversion. This belief endures, however, and one frequently reads in books and articles today that the Islamic conquest—heroically halted by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in 732—is now, after thirteen centuries, entering another phase. There persists a metaphor of conquest—with the implication of forced conversion—that casts the more than eleven million Muslims in Europe as a beachhead for Islam and serves the polemical purpose of framing Muslims as outsiders and enemies.

The spread of Islam now taking place has nothing to do with conquest or militarism: it occurs for many different reasons, depending on where one looks, and this has been true throughout history. For example, Islam spread along routes frequented and settled by Muslim merchants in the Indian Ocean and China Sea, which may explain why the country with the world’s largest Muslim population is Indonesia, where Muslim traders were active as early as we can track such things.

*But the spread of Islam, the civilization, from Arabia across the Eastern Mediterranean and Fertile Crescent, was accomplished by conquest, wasn’t it?*

The Islamic imperative was expanding the political sovereignty of Islam, and various doctrines of jihad have served to legitimate defensive and offensive war against non-Muslims for the purpose of establishing that sovereignty.

*Can you stay with that thought and explain just what is meant by “the doctrines of jihad”?*

If Americans tend to know one word of Arabic, that word is jihad; if they know a second, it’s usually jihadist, which they take to mean a religious fundamentalist who wages indiscriminate religious war. This is a radical misreading of a term as old as Islam itself. In the Qur’an, the word “jihad” is used in a number ways, the essential sense of which is “striving” rather than warring. It is, in part, for this reason that Muslims commonly speak of the “Greater Jihad,” by which they mean a moral or ethical struggle. Throughout Islamic history, however, this usage has been accompanied by the use of jihad in the sense of holy war, where it referred to doctrines that defined and constrained both the reasons one could go to war and how that war was to be conducted. But, just as Christian doctrines that define and constrain a “just war” have failed to prevent indiscriminate killing by Christians, so too has the classical doctrine of jihad failed to prevent indiscriminate killing by Muslims.

*These “holy wars,” justified by doctrine or not, were quite successful in expanding Islamic rule, weren’t they?*

Yes, they were. Islamic history has seen two especially important phases of political expansion, both of which led to durable or permanent Islamic states, laying the groundwork for conversion and the emergence of the distinctly Islamic societies that now constitute the Middle East.

The first was in the seventh and eighth centuries, when the Byzantine and Sasanian empires were defeated by Arabian and Syrian Muslims. By the middle of the eighth century, Muslim rule extended from the Atlantic to Central Asia; within two or three centuries, majorities in some of these areas had converted to Islam, and Arabic had become the lingua franca in nearly all of them, save for Iran where Arabic never fully displaced Iranian languages. Spain is a very different case; there the Reconquista reversed both the religious and linguistic trends of the previous four hundred years.

The second phase was in the eleventh century, when Islamic rule spread into northern India and Anatolia, and from there into the Balkans. Although mass conversion did occur in Anatolia, since many of these conquests were effected by Turkish tribesmen, it was Turkish that became the language there.
Both Islam and Christianity have proven as adaptable as history has required.

So then, conquest often was accompanied by large-scale conversion?
In many cases, large-scale conversion took place because Islam was the religion of the social and political elites. Within Islamic states, conversion was advantageous since it generally offered opportunities for employment and social advancement. It is commonly thought that differential tax rates induced subject populations to convert, but such differentials were frequently more theoretical than effective. Had Islamic states imposed them universally or effectively, conversion would have been altogether faster. In some places, such as North Africa, it seems that conversion followed relatively soon after the beginning of Islamic rule. In others, however, the process has been protracted and incomplete. Egypt was conquered in the 640s, and its rulers have been Muslim ever since; although widespread conversion has occurred over time, large Christian populations remain.

What Egypt shows, as do many other provinces of what became an Islamic empire, is that while conversion does relate to conquest, it does so indirectly. Muslims typically did not insist that non-Muslims convert to Islam; in fact, in some cases they worked actively to resist the entrance of non-Muslims into the faith. Forced conversion was extraordinarily rare by Christian standards.

If the focus of Islam is political sovereignty and not religious conversion, why doesn’t Islam recognize the separation of church and state?
Since there are many views on the matter, let me rephrase the latter part of your question and explain why some Muslims insist on the inseparability of religion and state.

What has become the normative Christian position is the product of history—not just the historical context in which the early church took root, but also the early modern experience of European society. It might reasonably be suggested that separating religion and state was the long overdue lesson of the near-genocidal Wars of Religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But, when I hear it suggested, for that reason, that “Islam needs a Reformation,” I’m always tempted to ask: “And a Thirty Years War too?” during which as much as thirty percent of the population of the Holy Roman Empire perished.

“Render unto God what is God’s and unto Caesar what is Caesar’s” is a dictum that made good sense in first-century Palestine, since the province was ruled by a Roman state that demanded political loyalty. Jesus was not building a state; the apostles did not conquer Palestine. For him and for them, building a religious movement and community necessarily meant coexisting within a pre-existing state. Configurations of power and authority eventually changed. In the fourth century, the marriage of empire and religion was effected by Constantine. Although Christian emperors in the West made much of their credentials as heirs of the Holy Roman Empire, it was in the East, in Byzantium, that the tradition was strongest. In fact, religious violence became a prominent feature of late antique history, and the last great wars between the Byzantine and Sasanian empires in the early seventh century produced what historians sometimes regard as the first examples of the religiously legitimized militarism that would emerge during the eleventh century, more fully formed, as the Crusades.

This late antique world, in which commanders campaigned in the service of the Cross and emperors ruled in the name of Christ, was the larger world into which Islam was born. And since the local world where earliest Islam was preached was tribal west Arabia, where political and social differentiation was modest—since neither the Roman nor the Sasanian empires ruled the area directly—it makes perfect sense that earliest Muslims would hold that power was unitary. There was no Roman state to accommodate; instead, there was an opportunity to build a religio-political community that would give full expression to what might be called God’s providential sovereignty.

What was the role of Muhammad in this?
Most of what we know about Islam in the seventh century comes from seventh- and eighth-century sources, and there’s a great deal of debate about the extent to which the history of this period, including the role of Muhammad, has been documented accurately.

On the basis of the Qur’anic evidence—and nearly all scholars believe that the Qur’an was largely or entirely the product of the early or mid-seventh century—one can discern a distinctive prophetic model of authority. Muhammad is seen as heir to a succession of prophets, starting with Adam, through Abraham and Moses—all of whom built religio-political communities. God being merciful, He directed Muslims to establish His rule on earth in order to lead believers to salvation.

Muhammad exemplified these ideals: he attracted a community of believers, who invested him with authority in all matters of public or collective significance. Since the monotheism he preached was incompatible with the prevailing paganism of western Arabia, his community ran afoul of the pagan establishment. Through a series of small battles and skirmishes, Muhammad established a simple polity,
There are many reasons why a return to an original Islam has appeal in the postcolonial Middle East. One is the fact that the early Islamic Middle East was, by any reasonable standard, politically and culturally the superior of that peripheral edge of Eurasia that we now call western Europe. Another, which is closely related, is precisely because this era predates Western colonialism. But, a “pure” Islam, unadulterated by Western values, is in many respects an Islam—that-never-was, since Muslims were always interacting with non-Muslims.

Regardless of this fictive Islam’s appeal, the circumstances that obtained in the eighth and ninth centuries are not reproducible in the twentieth or twenty-first, and no serious Muslim thinker disagrees with that. It’s impossible to wield authority now the way the caliphs or scholars did then; the distinctly modern forces of large-scale industry and technology have transformed social systems. Transnationalism is often couched in Islamic terms, but the nation-state, with which premodern Muslims were of course entirely unfamiliar, remains today’s standard.

What you have in Iran is an example of how modernity can take shape in the Middle East: a national political order that is representative and democratic in some principles and practices—which is not to say that voting fraud does not take place—but theocratic in others. The people have a voice in determining the state, but the state is ultimately ruled by the jurist—the Supreme Leader—who claims authority through his mastery of religious knowledge. The theory of the unity of religion and politics is thereby preserved and provisionally harmonized with the requirements of modernity.

We in the West share the world with predominantly Muslim nations, and there is increasing need to accommodate growing Muslim populations in our own countries. How can we best minimize friction and maximize opportunities for accord with Muslim countries and our own Muslim communities?

We need to recognize that Islam, Christianity, and Rabbinic Judaism claim a common Biblical heritage and were also, in large measure, formed by common historical forces in the eastern Mediterranean and Fertile Crescent during late antiquity. This was a period of creative interaction and frequent conflict among Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

The subsequent spread of Muslim rule not only defined what was Islam, as a civilization, it was also decisive in forming Europe, the realm of Christendom, which, like the Islamic Middle East, is a geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious complex that took shape through mutual conflict and definition. So many signal moments of European history—the Battle of Tours in 732, the sack of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099, the fall of Constantinople to Muslims in 1453, the fall of Granada to Christians in 1492, and the siege of Vienna in 1683—mark turning points in the West’s ongoing conflict with Islam.

What makes this history important to us today is recognizing how conflict with Islam shaped not only Europe but European identity—how we in the West have chosen to define ourselves as being different from Muslims. In the process, we have created in Islam a kind of stereotypical “other” that is Arab, that is exotic, that is militant. Religiously legitimated or inspired violence is always abhorrent, but it strikes me as incontrovertible that, with the collapse of Communism and the events of September 11 in 2001, Islam has come to occupy the same imaginary space that Communism had occupied—the “other” of so much contemporary political and cultural polemic. We stand for freedom; they stand for terror. We stand for rationalism; they stand for faith. We stand for democracy; they stand for tyranny. It’s these kinds of dichotomies, all very powerful—if, in many ways, imaginary—that makes Islam so conveniently fear-inducing.

The Graduate Center’s Great Issues Forum will feature two special programs on Islam this spring, moderated by Dr. Robinson and by Distinguished Professor of Anthropology Talal Asad. For details see www.gc.cuny.edu after the New Year.
IT WAS DYLAN the eloquent and accessible who—literally and figuratively—loomed over the stage of the Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall on September 27 for “Bob Dylan: American Poet: The Musical Settings Inspired by Dylan’s Lyrics.” This was the first in a new Graduate Center series, Concerts & Conversations, bringing musicians together with composers, critics, and scholars for programs of discussion and performance.

There to discuss Dylan’s words and the music these words inspired were Pulitzer Prize-winning composer and Graduate Center distinguished professor John Corigliano, along with musician and composer Howard Fishman, and the evening’s moderator, music critic and cultural historian Greil Marcus. Together they formed a trio tailor-made for the series’ words-and-music format and a program that brought an unfamiliar focus to the work of a talent many consider the most distinctive and enduring of our time.

Corigliano is an enormously popular and prolific contemporary composer, whose works include an Oscar-winning score for The Red Violin and the Metropolitan-commissioned opera The Ghosts of Versailles. His song cycle Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan uses Dylan’s words but none of Dylan’s music. Fishman, whose own music draws on everything from jazz and pop to blues and gospel, has boldly—some would say radically—reinterpreted the settings of songs from Dylan’s legendary “Basement Tapes.” These were works privately recorded by Dylan and the Band in the summer of 1967 and never intended for release. Although a selection of these songs subsequently was released, much of the Basement Tape music has been heard only on unauthorized “bootleg” recordings. Moderator Greil Marcus, whose scholarly criticism covers vast stretches of pop culture, is the author of Old Weird America: The World of Bob Dylan’s Basement Tapes.

Corigliano was seeking works by “a great American poet, who speaks to everyone,” for a song cycle commissioned by Carnegie Hall. He had not, at that time, heard the songs of Bob Dylan, but a friend suggested he consider Dylan’s lyrics. “I sent away for a book of his lyrics,” the composer explained, “and I loved them.”
Marcus wanted to know how Corigliano had avoided hearing any Dylan songs over the past forty years, and Corigliano allowed that, “I’m sure I did hear Bob Dylan while I was in a coffee shop having a cappuccino and talking to someone, but my ear didn’t go to it. So, I didn’t hear it, and it’s a good thing I didn’t,” for then, he said, “I could never have written the cycle.”

Making clear that he was not taking Dylan’s music, Corigliano told Dylan’s manager, “I’m going to take the words and treat them as poetry, and set them as a composer sets poetry.” He would be treating Dylan’s work, he has explained, as though it were a poem by Goethe, one that Brahms would set, Schumann would set, and Wolf would set, each in his own musical style.

Fishman introduced his “Basement Tapes Project” over three consecutive evenings at Joe’s Pub at the Public Theater in May 2006. “I’ve always loved the unreleased Basement Tapes stuff,” he says, “and my idea was to expose more people to it.” The challenge, he realized, was doing Dylan’s songs without doing Dylan. He had to find a way to personalize the music, he says, “while still holding true to the spirit of the originals.” Events dictated certain abrupt departures from the 1967 versions. In the wake of Katrina, for example, Fishman’s haunting setting for “Crash on the Levee” seems far more appropriate than the original light-hearted air.

Marcus focused discussion on what may be the most gripping and elusive song on the Basement Tapes—“I’m Not There,” which, he explains, “is barely a song at all. There are fragments. There are phrases. There are lines you think you know what they are, and the next time you hear them you have no idea. Yet, the entire performance is invested with an emotional commitment, with a sense of high stakes.” All of this made what Fishman accomplished remarkable, in Marcus’s eyes. “He performed and recorded a complete version of the song. The whole thing is there. What I want to know,” he asked Fishman, “is where you get the nerve to do that, and how did you do it?”

Of the words he used, Fishman admits, “I’m not sure all of them were sung by Bob Dylan. Some of them were.” As for the others, “I just went for what it seems he was going for.” And Fishman kept going back to the original. “I listened to it again and again and then cobbled together lyrics that seemed to make sense.”

Singing his Dylan cycle requires the technique of an opera singer, says Corigliano, “but you cannot sound like an opera singer.” Bringing both skill and passion to this task, Amy Burton performed four of the cycle’s seven songs, from the upbeat “Mr. Tambourine Man” to the stentent “Chimes of Freedom.” A leading soprano of the New York City Opera and Metropolitan Opera, she was accompanied by pianist Stephen Gosling.
In their comfortably loose, extemporaneous style, the Fishman band performed songs from the Basement Tapes project, interspersed with readings from Marcus’s *Old Weird America*. Included in their program was “Pretty Polly,” which is not part of the Basement Tapes, although Dylan sang it, but gave the Fishman ensemble plenty of time and opportunity to cut loose and improvise. With Fishman on guitar, the band that evening included Mazz Swift on violin, Nathan Peck on bass, Michael Daves on electric guitar, and drummer Mark McLean.
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DANCING IN THE DARK

from the book by Morris Dickstein

Few scholars are as well equipped as Morris Dickstein to write a cultural history of the Great Depression. A leading critic of American culture and literature, he is a distinguished professor of English at the Graduate Center and senior fellow of its Center for the Humanities. In his popular new book, Dancing in the Dark, he captures the essence of a time when a faltering economy brought poverty, hunger, and—above all—fear into many American lives.

Against a background of want and self-doubts, the arts—all the arts—came to play new and significant roles. “Of all periods in American history,” Dickstein says, “this was the period when high and popular culture were closest to each other, and both focused on ordinary life more than at any other time. Whether dealing with showgirls or apple pickers, they emphasized community and solidarity rather than the typical American individualism.”

“Working on the book,” he explains, “I found that the things that are called escapist, such as the Busby Berkeley musicals, are full of references to the Depression. And the things that are considered definitely not escapist, like The Grapes of Wrath, are very melodramatic and entertaining. So, it seemed to me that the line between social consciousness and escape was not only completely blurred, it was virtually nonexistent.”

What made the arts and entertainment so influential in the Thirties was the creation, during those years, of a vast strand of thirties culture: Transportation (to get the country moving again), Food (in a world where many were still poor and hungry), the programs of the New Deal. This was the period when high and popular culture were closest to each other, and both focused on ordinary life more than at any other time. Whether dealing with showgirls or apple pickers, they emphasized community and solidarity rather than the typical American individualism.”

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What made the arts and entertainment so influential in the Thirties was the creation, during those years, of a vast national audience. “Because of radio, because of talking pictures, because of newsreels in the theatres, because of the recording industry,” says Dickstein, “there was for the first time, a truly national popular culture.”

In this book I’ve tried to show how the expressive culture of the thirties—the books, films, murals, photographs, reportage, radio programs, dance, and music—besides telling us much about the inner life of the Depression years, played a role parallel to the leadership of FDR and the programs of the New Deal. This went well beyond the new government sponsorship of the arts: the arts bound people together in a collaborative effort to interpret and alleviate their plight. These works could traffic in harsh exposure, warm empathy, fizzy distraction, or energetic uplift. They could resonate with the moods of the Depression by portraying dismal failure, as in Tender Is the Night, Studs Lonigan, or Miss Lonelyhearts, or they could feed the nation’s hopes and dreams with a shot of adrenaline, as in screwball comedy or swing music, creating a remarkably buoyant, graceful, even giddy culture against a bleak background. They offered a stimulus of optimism and energy. They could appeal to the masses, paradoxically, by tuning in to the lives of exceptional people, such as the warring couples in romantic comedy, and by resolving scenes of conflict into moments of concord. At the other end of the spectrum, the folkways of ordinary people brought out the best in Woody Guthrie and John Steinbeck, Walker Evans and Frank Capra, Aaron Copland and George Gershwin, James Agee and John Ford. But such populist sentiments fueled the corrosive skepticism of naysayers like Nathanael West, who worried about the latent savagery of the common man, a foreboding borne out by the terrific carnage of the Second World War, abetted by deadly new technology.

Brought together by the challenge of the Depression, the American people were primed for the patriotism, sacrifice, and collective effort of the war, a time of emergency when individual needs were set aside for dire national priorities. (Such an enforced unity would take a darker turn with the social conformity and political intolerance of the early cold war years.) But the symbolic end of the Depression came not with the attack on Pearl Harbor but with the New York World’s Fair of 1939–40, the last major collective event of the Depression years. First conceived as a way of stimulating business activity, it was built on the dump site that figured ominously as “the valley of ashes” in The Great Gatsby. Over two seasons, on the cusp between Depression and war, it provided 45 million visitors with an immense cabinet of wonders, pointing the way to a brighter tomorrow. It combined elements of a trade show, a county fair, an amusement park, a science fair, a design exhibition, and a concourse of nations. In separate zones around an uplifting Theme Center, symbolized by the Trylon and Perisphere, the fair brought together many strands of thirties culture: Transportation (to get the country moving again), Food (in a world where many were still poor and hungry),
According to a 1940 editorial in Architectural Record, the daydreaming of 1933 revealed a vast potential for the uses of electricity. "The president and the New Deal worked hard to combat. Instead, they encouraged a sense of common problems and common purpose. "We're going to make a country in which no one is left out," FDR once told his secretary of labor, Frances Perkins.

In their own way, the art and entertainment of the thirties had a similar impact. Radio, movies, and popular music left few people out, especially with the tremendous advances in rural electrification, one of the New Deal's most far-reaching programs. The high arts, once the preserve of the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant majority, began to embrace a crazy quilt of ethnic, religious and regional populations."

"The high arts, once the preserve of the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant majority, began to embrace a crazy quilt of ethnic, religious and regional populations."
“Silent Pictures” was this season’s opening exhibition at the Graduate Center’s James Gallery. The title comes—as does the concept for the show—from the “wordless novels” of the 1930s, hard-hitting tales, told in sequential illustrations without text. A number of these books, from the collection of comic artist Art Spiegelman, were displayed at the show, which moved well beyond these wordless novels to explore the far reaches of what might be considered “silent pictures.”

The wry humor of *Straw Dogs No 44* (left), by artist Renee French, made it a visitor favorite. This work is also sequential in its way. Covering an entire display wall of the gallery, it is made up of thirty individual abstract panels, giving the wall drawing what gallery director Linda Norden calls a “micro-into-macro” structure.

There was also humor and a dash of the erotic in the show’s program of animated films, *Comic–Film–Strip*. More challenging to viewers, however, was the progression to be found in “abstract comics.” Introducing this emerging genre were examples brought to the gallery by Norden’s co-curator Andrei Molotiu.

What “Silent Pictures” exemplifies, Norden maintains, is the mission of the gallery, “to bring contemporary art and artists into confrontation with the academic community.” A beneficial by-product of this clash of cultures is how often it can delight, as well as enlighten, both scholars and the general public.
In August and September, the Graduate Center received twenty-eight grants totaling $1,918,229. The name(s) of the principal investigator(s), awarding agency, the title of the project, and the amount of each are listed below. This information was submitted by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.


### GRANTS

**The Graduate Center** | The City University of New York

Grant Supports Urban Research Center’s Mapping of Hard-to-Count Communities for 2010 Census

The Hagedorn Foundation has provided a one-year grant of $95,600 for the CUNY Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research (CUR) to map hard-to-count communities for the 2010 U.S. Census. The project is part of a nationwide effort to increase Census participation in undercounted populations, including people of color, children, immigrants, residents of multifamily dwellings, renters, and other populations. An August 20 article in *Newsday* mentioning CUR’s work detailed the initiative.

Steven Romalewski, director of CUR’s Mapping Service, is coordinating the project. “I’m obtaining and managing databases, developing maps for print and interactive applications, and helping to design the interactive Web site.” Working with him are CUR staff members David Burgoon (application architect) and Christy Spielman (graphic designer and Geographic Information Systems consultant), Lee Hachadoorian, an Earth and Environmental Sciences doctoral student, worked on the project’s first phase.

Initially, the foundation requested a set of Long Island maps identifying specific areas at which local groups could perform outreach. The Mapping Service is now being developed into an interactive mapping Web site that will enable anyone across the country to zoom in on a neighborhood, county, city, or state to see patterns of hard-to-count Census areas.

“People can click on individual tracts to display detailed information,” explains Romalewski. “If they’re interested in a particular tract where they live or work, for example, they could obtain a full demographic profile.”

The maps also will display state and local resources: funding opportunities, Census contacts, contact information for outreach groups, and more. “The data we mapped is multifaceted,” Romalewski says. “It integrates several layers of Census data with a Google Maps base that is as easy to use as it is powerful.”

—**Kris DiLorenzo**
This list reflects titles that have been published since the previous listing in 365 Fifth (September 2009). All members of the doctoral faculty are invited to contact pubaff@gc.cuny.edu with information about their books once final proofs have been submitted. Due to space limitations, full descriptions cannot be printed here. However, a listing that includes more complete descriptions, book covers, and links for purchase, may be viewed at www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/bookshelf.htm.

TIMOTHY ALBORN (Assoc. Prof., Lehman, History), Regulated Lives: Life Insurance and British Society, 1800–1914 (University of Toronto Press, 2009). After tracing the history of British life insurance, Alcorn focuses on issues as diverse as mathematics, literature, religion, medicine, and commodification to provide a cultural context for the development of the industry and to identify it as a creator of culture, and of new ways of telling stories, counting people, and examining bodies.

LINDA MARTIN ALCOFF (Prof., Hunter, Philosophy) and Jack Caputo, eds., Saint Paul among the Philosophers (Indiana University Press, 2009). In his epistles, St. Paul expounded a philosophy that posited the universality of truth. In a scholarly dialogue that ushers in a new generation of Pauline studies, eminent New Testament scholars, historians, and philosophers debate the philosophical undert currents of Paul’s message.

GEOFFREY BATCHEN, ed. (Prof., GC, Art History), Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes’s Camera Lucida (MIT Press, 2009). In Camera Lucida Barthes revealed his understanding of photographic time and the relationship between photography and death. This anthology presents responses to the book ranging from psychoanalytical to Buddhist, and includes a history of Barthes’s writings on photography and an account of Camera Lucida and its reception.

CAROL BERKIN (Prof., Baruch, History), Civil War Wives: The Lives and Times of Angelina Grimke Weld, Varina Howells Davis, and Julia Dent Grant (Knopf, 2009). Drawing on private and public records, Berkin relates how the remarkable wives of abolitionist Theodore Weld, Confederate President Jefferson Davis, and President Ulysses S. Grant both benefited from and were limited by their marriages.

MARVIN CARLSON (Dist. Prof., GC, Comparative Literature, Theatre), Theatre Is More Beautiful than War: German Stage Directing in the Late Twentieth Century (University of Iowa Press, 2009). The most comprehensive survey available in English, this well-illustrated volume covers ten of Germany’s leading stage directors, each of whom helped shape one of the most productive and innovative theatre traditions in Europe.

NOEL CARROLL (Dist. Prof., GC, Philosophy), The Poetics, Aesthetics, and Philosophy of Narrative (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). This unique study of the philosophy of narrative in the analytic tradition examines narrative, metaphysics and epistemology, character, and emotion in various narrative art forms, including painting and comics.

RAQUEL CHANG-RODRIGUEZ, ed. (Dist. Prof., City, Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages), Discursos en Loor de la Poesía, Epístola a Belardo (PCUP, 2009). In a detailed introduction, the editor explores the impact on gender studies today of the unknown authors of these two early seventeenth-century treasures of Peruvian and Spanish lyric poetry.


GREGORY P. CHEPPLICK (Assoc. Prof., Staten Island, Biology) and Stanley H. Faeth, Ecology and Evolution of the Grass-Endophyte Symbiosis (Oxford University Press, 2009). In the first book of its kind, the authors synthesize existing studies of endophytegrass symbioses within the context of modern ecological and evolutionary concepts.

ERICA CHITO CHILDS (Assoc. Prof., Hunter, Sociology), Fade to Black and White: Interracial Images in Popular Culture (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009). Childs considers the larger context of social messages, conveyed by the media, which influence how we think about love and interracial relationships.

LYN DI IORIO (Assoc. Prof., City, English), Killing Spanish: Literary Essays on Ambivalent U.S. Latino/a Identity (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; paperback, 2009). Di Iorio suggests that the doubles, madwomen, and other raging characters populating the pages of contemporary U.S. Latino/a literature allegorize ambivalence about both present American identity and past Caribbean and Latin American origins.

DANIEL GERould (Dist. Prof., GC, Comparative Literature, Theatre), Marcy Arlin, and Gwynn MacDonald, eds., Czech Plays: Seven New Works (Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, 2009). This first English-language anthology of Czech plays written after the 1989 Velvet Revolution reveals the innovative forms and styles playwrights found to tackle the new social realities created by democracy and globalization.

DANIEL GERould, trans. (Dist. Prof., GC, Comparative Literature, Theatre), Macej Korbowa and Bellatrix, by Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz (InkerMen Press, 2009). This strange and haunting 1918 drama, bursting with violence, rage, and anguish, is a seminal work for understanding Witkiewicz, a Polish writer, artist, and philosopher.

ROMY GOLAN (Assoc. Prof., Lehman/GC, Art History), Muralnomad: The Paradox of Wall Painting, Europe 1927–1957 (Yale University Press, 2009). Golan explores monumental European murals and large mural-like works by such artists as Le Corbusier, Léger, Monet, Sironi, Pagano, and Picasso and demonstrates their integral contribution to public debate on social issues.

JANET GORNICK (Prof., GC, Political Science, Sociology) and Marcia Meyers, eds., Gender Equality: Transforming Family Divisions of Labor (Verso, 2009). Social scientists Gornick and Meyers propose a set of policies designed to foster more egalitarian family divisions of labor by strengthening men’s ties at home and women’s attachment to paid work.

DANIEL GEROULD (Daniel Rose Faculty Scholar in Political Theory, Martin E. Segal Theatre, Theatre), A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Le Corbusier, Léger, Monet, Sironi, Pagano, and Picasso and their Contribution to the Avant-Garde (Yale University Press, 2009). In this groundbreaking volume, Gerould examines the impact of the avant-garde on European art, architecture, and society.

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ANNA INDYCH-LÓPEZ (Assoc. Prof., City, Art History), *Muralism without Walls* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009). The author examines the introduction of Mexican muralists Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros to the U.S. in the 1930s, the challenges faced by the artists, and the political overtones of their work in a new society.

DAVID R. JONES (Assoc. Prof., Baruch, Political Science) and Monika L. McDermott, *Americans, Congress, and Democratic Responsiveness: Public Evaluations of Congress and Electoral Consequences* (University of Michigan Press, 2009). The authors show the ways both politicians and voters take a hand in reconfiguring the House and Senate when the majority party is unpopular, as was the case in the 2008 elections.


BARBARA G. LANE (Prof., Queens, Art History), *Hans Memling: Master Painter in Fifteenth-Century Bruges* (Harvey Miller, 2009). Ranked above Jan van Eyck by the Romantics, this Flemish painter lost his exalted reputation by the mid-twentieth century. A major 1994 exhibition finally granted him recognition. Lane contributes to his ongoing reappraisal by addressing some tantalizing problems that remain unsolved.

MARNIA LAZREG (Prof., Hunter, Sociology), *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women* (Princeton University Press, 2009). Written in epistolary form, Lazreg combines her own experiences growing up in a Muslim family with interviews and real-life accounts to examine the reasons given for veiling Muslim women and the dangers and limitations of the practice.

ANTHONY J. LEMELLE, JR. (Prof., John Jay, Criminal Justice), *Black Masculinity and Sexual Politics* (Routledge, 2009). By considering their experience as a form of sexism, Lemelle proposes that the only way to successfully accommodate African American males in the social order is to eliminate all sexism, particularly as regards the organization of families.


JONATHAN PIESLAK (Asst. Prof., City, Music), *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War* (Indiana University Press, 2009). Pieslak explores three ways in which music is used by American soldiers involved in the Iraq War: as an inspiration for combat, as a psychological tactic, and as a form of expression for the soldiers.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN (Dist. Prof., GC, Political Science, Sociology), Lorraine C. Minnite, and Margaret Groarke, *Keeping Down the Black Vote* (New Press, 2009). Over forty years after the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the effort to prevent African Americans—as well as Latinos—from voting is resurgent. The authors demonstrate that the effort to rig the system is as old as political parties themselves, and race is at the heart of the game.

TIMOTHY W. PUGH (Assoc. Prof., Queens, Anthropology) and Leslie G. Cecil, eds., *Maya Worldviews at Conquest* (University Press of Colorado, 2009). In examining Mayan culture and social life in the period before and after Spanish conquest, the book critically defines and strengthens the use of worldviews in the scholarly literature regardless of the culture studied.

ELAINE ROSEN (Assoc. Prof., Hunter, Physical Therapy), Jeffrey M. Gross, and Joseph Fetto, eds., *Musculoskeletal Examination*, 3rd. ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). Along with an easy-to-follow examination process for all the joints and spine, as well as combining biomechanics with physical examination to enhance understanding of function, the third edition includes over 850 illustrations.

HELENA ROSENBLATT, ed. (Prof., GC, French History), *The Cambridge Companion to Constant* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). Rosenblatt has collected scholarly essays on the founding father of modern liberalism and the most important liberal thinker between Montesquieu and Tocqueville. Included is the first English language translation of the seminal 1980 essay on Constant by philosopher Marcel Gaucher.

DAVID SAVRAN (Dist. Prof., GC, English, Theatre), *Highbrow / Lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class* (University of Michigan Press, 2009). Savran explores the twentieth century’s first culture war in the 1920s, arguing that the efforts to defeat the democratizing influences of jazz and to canonize playwrights like Eugene O’Neill triumphed, giving birth to American theatre as we know it today.

SYBIL A. SCHWARZENBACH (Prof., Baruch, Philosophy), *On Civic Friendship: Including Women in the State* (Columbia University Press, 2009). Through a critical examination of social and political relationships from ancient times to the present, Schwarzenbach develops a truly innovative, feminist theory of the democratic state, arguing that friendship not only is reciprocal but also necessarily seeks to establish and maintain equality.

IDA SUSSER (Prof., Hunter, Anthropology, Public Health), *AIDS, Sex, and Culture: Global Politics and Survival in Southern Africa* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). Susser draws on her own extensive ethnographic research to consider the impact of social conservatism in the U.S. on AIDS prevention programs. She reveals the experiences of women in areas ranging from KwaZulu-Natal to Namibia and Botswana.

NOSON S. YANOFSKY (Assoc. Prof., Brooklyn, Computer Science), *Quantum Computing for Computer Scientists* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). Written to be understood by all readers regardless of their mathematics or physics background, the text presents different aspects of quantum computing from a specific computer science standpoint, bringing the ideas of quantum computing alive.
Ph.D. Alumni Association Contributes to Doctoral Candidate Support

On the occasion of the first fall meeting of the Council of Executive Officers on September 30, Dr. Gertrude Schneider (History, 1973), who served as president of the Ph.D. Alumni Association for twenty-six years, presented a check from the Association in the amount of $25,000. The funds are earmarked for doctoral candidate support. President Kelly warmly accepted the check on behalf of the Graduate Center. Addressing him as “mon cher Chevalier de la Sorbonne et la belle France,” Dr. Schneider explained the origin of the funds. “Without any arm twisting, most of our members always added something extra to their dues,” she said, “so that the Association could contribute to dissertation-related expenses incurred by Level III doctoral students—in other words, this is a gift from those who have earned their doctorates to those who will still do so.” In her speech, Dr. Schneider referred to the forty-year history of the Association and past presidents Dr. Jane Fenyo (English), Dr. Louis De Acetis (Physics), Dr. Herman Berliner (Economics), Harvey Braverman (Mathematics), and Shirley Har risson (Physics), all of whom worked on a pro bono basis, as did all of the Association’s officers and board members. She then bade farewell, saying “It’s been a wonderful forty years. AVE atque vale.”

After many years of great service, the Association has chosen to dissolve. Moving into the gap are other vehicles by which alumni may engage with the school or each other: the alumni Web page (www.gc.cuny.edu/alumni/index.htm) and an online alumni directory, exclusive and free to all alumni awarded a GC doctoral or master’s degree. The GC will continue to provide the perquisites the Association awarded to its “life members.”

In the coming months, more programs will be developed for all GC alumni. There is no dues structure for the new alumni community. Alumni are encouraged to keep in touch and send their news to pubaff@gc.cuny.edu.

Alumni Notes

For a full listing of alumni notes received, see www.gc.cuny.edu/alumni/alumni_index.htm. Alumni are invited to submit news by contacting pubaff@gc.cuny.edu.

Karen Altfest (History, 1979) was named one of the “50 Most Distinguished Women in Wealth Management” by Wealth Manager magazine in April. Lewis Altfest (Business, 1978) was recently featured in the magazine Bottom Line Personal (June and August 2009) and quoted in Investment News (July 12, 2009). Amos A. Avidan (Engineering, 1980), senior vice president, Bechtel Corporation, has received one of the profession’s highest honors: election to the National Academy of Engineering. Lakshmi Bandlamudi (Psychology/Developmental, 1994) recently contracted with Anthem Press (London, New York, Delhi) to publish her dissertation, “The History of Understanding and the Understanding of History: A Dialogue with Epic Heroes and Heroines.” Thomas Diamante (Psychology/Industrial and Organizational, 1987), senior vice president at Corporate Counseling, was selected to serve on the board of directors for ENACT, Inc., a non-profit focused on social, emotional, and intellectual development of at-risk New York City schoolchildren. Jim Drylie (Criminal Justice, 2007), assistant professor of criminology and criminal justice at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, has been appointed Research Fellow of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, where he will examine public-policy initiatives in Latin America.

Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (Anthropology, 1988), professor of anthropology and director of the Institute of Social Sciences at University of Brazil, was elected Vice-President of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) during its July congress in Kunming, China. Sabra Statham (Music, 2009) was awarded a faculty fellowship by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities at the University of Virginia last summer; working with UVA scholars and Documents Compass, an NEH-supported digital development consulting group, she developed a pilot online digital archive of letters by American composer George Antheil. Mark Sacharoff (Theatre, 1967) had his adaptation of Turgenev’s The Bachelor performed in June by the Resonance Ensemble in New York.

Robert B. Talisse (Philosophy, 2001), associate professor of philosophy at Vanderbilt University, and Maureen Eckert (Philosophy, 2004), assistant professor of philosophy at University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, coedited A Teacher’s Life: Essays for Steven M. Cahn (Lexington Press, 2009), a collection of thirteen essays honoring the GC professor of philosophy, Song-Yu Yang (Biochemistry, 1984), see box p. 23.

Science and Mathematics (C‘PRISM), a recently funded NSF project. Xue-Ying He (Biochemistry, 1991), see box p. 23. Carol Siri Johnson (English, 1995), tenured associate professor at New Jersey Institute of Technology, published The Language of Work: Technical Communication at Lukens Steel, 1810 to 1925 (Baywood, 2009). Yong-Kyu Kim (Biology, 1994), assistant research professor in the Department of Genetics, University of Georgia, Athens, recently edited Handbook of Behavior Genetics (Springer, 2009).

Jessie Kindred (Psychology/Developmental, 2005) has published her dissertation as Belonging(s) at Work: Psychological Ownership at the End of the Industrial Age (VDM Verlag, 2009). Thomas A. Kubic (Criminal Justice, 2000, and Assoc. Prof., John Jay, Chemistry, Criminal Justice), a member of the doctoral faculty, was invited to speak at the Trace Evidence Symposium, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the F.B.I. His lecture dealt with murders in Rwanda during the mid-1990s.

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Reaccreditation Process Moves to the Next Stage

The reaccreditation process, vital to a university’s continued operation, happens every ten years—taking place over a three-year period—and provides an important opportunity to reflect on what an educational institution is doing well and where it can improve. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is the regional accrediting body and oversees the procedure at the Graduate Center. The process consists of a self-study and a review of the institution by a team of outside visitors chosen by MSCHE. In the first part of the process, the self-study, groups of GC faculty, students, staff, and administrators met to assess the institution using MSCHE’s fourteen standards of excellence. The standards fall into two broad categories: institutional context and educational effectiveness. The former covers everything from the appropriateness of an institution’s mission to the adequacy of its financial resources, while the latter assesses an institution’s faculty, curriculum, admissions policies, and student learning.

A Steering Committee has been overseeing the self-study and the creation of a draft self-study report. The committee is co-chaired by Louise Lennihan, associate provost and dean for the humanities and social sciences, Anne Humpherys, professor of English at Lehman College and the GC, and David Adams, director of Institutional Research and Program Evaluation.

The draft of the self-study report was presented to the GC community for public comment in early November and was made accessible on the GC’s Web page. The final version of the self-study report will be sent to the Middle States visiting team in February.

The chair of the MSCHE visiting team, Dr. Charles Caramello, a specialist in American literature and associate provost and dean of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, made a preliminary visit to the GC on November 5. The MSCHE visiting team will make its official visit to the Graduate Center between April 11 and 14, 2010. If all proceeds smoothly, MSCHE will approve reaccreditation over the summer.

Residential Facility Announced at Community Meeting

The president’s community meeting on October 5 in the Skylight Room was a lively event, as Dr. William P. Kelly presented good news and spoke about upcoming challenges.

“Until now, we had achieved or exceeded the benchmarks we set for ourselves ten years ago, with the exception of building a residential facility for students and faculty,” stated President Kelly. “However, I’m pleased to announce today that we will soon achieve that goal as well.” Despite the impact of the national economic crisis, the Graduate Center Foundation is close to raising the funds needed for construction of the facility. The residence will be part of CUNY’s East Harlem campus, where the new CUNY School of Public Health and the Hunter College School of Social Work will be housed. Located at 118th Street and Lexington Avenue, this housing unit will have eighty apartments for doctoral students and thirteen for faculty.

Alumni/Faculty Collaboration Leads to Valuable Discovery

A collaboration between members of the doctoral faculty and GC alumni has led to the analysis of a genetic mutation with a strong connection to developmental disability in humans. Manfred Philipp (Prof., Lehman, Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry), Song-Yu Yang (Biochemistry, 1984; Adj. Prof., Head, Laboratory for Medical Chemistry, NYS Institute for Basic Research, Biology), and Xue-Ying He (Biochemistry, 1991), along with collaborators from other institutions (including the College of Staten Island, CUNY), published their findings in “Mental retardation linked to mutations in the HSD17B10 gene interfering with neurosteroid and isoleucine metabolism,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS, 2009).

Their research used bioinformatics—the application of computers and databases to biological problems—in order to analyze a protein mutation that, according to Professor Philipp, “appears very rarely in human beings, but when it does it usually results in development disability.” The researchers found that mutations to gene HSD17B10, which is required for normal brain development, can slow the activity of enzyme HSD10, which processes many types of steroids and steroid modulators in the human brain. While practical applications are a long way off, the discovery may open up a new approach to the prevention and treatment of developmental disability. “If this mutation had not been discovered, we would not know how important this enzyme is in human development,” says Professor Philipp.

Executive Director of Academic Affairs Appointed

Jane Herbert has been appointed to the new position of Executive Director of Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost at the Graduate Center, effective October 13. Herbert has more than thirty years of experience in increasingly responsible administrative positions at the City University of New York, having served most recently and for more than nine years as chief of staff to the president of Brooklyn College, where she worked in close collaboration with the senior administration and directed both the Office of Communications and the Office of Government and Community Relations. Prior to Brooklyn College, she distinguished herself at the CUNY Central Office, working for the vice chancellor of Faculty and Staff Relations, and at Lehman College, as executive assistant to the provost and director of Enrollment Management.
Spring 2010 President’s Public Programs

Elebash Presents: Concerts & Conversations
“Music of the Iraq War,” on February 24, will be the first of three spring events.

Great Issues Forum
Keeping to this year’s theme of religion, the spring programs will focus on Islam.

Extraordinary Lives
Conversations between President Kelly and exceptional men and women of our time.

Watch for details about these programs after the New Year at www.gc.cuny.edu.