

The Ray Smith Symposium Presents



# THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN FILM

March 30 - April 1, 2017  
Syracuse University



[religionconference.syr.edu](http://religionconference.syr.edu)

# A Word of Welcome

DEAR SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS,

It is with excitement and pride that I welcome you to Syracuse University and the 2017 Ray Smith Symposium. We are a diverse group of scholars, gathered from 12 countries and multiple academic departments to share our scholarly projects on the place of religion in film. As with any scholarly enterprise, the key terms of this symposium—place, religion, film—are multivalent and richly debated in our respective fields. I expect these debates will galvanize vigorous conversations this weekend! I hope we conclude our symposium inspired by what we've learned from each other and committed to translating this learning into robust and challenging scholarship. Our world decidedly needs to hear more about the place/placing of religion and religious difference, in film and elsewhere.

M. Gail Hamner  
Professor, Religion Department

## The Place of Religion in Film Program

### Thursday, March 30

5 - 6 p.m. Registration, Sheraton Hotel  
6 - 8 p.m. Opening dinner, Sheraton Hotel

### Friday, March 31

8 - 9 a.m. Registration, Newhouse 2, third floor  
8:30 - 8:50 a.m. Opening remarks, 469 Newhouse 2  
Gerald Greenberg, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs,  
College of Arts and Sciences  
9 - 10:40 a.m. Concurrent sessions, Newhouse 2 rooms 350, 355, 469  
10:40 - 10:55 a.m. Coffee, Newhouse 2, third floor  
11 a.m. - 12:40 p.m. Concurrent sessions, Newhouse 2 rooms 350, 355  
12:45 - 2 p.m. Lunch  
2 - 3:40 p.m. Concurrent sessions, Newhouse 2 rooms 350, 355  
2 - 3:45 p.m. Screening, *Son of Saul*, 141 Newhouse 3  
3:40 - 3:55 p.m. Coffee, Newhouse 2, third floor  
4 - 6 p.m. Plenary, *Son of Saul*, 469 Newhouse 2  
Sara Horowitz, professor, York University, Toronto  
June Hwang, associate professor, University of Rochester  
Facilitated by Zachary Braiterman, professor, Syracuse University  
6 - 7 p.m. Reception, Newhouse 1 lobby

### Saturday, April 1

8 - 8:30 a.m. Registration, Newhouse 2, third floor  
8:30 - 10:10 a.m. Concurrent sessions, Newhouse 2 rooms 350, 355, 469  
10:10 - 10:20 a.m. Coffee, Newhouse 2, third floor  
10:25 a.m. - 12 p.m. Concurrent sessions, Newhouse 2 rooms 350, 355  
12 - 1:30 p.m. Lunch  
12:10 - 1:20 p.m. Mentoring Lunch (for pre-registrants), 101 Hall of Languages  
Facilitated by M. Gail Hamner, professor, Syracuse University  
1:30 - 4:15 p.m. Screening, *What Now? Remind Me*, Watson Auditorium  
4:15 - 4:25 p.m. Coffee, Watson Auditorium lobby  
4:30 - 5:30 p.m. Plenary, *What Now? Remind Me*, Watson Auditorium  
Joaquim Pinto, director  
Nuno Leonel, cinematographer  
Facilitated by M. Gail Hamner, professor, Syracuse University  
5:45 - 7 p.m. Closing reception, Goldstein Faculty Center



**Sara R. Horowitz** (professor, York University in Toronto) is the author of *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (State University of New York Press, 1997), which received the Choice Award for Outstanding Academic Book, co-editor of *Encounter with Appelfeld* (Mosaic Press, 2003), a collection of essays on Aharon Appelfeld, and co-editor of the journal *Kerem*. She is co-editor of *H. G. Adler: Life, Literature, Legacy* (Northwestern University Press, 2016), which was awarded the 2016 Canadian Jewish Literary Award in Jewish Thought and Culture. She has published extensively on Holocaust literature, women survivors, Jewish American fiction, and pedagogy. Currently, she is completing a book titled *Gender, Genocide and Jewish Memory*.



**June Hwang** (associate professor, University of Rochester) specializes in 20-century literature, film, and culture, with an emphasis on the topics of German Jewish identity, Holocaust Studies, questions of modernity, film theory, and critical theory. Her book *Lost in Time: Locating the Stranger in German Modernity* (Northwestern University Press, 2014) explores discourses of timelessness in the works of central figures of German modernity, such as Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer, and Helmuth Plessner, as well as Alfred Döblin, Joseph Roth, and Hugo Bettauer. She argues that in the Weimar Republic the move toward a-historicization is itself a historical phenomenon, one that can be understood by examining the intersections of discourses about urban modernity, the stranger, and German Jewish identity. Her current work includes a collection of essays that look at the relationship between minority identities, power, privilege, and subjectivity in relation to Holocaust Studies.



**Joaquim Pinto** (b. 1957, Porto, Portugal) is a sound designer, producer, and director. He has been sound designer and mixer on more than 100 films, working with such directors as Manoel de Oliveira, Raúl Ruiz, Werner Schroeter, and André Téchiné. From 1987-1996, he produced some 30 films, including João César Monteiro's *Recollections of the Yellow House* and *God's Comedy*, both awarded at the Venice Film Festival. Some of his recent works are collaborations with Nuno Leonel: *Rabo de Peixe / Fish Tail* (2015), *Fim de Citação / End of Quote* (2013), *O Novo Testamento de Jesus Cristo Segundo João / The New Testament of Jesus Christ According to John* (2013), *Porca Miséria / Pig of a Story* (2007), and *Sol Menor / G Minor* (2007). Pinto's recent solo work is the biographical documentary *E Agora? Lembra-me / What Now? Remind Me* (2013). The film won a Special Jury Prize and the FIPRESCI Award at the Locarno Film Festival and Best International Film Awards at FIDBA, Valdivia and DocLisboa.



**Nuno Leonel** (b. 1969, Lisbon, Portugal) works as a set designer, cinematographer, editor and actor. He started directing animation films in the early '90s and has been making films together with Joaquim Pinto since 1996, including *Rabo de Peixe / Fish Tail* (2015), *Fim de Citação / End of Quote* (2013), *O Novo Testamento de Jesus Cristo Segundo João / The New Testament of Jesus Christ According to John* (2013), *E Agora? Lembra-me / What Now? Remind Me* (2013), and *Porca Miséria / Pig of a Story* (2007).

## Concurrent Panels

Friday, 9 - 10:40 a.m

**Bodies of Difference: The place of embodied (religious) difference in film,**  
350 Newhouse 2

- Phuong Nguyen (Ithaca College), Chair
- Adele Reinhartz (University of Ottawa, Boston College), Religion, Body and Place in *Félix et Meira* (Quebec, 2014)
- Yael Shenker (University of Florida, Sapir Academic College, Israel Institute), That made me a woman: On body and gender representations in Israel's religious-community films-making
- Vinh Pham (Cornell University), Church, Sex, and the LGBT Bildungsroman: A Critique of Narrative Mediocrity in *Henry Gamble's Birthday Party*
- Eric Silverman (Wheelock College), Primitivism, Kabbalah, and James Cameron's *Avatar*: Mythic Redemption on Planet Pandora

**Placing Religion in the Postcolonial Imaginary, 355 Newhouse 2**

- Terry Reeder (Syracuse University), Chair
- Russell Powell (Princeton Theological Seminary), "The Beginning Ends, the End Begins:" Religion and Subversive Filmmaking in Jean Renoir's *The River* (1951)
- Heba Arafa Abdelfattah (Georgetown University), Egyptian Cinema and Representation of Islam Amidst Caricatures of Modernity
- Samuel Lagasse (Cornell University), Reconstructing the Hindu Household, or the Postmodern Politics of Indian Cinema in English
- Anugyan Nag (New York University), Dedicated to Gods, Possessed by Spirits: Documenting Religion and Women

**Placing the Sacred: Reflecting Religion and spiritual experience in film,**  
469 Newhouse 2

- Jordan Loewen (Syracuse University), Chair
- Peter Schweigert (University of California Santa Clara), From the Propositional to the Relational: Religion and the Films of Caveh Zahedi
- Sergio Dias Branco (University of Coimbra), Divinely Human: Robert Bresson's Spiritual Reflections
- Joseph Kickasola (Baylor University), Engagement and Transformation: Poetic Documentary and the Contours of Religious Experience



### Friday, 11 a.m. - 12:40 p.m.

#### The Sacred in the Secular: Placing Religious institutions, 350 Newhouse 2

- John Borchert (Syracuse University), Chair
- William Blizek (University of Nebraska Omaha), The Expected Places of Religion, Communities, and Institutions
- Stephen Bede Scharper (University of Toronto), When Hollywood Goes to War, Does Religion Follow: A Look at the “Enlistment” of Religious Discourse in Selected US World War Two Films
- Rebecca Carter-Chand (Lakehead University), The Fragility of Goodness and Corruption: The Salvation Army in 20th Century Film
- Nestor Gomez-Morales (Illiff School of Theology), Reading *Mi Pequeño Angelito* (Home Alone) Film through Hispanic Eyes

#### Revelation and Redemption: Theological affects of place, 355 Newhouse 2

- Holly White (Syracuse University), Chair
- Richard Goodwin (University of Otago), “Surely the LORD is in this Movie Theater:” Transcending Place Through Montage
- Eric Gunawan (Universitas Pelita Harapan), The Concept of Beauty: Jesus Films Before and After 1968
- Ian Deweese-Boyd (Gordon College), Scorsese’s *Silence*: Film as Practical Theodicy

### Friday, 2 - 3:40 p.m.

#### Matters of Perspective: Concerning Religion & representation, 350 Newhouse 2

- Danae Faulk (Syracuse University), Chair
- Kaustav Bakshi (Jadavpur University), Hindu customs, conservation and violence: Female sexuality and caste in Aparna Sen’s *Sati* and Goutam Ghose’s *Antarjali Jatra*
- Rania Mahmoud (University of North Carolina Wilmington), Professional Interlopers: Religion and Professional Women in Egyptian Cinema Classics
- Abhijit Dasgupta (Indian Institute of Technology), Negotiating ‘Home’ and its ‘other’ in Aparna Sen’s *36, Chowringhee Lane*: A representation of an ‘in-between’ Indian Christian lady

#### Embodiment and Spectatorship in Cinema: Placing perception, 355 Newhouse 2

- Hayden Hains (Syracuse University), Chair
- Dor Yaccobi (Tel Aviv University), A Shtetel in Minnesota: Archaic Ontology in the Cinema of the Coen Brothers
- Thomas J. West, III (Syracuse University), The Spirit is Willing, but the Flesh is Weak: Embodiment, Transcendence, and Sacro-Historical Spectatorship in the Historico-Biblical Epic

- Hwasun Choe (Seoul National University), Religion on Screen: Haunting Memories and Surviving Images in Park Chan-kyong and Apochatpong Weerasethakul's Films
- Rachel Wagner (Ithaca College), "Carrying the Fire:" Post-Apocalyptic Imagination in Cormac McCarthy's Novel *The Road* and its Filmic Adaptation

**Saturday, 8:30 - 10:10 a.m.**

**Placing the Apocalypse (And Other Genres): Reading Religion across film genre, 350 Newhouse 2**

- Adam DJ Brett (Syracuse University), Chair
- Isaac Alderman (The Catholic University of America), "Another Time and Another Place:" Apocalyptic Elements in *Pan's Labyrinth*
- Marty Norden (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Religious Perspectives in Hammer's Early Dracula Films
- Zubair Shafiq (Islamia University of Bahawalpur), Religion in Bollywood Horror

**Ecce Homo: the body makes the man, 355 Newhouse 2**

- Jordan Loewen (Syracuse University), Chair
- James Cochran (Baylor University), "A lot of midgets tend to kill themselves:" Strange Bodies and Sacramentality in Martin McDonagh's *In Bruges*
- Sharon Rothschild (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), Looking at periodic social prohibitions through films that are re-telling a man-creation story
- Sharon Roubach (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Body, Memory and Redemption: *The Diving Bell and The Butterfly*

**Placing (Post)Colonialism: Changing representations of the Other, 469 Newhouse 2**

- Terry Reeder (Syracuse University), Chair
- Jon Cowans (Rutgers University), Breaking the Habit: The Decline of 'Missionary Film' in the Decolonization Era, 1958-1966
- Rinke van Hell (Evangelical Theological Faculty Leuven, Ede Christian University of Applied Sciences), *Of Gods and Men: the place of a monastery in Des Hommes et Des Dieux* and its impact on viewers
- Michael Chaness (Nazareth College), Inflammatory Indigenous Images: Playing Indian and Staying Indian in James Cameron's *Avatar*
- Vivienne Angeles (LaSalle University), Philippine Muslim Women on Film

**Saturday, 10:25 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

**Placing Religion in Conversation with Philosophy, 350 Newhouse 2**

- Holly White (Syracuse University), Chair
- Toni Alimi (Princeton University), Michael Haneke's Liberal Critique of Religion, and a Kierkegaardian Reply
- Sean Steele (York University Toronto), Everywhere and Nowhere: Process Theology in Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life*
- William Scalia (St. Mary's Seminary & University), The Art of Movie-going: The Screened World of Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*

**Placing Islam: Transforming representational identities via film, 355 Newhouse 2**

- Danae Faulk (Syracuse University), Chair
- Kristian Petersen (University of Nebraska Omaha), Intercultural Cinema and American Muslim Filmmaking
- Elliott Bazzano (Le Moyne College), *Wadjda* for Westerners: Combatting Stereotypes about Islam through a Subversive Saudi Drama
- Abdelkader Cheref (American University of Ras Al Khaimah), "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from a religious conviction:" A Comparative Study of *Submission* (2004) by Theo van Gogh and *Of Gods and Men* (2010) by Xavier Beauvois
- Megan Goodwin (Syracuse University), "I Can Take Your Eyes:" Gender and Surveillance in *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*

## Acknowledgements

For generous funding that has made possible this symposium and its public plenaries, I wish to thank the Syracuse University Humanities Council, Humanities Center and Graduate School, as well as the following academic units: Religion; Jewish Studies; English; Television, Radio & Film; Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics; and Philosophy. Joaquim Pinto and Nuno Leonel's plenary session is made possible in part with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts' 2017 Electronic Media and Film Presentation Funds Grant program, administered by The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes.

It was Bill Blizek and John Lyden who first put it in my head to organize a religion and film conference. I want to thank them for helping me think about the parameters and possibilities of this event, and for their willingness to use the *Journal of Religion and Film* as an advertising medium for the call for papers.

Thanks also to Joanna Giansanti of Giansanti Design for her artistic vision and skill.

An event such as this simply does not—cannot—come together without an immense amount of dedicated labor, collegial advice, and all-around good will. The list of people I owe is tremendously long; for the sake of this place of thanks I want to shout out first and foremost to Rebecca Moody, conference assistant extraordinaire. Becky carried the large and small details of this conference from first to last and never lost her patience or sense of humor. She is amazing. Next I have to thank Deborah Pratt, Religion Department secretary and knower of all important institutional knowledge. Debbie oversaw the anonymous submission and review process, and never broke stride in her willingness to help me, even when she was swamped with many other departmental events and priorities. Finally I have a list of colleagues who have been present and supportive from the beginning: Zachary Braiterman, Roger Hallas and Tula Goenka, colleagues whose human kindness, intellectual support, and organizing savvy raise the bar for me on any future collegial interaction; Philip Arnold, Vivian May, and Amanda Eubanks Winkler for their support of the idea of this symposium and their invaluable suggestions for how to pitch it, fund it, and organize it; and finally to Adam DJ Brett for his amazing webmaster skills, and to all of my religion graduate students who pitched in at the last minute to help me with hospitality, panel support, and anything else I panicked about.



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**Revised Concurrent Panels Schedule**

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