The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale

New Modern Middle East Studies Major

Less than one year after South Asian Studies major was added to the curriculum, Yale College faculty members voted unanimously this past February for the creation of a new, interdisciplinary Modern Middle East Studies major. Students may declare the major beginning in the 2008-09 academic year.

"The creation of the Modern Middle East Studies major really represents the culmination of effort of numerous colleagues under the leadership of Middle East Studies Chair Ellen Lust-Okar," said Henry R. Luce Director Ian Shapiro, The MacMillan Center. "We are actively searching for incremental faculty to assist in this important effort. To this end, the Department of Anthropology has appointed Assistant Professor Narges Erami, who will begin teaching in fall 09, and additional searches are underway."

The Modern Middle East Studies major, spearheaded by members of the Council on Middle East Studies at the MacMillan Center for Area and International Studies and professors in the Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations department, will largely consist of existing courses offered in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures and other departments relating to the Middle East. The 12-course major requires students to attain proficiency in one of four Middle Eastern languages – Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish.

Foundational requirements include three term courses including Modern Thought; Classical Thought; and Seminar on the Modern Middle East. Elective courses must include six further term courses on the modern Middle East that examine culture and thought, history, religion, politics and society. Courses are to be spread geographically and substantively including courses focusing on at least two different sub-regions and from two or more departments.

For details on the major, please consult the Yale College Bulletin.

Ambassador Hill Gives Walker Lecture

"...the development of China has been the story of the century so far."

Diplomacy is an art that requires patience and a long view toward progress, a top American diplomat told the audience at the MacMillan Center for the annual George Herbert Walker Jr. Lecture in International Studies on April 24.

Christopher R. Hill is Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. He’s been the chief U.S. negotiator in the six-party talks over North Korea’s nuclear weapons program that include North and South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the U.S.

Hill said progress has been slow, but achievements have been made, and he’s looking forward to the last phase, in which North Korea will declare its nuclear materials and turn them over to the international community, "and North Korea would then be de-nuclearized and would return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Verification is the key to all of this," he said. "There’s no ‘Trust me’ in the six-party process. It is all about our ability to verify commitments that people make, and we will make sure our verification regime within the six parties can deal adequately with these problems."

Rinpoche Visits Yale

Bhutanese Lama Khyentse Rinpoche, the third recognized reincarnation of the Buddhist saint, Jamyang Wangpo, makes rare appearance.

Through the efforts of Phyllis Granoff, Lex Hixon Professor of World Religions and South Asian Studies Council Chair, Yale had the rare opportunity to meet a great figure in Tibetan Buddhism, the Bhutanese Lama Khyentse Rinpoche, the third recognized reincarnation of the Buddhist saint Jamyang Wangpo. On January 25, he met a small group of faculty and students for lunch, and participated in an afternoon discussion about the study of Buddhism in Western Academia.

That evening, Rinpoche lectured to a group of 500 students, teachers, and others on "Projecting the Dharma: Film and the Transmission of Buddhism to the West."

"Buddhism is a study of life and self, and how we look at the world. Film [acts like] a utensil to that end," Recalling the shocked reaction of many Westerners when they discover he’s a filmmaker and lama, Rinpoche humorously commented "I don’t see filmmaking as sacrilegious. There are worse things I do than making films!" He compared early Buddhism’s discouragement on statues of the Buddha to modern reactions against Buddhist films. He commented that “maybe even video games can be used to bring us closer to the truth.”

"...the development of China has been the story of the century so far.

"Buddhism is a study of life and self, and how we look at the world. Film [acts like] a utensil to that end."

"I have been lucky with films," stated Rinpoche.

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Children are often referred to as the future leaders of nations and the key to economic growth and development. In order to reach their full potential, however, a growing body of research suggests that it is essential to focus on early childhood development (ECD). This also makes economic sense; there is a high return on investments in early childhood, especially in comparison to costly interventions later on. Over spring break, eight graduate students traveled with Pia Rebello Britto, Associate Research Scientist, Child Study Center at Yale, and Cheryl Doss, Director of Graduate Studies, International Relations, to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic to examine these issues in a Laotian context.

Laos is a mountainous, landlocked country in Southeast Asia. Currently ranked as a Least Developed Country (LDC), its economic and social development indicators are among the poorest in the world. The Laotian government is committed to graduating from the ranks of LDCs by 2020, and has decided to invest in ECD as one of its primary strategies for doing so. The government invited Professor Rebello Britto to conduct a four-day workshop, in conjunction with UNICEF and Plan International, for over 60 different Laotian stakeholders, including government officials, legislators, and representatives from Laotian unions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), with the goal of formulating a comprehensive national ECD policy.

Observing national policy-making up-close was a novel experience for the Yale students. Liora Danan, International Relations MA ’09, noted that, “It was really interesting to observe the process and see what worked and what did not work as well. This is really helpful for those of us who will be doing this type of work in the future.” During the course of the workshop, participants discussed various aspects of ECD policy including governance, financing, and accountability. One of the main obstacles identified for the implementation of this policy is the cultural and linguistic diversity of Laos. The Deputy Director of the Department of Statistics noted that there are 49 different ethnic groups in Laos, with at least as many spoken dialects. There are also wide regional variations, particularly between rural and urban areas, which compound the problems of predominantly rural ethnic minorities. The Deputy Director of Statistics stated that the literacy rate for one ethnic minority, the Akha, is only 1 percent.

The workshop illustrated the challenges of designing and implementing national ECD policy in a developing country. It also emphasized the benefits of a partnership between national governments and international experts. Pauline Hilmy, International Relations MA ’08, observed that, “The international consultant team brought a lot of expertise about early childhood development to this process. There was also much to be gained from their experience with ECD policy development in other countries.” While Laos has a long way to go in order to leave the ranks of LDCs, investing in ECD is a promising pathway toward this goal.

Outside of the workshop, the Yale students visited several kindergartens in the capital city Vientiane. Jael Humphrey-Skomer, a joint International Relations and Law student ’08, spoke to the preschoolers about the importance of their education, urging them to study hard. She pointed out that, “We are students, just like you. We first went to kindergarten, then primary school, then secondary school, and finally university.” The kindergarten visits highlighted the regional differences in Laos. The kindergartens in Vientiane had brightly decorated classrooms, playgrounds, and average student-teacher ratios of 20 to 1. However, high quality preschools are not the norm in Laos, where many children lack access to basic primary education and health care.
Panel Held on Tibetan Demonstrations

On April 17, The Yale Globalist, with support from the MacMillan Center, hosted a panel discussion on the demonstrations that have besieged Tibet and China’s reaction to them.

The panel featured Jake Dalton, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies; Peter Perdue, Professor of History; Pierre Landry, Associate Professor of Political Science; and Bruce Blair, Yale’s Buddhist chaplain. Charles Hill, Lecturer in International Studies, moderated.

The panelists explored the issue from the perspective of their specialization, thus offering a variety of views on the situation. Dalton, a specialist on pre-modern Tibetan Buddhism who has traveled widely in Tibet, lamented that rioting has disrupted on-the-ground programs that were making progress developing the local economy, which he believes are essential to improve the Tibetan situation. He emphasized what he called “the lost middle,” that is, Tibetans living in Tibet, as opposed to the polarized Chinese on one side and exiled Tibetans on the other.

Perdue and Landry, specialists in East Asian history and Chinese politics respectively, were more focused on China. Perdue focused on Chinese nationalist rhetoric that “dismisses moderate voices” and “invokes violence irresponsibly,” citing incidents at Duke and MIT where moderate Chinese were harassed.

Landry urged listeners to look beyond Tibet, saying, “If we care about the well-being of Tibetans, it is best not to engage China on the issue of Tibet but instead ask: ‘How are ethnic minorities treated?’” He added that Tibetan demonstrations might be the first indications of wider discontent throughout China’s poorer regions.

Blair, who has studied with the Dalai Lama’s spiritual teacher, steered the conversation away from academia and shared a spiritual perspective that looked to Tibet for the “Dalai Lama’s call for nonviolence” and applied that to Yale life.

Elaine Sullivan, PC’10, found Blair the most interesting panelist for his remarks on spirituality. “He made it so global,” she explained.

The panel provided a refreshing conversation on Tibet that moved beyond media coverage, as well as an opportunity for Yale scholars and spiritual leaders to illuminate those real issues. As Dalton concluded, “Tibet has a history of being romanticized. There is a fascination in the West that dehumanizes Tibetans themselves. It brings a lot of attention to Tibet but obscures real issues.”
How do we maintain national security while also protecting individual civil liberties? On March 25, the Council on Middle East hosted a panel and community discussion around this quandary through presentations by scholars, legal experts, and other professionals in conversation with Yale and New Haven community members. Surveying topics from FBI surveillance tactics to the experience of Muslim communities to a history of terrorist tactics, the discussion investigated legal, social, and political implications for the post-9/11 experience.

General Counsel of the FBI, Valerie Caproni, in an effort to improve transparency, emphasized the legal significance of FISA (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) to regulating FBI investigations. She noted the importance of ensuring that information collected is relevant to an investigation and warned against broad-based surveillance tactics. However, Caproni acknowledged that innocent people do sometimes get caught up in the mix: “Do we investigate innocent people? Absolutely. That’s the cost of doing business. Sometimes we’re wrong. If we set the bar so that we never miss a bad guy, it means we’re occasionally going to investigate some people that are not terrorists or criminals.”

Loury M. Safi of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) discussed the experience of many American Muslims who have been branded as “terrorists” in the public eye and who have experienced intrusive surveillance measures. He noted that the careless overuse of terminology such as Islamofascism or Islamic fundamentalism greatly alienates American Muslims. He also pointed out that terrorism is not an identity that could be ascribed to one particular biology or group, but rather a tactic that many actors have used for various reasons throughout history.

“If terrorism is a tactic, then it has been used by a variety of groups for a variety of reasons, in a variety of contexts.”

Professor Reva Siegel of the Yale Law School addressed the elusive issue of racial profiling in surveillance tactics. She criticized the courts for reaching out any possible acknowledgment of racial bias, unconscious or intentional, in investigations, citing too narrow a definition of “what counts” as race-based profiling, a tendency to rule acknowledgement of race as description rather than profiling, and a lack of judicial oversight.

“Will we be information gluttons or information gourmets?” Professor Jack Balkin of the Yale Law School suggested that we have a choice of becoming one of two models of an information state: authoritarian or democratic. The former is a mixer, seeking and hiding information it gathers with no clear purpose. The latter is a philospher, gathering only what it needs, freely giving information about its operations, thus allowing us to “watch the watchers.”

Finally, Professor Beverly Gage, a Yale historian, contextualized post-9/11 realities within the longer history of terrorism in the United States. Tracing its origins to the late 19th century, she underscored the point that “terrorism is a tactic, then it has been used by a variety of groups for a variety of reasons, in a variety of contexts,” Gage described terrorist acts that occurred between 1870-1930 associated with anarchist groups and labor movements. These acts met with reactions that bear striking resemblance to what we see today — restrictions on violence-inspiring speech and a chilling distrust of foreigners.

A community discussion following the panel echoed many of these themes, dominated by a clear sense of discontent and frustration with the legal frameworks for challenging current surveillance practices, particularly those applied to Muslims.
Ramírez Talks Latin American Politics

The Nicaraguan writer and former Vice President Sergio Ramírez challenged the view of the left in Latin America as a consistent phenomenon and explained how the differences among the countries can be extreme.

“I would rather talk about literature,” began Ramírez, drawing a chuckle from the audience. On March 27, Ramírez—who was a writer before he served as Sandinista Vice President of Nicaragua from 1984 to 2000, and who is now a prolific award-winning fiction and nonfiction writer, professor, and columnist for several international media—gave the lecture “New Winds or Old Storms: Contemporary Political Changes in Latin America,” hosted by the Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies at Yale, as part of its Spring 2008 Lecture Series, and with the support of the Poynter Fellowship at Yale.

Ramírez talked about the social, economic, and political contexts in the different countries of Latin America that have led the people of most of these countries to elect leftist governments in the last decade, and the possible impacts of this trend on the future of the region. He said that in the middle of the last century, “the voters, armed with hope and passion, began to see that the promises of a market economy were nothing. Everything was privatized, and Latin American economies were put in a straitjacket.” He said spending in the public sector dropped, and eventually ushered in the period that followed—the age of dictatorships. He ticked off all the countries on the continent that had suffered under dictatorships—Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Colombia, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Chile, Guatemala—generally supported by successive administrations of the United States.

He measured the change over the last half century by pointing out that only four countries are currently ruled by right-wing governments: Mexico, Colombia, Paraguay and El Salvador. He added that the latter two are likely to produce leftist governments this year, including one led by the FMLN—the guerrilla movement transformed into a political party—in El Salvador.

Ramírez said Cuba is unique, with a traditional Leninist regime, “the only country with a state economy and one-party system on the continent.”

He said populist governments “with anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist speech” intend to replace the traditional political structures in Venezuela, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Bolivia, and that social democrats rule in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, while governments ranging from center left to left rule in the Dominican Republic, Peru, Argentina, Panama, Honduras and Guatemala.

He contrasted the leadership of Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez with Brazil’s Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, preferring what he called Lula’s “pragmatism” over Chavez’s “radical authoritarianism.” Ramírez said the generous loans, the creation of the Banco del Sur and other initiatives of Chavez are “instruments destined to consolidate his political leadership.” On the other hand, he said others identify with what he called “the responsible socialism of President Lula, which gives him a kind of continental leadership.” He said the cheap oil Chavez provides to other countries, such as Nicaragua, is like “poison candy” because it causes inflation in those very poor countries.

Among the left governments in the region, he said economic interests, border interests, who extends help and who receives it, are all important factors in determining relations among the countries.

Ramírez said the most important difference among left-wing governments in Latin America is “democratic will. It’s that simple—whether left-wing leaders, once reaching the presidency, pretend to stay or accept alternation in power.” It marks the difference between democratic will and authoritarian will. He said as of now, Lula is saying he will not run for a third term. He contrasted that with Chavez’s failed attempt to change the Venezuelan constitution to allow him to run indefinitely. When Lula was asked about that attempt, Ramírez said he responded, “I can only speak for Brazil, and I think Chavez has a kind of dictatorship, he said others identify with what he called “the responsible socialism of President Lula, which gives him a kind of continental leadership.” He said the cheap oil Chavez provides to other countries, such as Nicaragua, is like “poison candy” because it causes inflation in those very poor countries.

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There will continue to be left-wing governments in Latin America, elected by their citizens, he said. “My aspiration is that when voters are deceived by them, they remove them with their vote, as they removed the right-wing governments that failed. But I wish even more that left-wing governments succeed, in favoring the people. The voices of the citizens must be heard.”

Education in New Cairo

This April, eight high school students from the Center for Global Studies (CGS) in New Cairo, Egypt, went on a pioneering two-week study tour. Led by their teacher, Emad El-Digwy, and Greta Schamburer, the MacMillan Center’s PIER Director for Middle East Studies, the students were hosted by the Modern Education School (MES) in New Cairo, a sprawling suburb of the largest city in the Arab World. Housed in the homes of MES students, the CGS group spent many of their days attending school and learning about the Egyptian education system as well as Egyptian culture through firsthand experience. In addition to attending school with Egyptian peers, the students visited important cultural sites with their MES hosts, such as the pyramids, the historical Khan Al-Khalili bazaar, the Egyptian Museum, Coptic and Islamic Cairo, and the new Al-Azhar Park. The group also went on an excursion to Upper Egypt, where they visited the Aswan Dam, the Karnak and Philae Temples and the Valley of the Kings. Individual outings in Cairo with their homestay families provided a range of social and cultural activities for the students.

Community service activities also formed an important part of the program. CGS students visited the St. Andrews Refugee Ministry, where they tutored refugee children in their English lessons and learned about the issues that refugee populations face in Cairo. A site visit to the Fatma Annan public school provided an important contrast to their private school MES hosts.

The study tour marks the culmination of a two-year effort in Middle East Studies on behalf of CGS, a global studies magnet affiliated with Brien McMahon High School. In consultation with PIER-Middle East Studies, CGS has rolled out a full-time Middle East Studies track that trains students in two levels of Arabic (with Arabic III to start in Fall 2008). It also offers a Middle East history course and a Persian language course. CGS plans to offer a two-week study tour for its Arabic students every spring, mirroring their successful East Asian programs in Chinese and Japanese.

For more information, visit www.centerglobalstudies.org
Michael Doyle, a professor of U.S. foreign policy and security policy at Columbia University, and a former special adviser to former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, gave the 15th annual Coca-Cola lecture on April 16 at Luce Hall on "Striking First: The Law and Politics of Preemptive and Preventive Force." The lecture is sponsored by the MacMillan Center, the Yale Law School, and the Yale School of Management.

His talk considered the question: When should states be permitted to go to war before they’ve been attacked and for the purpose of protecting themselves? He stated at the outset that he believed the United States was wrong in preventively attacking Iraq in 2003 – that the situation did not meet the criteria to justify the war.

"Talking about preventive war in the aftermath of Iraq makes me feel as if I were asking the survivors of the Titanic how they felt about ocean travel," he joked. "The fisico of Iraqi colors every discussion about preventive war." Doyle considered the ethics and politics of the law of preemptive and preventive self-defense. He believes that both the substantive and procedural rules and standards are inadequate, and he proposed new standards for judging these two kinds of interventions.

He said according to the existing standards, preemptive war is condoned only when an attack is clearly imminent, while preventive war involves a longer timeline and much less certainty.

Regarding the substantive rules, he said they derive from the Caroline case of the 1830s, when England crossed into U.S. territory, destroyed a U.S. ship and killed 183 people, although he conceded the attack was illegal.

He also cautioned that allowing one state to adopt an inherently subjective standard – i.e., the threats it happens to perceive – is an invitation to chaos, whether that state abuses it or other states do exactly the same thing.

In summary, he said, "We face serious threats that are not readily deterred, and we’re stuck with a legal rule [Caroline] that is too narrow and doesn’t allow us to act with adequate foresight, and a Bush Doctrine that is much too broad."

Procedural rules call for careful deliberation before any action is taken. Unilateral prevention is illegal, but multilateral decisions are embedded in the United Nations (U.N.) Charter, providing the Security Council with a decision-making process and the authority to determine "any threat to the peace, breach of peace, or act of aggression" and to take whatever action it sees fit – legally binding on all members of the U.N. All that is required of us is that we vote on the Security Council and no votes from its permanent members.

"I think it’s a neat solution, but there are problems," Doyle said. "In the past the Security Council has sometimes behaved irresponsibly, such as when not having stronger humanitarian interventions in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and maybe Darfur, though I find that more questionable. The second problem is that the Security Council lacks substantive standards to guide its deliberations." So Doyle called for new substantive and procedural standards. "Preventive standards need to look beyond immediacy," he said, "to a threat that isn’t immediate. We can borrow from Just War doctrine, and look at the nature of the threat." He proposed that an acceptable preventive war strategy must consider four criteria (what he called "the four L’s"): lethality – how many people are killed; legality – how necessary to dispatch the threat (i.e., the threats it happens to perceive – is an invitation to chaos, whether that state abuses it or other states do exactly the same thing."

The lecture is the 15th annual Coca-Cola World Fund Lecture at Yale and opens the MacMillan Center’s spring schedule of lectures and events. The MacMillan Center is part of the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale.
Taiwan’s Representative to the United States Visits Yale

Jauhhieh Joseph Wu, Taiwan Representative to the United States, visited Yale on March 4 to present a lecture on “Taiwan and its Unique Relations with the U.S. and China” as part of the Gaddis Smith Seminar Series. The lecture was sponsored by the International Affairs Council, Yale Taiwanese Student Association, China Law Center, Yale Law School, and the MacMillan Center.

Addressing an audience that included students, faculty, visiting scholars, and other members of the Yale and New Haven communities, the ambassador touched on both Taiwan’s successes and the challenges still facing the young democracy. With the upcoming presidential elections looming, Representative Wu reminded his listeners that the 2008 Taiwanese elections represented only the “fourth direct elections to ever be held in Taiwan.”

Opening the lecture, Representative Wu humorously described himself as the most active diplomat in Washington D.C., a reminder that Taiwan’s unofficial relations with the U.S. pose a unique challenge to an already delicate set of responsibilities that all Taiwan diplomats are expected to fulfill.

Following on the subject of Taiwan’s relations with the U.S., Representative Wu emphasized that Taiwan is “a young democracy, but a democracy nonetheless and one that has potential to serve as a model for other nations.” He pointed to Taiwan’s 2000 presidential election as an example of Taiwan’s democratic development. The peaceful transfer of power from the Nationalist Party (GMD) to the Democratic Progressive Party marked the end of a monopoly on leadership that the GMD had held in Taiwan since 1949.

Beyond Taiwan’s political development, Representative Wu focused on Taiwan’s economic successes, pointing out that Taiwan is the world’s 18th largest economy, a particularly notable achievement for the small island nation. Representative Wu also praised Taiwan-U.S. cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. He went on to add that Taiwan’s rising military capabilities have allowed closer security collaboration with the U.S. and Taiwan is now the third largest monetary contributor to Afghanistan’s reconstruction.

Looking at current challenges and Taiwan’s future place in the global arena, Representative Wu also spoke of Taiwan’s struggle for international recognition. He stressed that China’s efforts to exclude Taiwan from international organizations ranging from the United Nations to the World Health Organization and the Miss Universe pageant violated not only Taiwan’s rights as a nation, but also the rights of Taiwanese citizens to equal and fair treatment by the international community.

At the end of the lecture, Representative Wu concluded that Taiwan’s future will be determined both at a national and international level. He reminded the audience that while Taiwan still has much to work on domestically, the international community should also acknowledge Taiwan’s right to be heard.
New Center Supports Study of Greek Heritage and Culture

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation has endowed a new center to promote the study of Greek language, heritage and culture at Yale University.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for Hellenic Studies at Yale will be the major source of funding for the Hellenic Studies Program at the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University. The program was launched in 2001 with funding from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, alumni gifts, and University resources.

The Hellenic Studies Program encourages and coordinates the study of post-antiquity Hellenic culture and civilization at Yale. It offers a comprehensive curriculum in modern Greek and cooperates closely with the Yale Center for Language Study in the development of technology-based teaching aids for modern Greek. As part of its mission to put the study of post-classical Greece in a broad geographical, historical and comparative context, the program has affiliations with faculty members teaching courses in disciplines across the curriculum — including history, history of art, Near Eastern languages & civilizations, political science and religious studies.

The program is co-directed by Stathis Kalivas, the Arnold Wolters Professor of Political Science, and John Granados, the James Tilton Professor of Economics. The Program's current faculty consists of George Syrinis, Associate Program Chair and Lecturer in Comparative Literature; Maria Kaliambous, Lecturer in Modern Greek; and Giorgos Antoniou, Visiting Lecturer in History.

In the last six years, the Hellenic Studies Program has organized more than 100 events, including conferences on topics ranging from Greek monuments to Cyprus' European accession, the Olympics and public health, among others. In 2004, the program inaugurated the annual Stavros Niarchos Lecture. It has also sponsored film screenings and a concert program that featured some of Greece's most renowned artists. In fall 2007, the program hosted the 20th biannual symposium of the Modern Greek Studies Association. The program has awarded more than 50 language and research grants to Yale students and has hosted a series of visiting scholars. It has also initiated a number of online projects for modern Greek language acquisition, an online tour of several Greek Byzantine churches and a project to digitize over 7,000 images of Byzantine art.

Religion, Politics, and Culture in Russia

On April 4-5, the European Studies Council hosted a conference titled Sources First! Religion, Politics and Culture in Pre-Modern and Modern Russia. It reflected the intellectual and pedagogical influence of Professor Paul Bushkovitch of the Yale History Department, with whom most of the participants have been connected, either as graduate students or colleagues. The conference highlighted a number of central themes that connect the cultural traditions of modern Russia to the imperial and Soviet periods, focusing on issues of religious and social identity, and on the maintenance of social norms in the context of changing state structures and ideologies. Sessions on Prayer, Merchants and Poets; Prophecy, Spirituality and Repentance; Reform, Mission and Anatolian; and Scandals, Dilemmas and Westerners were chaired by, respectively, Charles J. Halperin (Bloomington, Indiana), Nancy Shield Kollmann (Stanford University), Alexandra Komninos (George University), and Dominick Laven (London School of Economics).

It was organized primarily by Nikolaos Charalambous (OSU), and received support from the MacMillan Center; Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kemp Fund, The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The Stanley W. Woodward Lectureship, and The Charles Gallaudet Trumbull Lectureship.

1989:

Film Culture and
The Fall of the Wall

A Film Festival and Conference at Yale University
Thursday, February 7 - Saturday, February 9, 2008
Whitney Humanities Center, 53 Wall Street, New Haven

European Studies Council Film Conference

When France celebrated the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution on July 14, 1989, there were few signs that the bicentennial year would yield any upheavals of its own. To be sure, Mikhail Gorbachev had insisted, in his address to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg eight days earlier, that reform in Eastern Europe was “entirely a matter for the people themselves,” a process with which the Soviet Union would not interfere. By year’s end, it seemed possible to read 1989 as marking the closure of an almost too neatly shaped two-hundred-year European revolutionary cycle. To mark the tumultuous events of 1989, the European Studies Council hosted a film festival and conference titled, Film Culture and the Fall of the Wall. The conference was held on February 7–9 at the Whitney Humanities Center. Like the Council’s earlier conferences that focused on the years 1945, 1956, and 1968, this conference linked a political turning point with the artistic self-consciousness of nations across the European landscape. The program’s juxtaposition of diverse cinema genres and national film cultures, in the context of the specific historical and political moment, generated a range of unexpected insights and contrasts. The Council plans to repeat this collaborative format in fall 2008 with an event provisionally called, Film in 1939, a Critical Year for the Confrontation with Fascism.
**Frederick Douglass Book Prize**

On February 21 at the Yale Club in New York City, more than 230 guests attended the Ninth Annual Frederick Douglass Book Prize dinner honoring Christopher Leslie Brown, Visiting Professor of History at Columbia University. Professor John Collins, celebrated Ghanaian poet Kofi Anyidoho and Yale’s own Professor Caleb Smith. Of the Institute, seminar member Tina Wu says, “Meeting Ghanaian writers and activists like professors Kofi Anyidoho and Kofi Awoonor underscored the wider image in person underscored our lessons about the role of performance and song and its relation to history.” Professor Caryl Phillips moderated the Institute, which included question and answer sessions following each talk.

The first few days in Accra were rounded out by trips to the National Museum of Ghana and a performance by the National Dance Company. This theatrical presentation, which recreated the disruption and horror of the slave trade through traditional and modern dance routines, was also written and narrated by Kofi Anyidoho.

On the November 19, the students set off for the fishing villages of Elmina and Cape Coast. Both locations are home to colonial slave castles, which were the last holding places of captives before their forced transatlantic voyage to slavery in the Americas. Elmina and Cape Coast castles are striking; their whitewashed walls and open courtyards contrast sharply with the dark dungeons that held thousands of slaves during their last days on the African continent. In touring the castles, students were able to engage with the foundational sites of much of the literature covered during the course of the semester.

The students also spent a day working with the local population through three organizations: New Light International Orphanage, the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana, and Women in Progress, an NGO-founded organization with the intent to empower local female artisans through economic benefits. Students were able to witness current conditions in Ghana, as well as hear plans for future economic growth.

Says Allegra Asplundh-Smith, and ENGL420a class member, “Children learning British English in school, fishermen mending their nets in the shadow of Cape Coast Castle, and the powerful voices of poets at the University at Legon all expanded my views of the works from our syllabus.” Of course, class attendance was also a factor in the success of the trip. Allegra adds, “I’ll always remember Thanksgiving night in Ghana, overlooking the Atlantic with my classmates, eating jollof rice, and giving thanks for Ghana and the opportunity to travel together.”

**Legacies of Slavery and Emancipation**

In conjunction with the exhibition “Art and Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and his World,” the Yale Center for British Art (YCBA) and the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition cosponsored a major international symposium on The Legacies of Slavery and Emancipation: Jamaica in the Atlantic World held November 1-3, 2007, at the Gilder Lehrman Center’s ninth annual international fall conference.

The focus of the conference was one of the central themes of the exhibition: the unfinished legacy of Jamaican slavery, both for present-day Jamaica and the wider Atlantic world. Scholars from the U.K., the U.S., and the West Indies, as well as oral historians, filmmakers, and students, investigated a range of topics including labor, religion, music, and the legacies of slavery in Jamaica and Britain. Complementing these panels was a series of sessions held in the exhibition space and in the collections of the YCBA and other institutions at Yale. These sessions, which focused on topics of the slave ship, slave gardens, Afro-Jamaican performance and art, and other topics, provided a forum in which attendees could explore specific objects and images within the broader conceptual and historical context discussed during the conference.

Highlights of the conference included a keynote address by Antonia “Barry” Chevannes from the University of West Indies, Mona, and a screening of Stephanie Black’s film Life and Debt, which depicts stories of individual Jamaicans whose strategies for survival and parameters of day-to-day existence are determined by the U.S. and other foreign economic agendas.
Inaugural Conference on Religion and Violence

The MacMillan Center Initiative on Religion, Politics & Society at Yale University hosted its inaugural conference on the topic of Religion and Violence on February 16. The motivating question of the conference was, according to faculty coordinator and Assistant Professor of Political Science Vivek Sharma, “If there is something unique or different about religion that leads particular patterns of conflict across time and space?” To begin answering this question, the conference gathered eminent scholars from the social sciences and history, starting with the keynote speaker, the distinguished professor of history Robert I. Moore (Emeritus, Newcastle University).

Professor Moore underlined the formative role of religion in medieval Europe, pointing out that the revolution responsible for ending European civilization with its distinctive forms of social organization based on patronal forms of secular property—holding in conjunction with a tithe-funded Church explicitly set apart from the society—relied on the exercise of violence and the expression of faith. As Moore put it, “[The revolution] needed religious faith, with its power to override traditional family ties and obligations, and to unite its devotees indissolubly to one another and to their cause, in the face of every threat and every temptation—in Weber’s terms, to replace the community of blood by a community of faith.”

“Religion played a role in making conflict more meaningful, more intense, more totalizing…”

The keynote address was followed by a panel on religion and violence in the premodern world, which featured Professor Mack Holt, Professor of History at George Mason University, and Professor Hugh Kennedy, Professor of Arabic at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. With approximately 50 members of the Yale community in attendance, Professor Holt’s paper, on the French Wars of Religion, pointed out that although religion was the motivating force behind the overall conflict, expressions of violence depended on local political conditions and the actions of local secular magnates. Professor Kennedy’s presentation, describing the rapid expansion of the Arab armies across areas of the Byzantine and Persian Empires in the seventh century, made the crucial point that “Islam was not spread by the sword, but without the sword it would not have spread.” Kennedy argued that conversion was not forced on conquered populations by Arab soldiers; rather, communities of other faiths were preserved in an environment where conversion was encouraged but certainly not forced. The conquests founded the political foundations of later conversion, which took place over the ensuing centuries.

Paradise in Buddhist Liturgies


In a nod to the lecture series’ namesake, who had worked in the space of an instant, “Religion played a role in making conflict more meaningful, more intense, more totalizing…”

Teiser said that he believed that “our liturgists had a clear idea of the afterlife and a good understanding of how to guide people there.” But the “sites” visited and the “sights” seen on the way there will differ for each practitioner. To illustrate his point, he said that he asks his undergraduate students to read a description of paradise on the first day of class, then hands out colored pencils for them to draw paradise. He included two of these drawings in his presentation—one emphasized multi-colored trees, while another focused on the music of paradise. “The dominating logic of [rebirth],” according to Teiser, “is sequence. Prayers are constructed with sequence and take their participants [and the soul being prayed for] on a disciplined journey over many lifetimes, ending in complete enlightenment.” Moreover, the “soul as Buddhists understood it, was not ‘purely eternal. It assumes a bodily form according to the level in which it travels.” Here, Teiser closed his talk by again hardening back to Hume. As Hume believed with his medical missionary work, “enlightenment cannot happen without a body,” and in the Dunhuang liturgies, “bodhi [sanskrit for ‘enlightenment’] requires a body.”

He began his talk with a painting of one of many Buddhist paradises. With its representations of Buddhhas, newly reborn souls, and other spiritual beings, the painting, in Teiser’s words, “includes [paradise’s] constituent parts and the relationship between its constituent parts.” But visual representations can only give the practitioner a “mental image of paradise.” It is up to ritual to carry him/her there. Teiser then moved onto a text describing a “liturgy for a departed mother” to be performed after her death. The liturgical core of a benediction that hopes the mother’s spirit will “ascend to Brahma’s heaven in one moment of thought, then be reborn through magical transformation in a red lotus, and that she travel to the Buddha-land in the space of an instant.”

In the afternoon, about 60 members of the Yale community attended the panel on religion and violence in the modern world. Paul Brass, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Washington, presented a paper on the political structure of acts of collective violence in India, explaining the dynamics of violence as driven by highly strategic political entrepreneurs concerned with maximizing electoral success. These entrepreneurs sought to influence and profit from religious cleavages in Indian society. Jennifer Todd, Associate Professor of Politics at University College, Dublin, analysed the role of religion in the conflict in Northern Ireland, arguing that “religion played a role in making conflict more meaningful, more intense, more totalizing.” Professor Malika Zeghal reversed the implicit causal association between religion and violence, arguing that expressions of violence themselves alter the public discourse of religion.

The Conference on Religion and Violence was the first step toward constructing an analytical framework for understanding the complex relationship between religion and violence. The MacMillan Center Initiative on Religion, Politics and Society plans to hold a follow-up workshop of scholars in the fall of 2008, the papers from which will go into an edited volume of Politics and Society.
Comparing Latin, continued from page 4

The last speaker was Harold Hongju Koh, Dean and Gerard C. & Berniece Latrobe
Smith Professor of International Law at Yale Law School and former Assistant
Secretary of State for Democracy, Human
Rights, and Labor under President Bill
Clinton. Koh spoke not only about how recent
U.S. practices resemble Latin American
practices in an earlier era, but how they
have undermined U.S. ability to influence
modern-day Latin American human rights
practices. Koh noted the irony that the
assassination by Operation Condor of
Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt was
perhaps the most egregious act of state-
sponsored terrorism on U.S. soil before
September 11. “It is both ironic and tragic
that the U.S. should respond to September
11 with tactics which have such obvious
parallels to Operation Condor.” He put
the issue of human rights violations in the
U.S. War on Terror in an international
context. “The U.S. is increasingly disabled
from raising human rights concerns with
other countries, because of a growing
global perception that our own hands
are not clean,” he said, adding that the
tactics used have led to a diminution of
U.S. “soft power,” i.e., the U.S. capacity
to use diplomacy and moral suasion to
achieve policy results, at the same time that
America’s “hard power”: i.e., military might,
is reaching its limits.

Koh said, “Many of us believe in American
exceptionalism in the sense that we believe
America has an exceptional capacity to
influence human rights for good. If the
United States loses that power to be
the balance wheel of the system, then
we’ve come to a sea change in the way
the international human rights system
operates: The United States will no longer
be a driving force; it will be one of the
principal outliers. Why should we be
concerned? For the simple reason that our
human rights reputation defines who we
are as a nation and a people: The words
of the Declaration of Independence and
the Constitution define us in terms of our
human rights commitment. If we’re not a
nation that’s committed to universal human
rights, then we really don’t know who we
are anymore.”

Rinpoche, continued from page 1

One of the most remarkable things about
Rinpoche was his humble character and
depreciating humor. When talking
about his education, Rinpoche described
himself as a “dropout” because he had not
completed his studies at London’s School of
Oriental and Asian Studies. Regarding his
films, Rinpoche described them as “a
sort of accidental success.” Nonetheless, it
was obvious that Rinpoche was very well-
educated, both from University and under
Buddhist masters, and that his award-
winning films were not accidents.

Rinpoche had encouraging words for the study of Buddhism at Western Universities. He commented that, to him, Buddhism
is “a tradition that gives a lot of emphasis
on learning.” Thus, Rinpoche saw the
objective of Western Universities as a
“strength of Western [academia].” Even
the Buddha said “my teachings need to be
analyzed.”

The MacMillan Center hosted a conference on the subject
of Islam and citizenship in non-Muslim liberal democracies
on December 7-8. It sought to address primarily
philosophical, ethical and doctrinal issues arising from
the dialogue between liberal and Islamic values, beliefs
and conceptions of justice, as well as empirical issues
related to the beliefs, attitudes and social conditions of
actual Muslim communities living in non-Muslim liberal
democracies. The conference included papers by Islamic
legal scholars, political theorists, comparative lawyers, and
political scientists all around the question of what liberal
citizenship requires of religious citizens, whether there exist
important conflicts of value between liberalism and Islamic
commitment and whether such conflict are in evidence in
the political attitudes of actual Muslim citizens.

Assistant Professor Mohammad Fadel (University of
Toronto), a participant, remarked that “the symposium,
liberalism, public reason and religion. Amaney Jamal
(Toronto), Matt Barreto (University of
Washington) and Lucas Swaine (Dartmouth) spoke on various aspects of
Islamic doctrine included
Sherman Jackson (Michigan), an expert on Islamic law
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(University of Pittsburgh); Yaqis Qalbi (PhD Candidate in
Religious Studies, Yale University); Nas K. Mudiruddah
(Texas, University of Houston); and Mosque Research,
Harvard); and Mucahit Bilici (University of Michigan);
Micaiah Schwartzman (University of Virginia Law) and
Lucas Swaine (Dartmouth) spoke on various aspects of
liberalism, public reason and religion. Amaney Jamal
(Princeton), Matt Barreto (University of Washington) and
Karam Dana (University of Washington) presented original
survey data on the political attitudes of religious Muslims in
various communities throughout the United States.

Islam and Liberal Citizenship Conference

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Contributors to this issue include: Diana Chu, Kevin Fogg, Lawrence Gipson, Frank Griffel, Sinéad Hunt, Andrew March, Paul Pinto, Dana Schaffer, Greta Scharnweber, Tara Stevens, Melinda Tuhus, Emma Vawter, TaoTao Zhang.

Director’s Note

As this academic year draws to a close, I am heartened by the growth and progress that has taken place in many of the Councils at the MacMillan Center. Some of the highlights: the development of a new two-year program on Women, Religion, and Globalization; the Stevens Nachimson Foundation endowment of a new center to promote the study of Greek language, heritage, and culture at Yale; the new MacMillan Center Initiative on Religion, Politics, and Society at Yale’s inaugural conference on Religion and Violence in February. I am especially pleased that two new faculty were appointed to our International Interdisciplinary Professorships: Professors Giovanni Maggi, an international trade economist who came to us from Princeton last September and Thomas Pogge, a specialist in ethics and international affairs, who will arrive from Columbia next fall. I am pleased to note that Susan St Aure, Director of our Program on Democracy and Studis Kalyvas, Director of our Program on Order, Conflict, and Violence and co-Director of our Hellenic Studies Program were both elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

I am delighted that we have broken ground for the new Rosenkranz Hall and the construction continues on it. We are on target for occupation in the fall of 2009. This will provide vital additional space for our rapidly expanding research faculty and other programs.

Another accomplishment that stands out is the strengthening of contemporary Middle East Studies. The initiative will enhance interdisciplinary teaching and research through visiting faculty, an Iraman Studies program, a Turkish Studies component, and a Public Health initiative. I am pleased to report that a new Modern Middle East Studies major was approved by the Yale College Faculty. Students can declare it beginning fall 2008. We anticipate that Middle East Studies activities will continue to grow in both scope and depth.

My best wishes to you for a restful and productive summer.

Don’t miss out on any events!

The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center