

REPORT FROM THE Center

Center's Spring Programs to Feature Virginia Wesleyan Faculty

This spring, the Center continues its efforts to integrate Center programs into the College curriculum by drawing on the talents of three Virginia Wesleyan professors.

On Thursday, Feb. 28, **Dr. Terry Lindvall**, *C. S. Lewis Endowed Chair of Communication and Christian Thought*, will speak on *"Heaven as Hell: The First Amendment as a Refuge for Religious Scoundrels."* Lindvall notes that "from Luther's vulgar attacks on the papacy to Larry Flynt's satire of Jerry Falwell in Hustler magazine, religious humor has played a role in defining not



only what is free speech, but what is civil behavior." His talk will look at the history of religious satire and its place in the freedom of religious expression.



On Thursday, March 13, **Dr. Eric Mazur**, *Gloria and David Furman Endowed Chair of Judaic Studies*, will give a presentation entitled *"Bubbe Got Run Over by*

a Reindeer: Using Hanukkah to Justify Christmas in the Public Square."

Mazur asks, "If the traditional Christmas Assembly is no longer acceptable in public schools, how can the insertion of Hanukkah – a holiday of little theological importance in the Jewish liturgical calendar – cultivate an aura of diversity?" His talk will explore the rise of Jewish cultural and religious practices in public settings, the emergence

of Hanukkah as a presumed Jewish counterpart to Christmas, and the significance of its use in the so-called "war on Christmas."

Finally, on Thursday, April 3, **Dr. David Lorenzo**, *associate professor of political science*, will speak on *"Religion and Religious Freedom in the People's Republic of China."*

Lorenzo's talk will look at Chinese religious traditions (including Christianity), historical conflicts between them and the government, and their resurgence and current status.



Each program will consist of a public lecture followed by audience discussion, and each will be offered twice: once at 11 a.m., and again at 7:30 p.m. in the Boyd Dining Center at Virginia Wesleyan College. All are free and open to the public; no reservations are required. *More information can be found on page 8 and online at www.vwc.edu/csrf.*

IN THIS Issue

■ STUDENT ADVISORY GROUP FORMED	2
■ RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE NEWS	3
■ RECOMMENDED READING	5
■ NEXUS HIGHLIGHTS	6
■ DIRECTOR'S ACTIVITIES	6
■ LOOKING AHEAD	7
■ CALENDAR OF EVENTS	8

REFLECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Misunderstanding and Confusion about Religious Freedom

Nearly all Americans consider religious freedom to be an extremely important right, but most Americans hold confused or erroneous ideas about what religious freedom means. This is the basic message I take from the results of a recent nation-wide survey on the "State of the First Amendment." The First Amendment Center, associated with Vanderbilt University, has conducted this survey every year since 1997, and its 2007 report was released in September.

The good news is that when asked about the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, 97 percent of Americans agree that the right to practice the religion of one's choice was either "essential" or "important," and 89 percent said the same thing about

continued on page 2



Center Student Advisory Group Formed

During the fall 2007 semester, Center Director Paul Rasor formed a student advisory group for the Center. Its purpose is to help increase awareness of religious freedom and participation in Center events among Virginia Wesleyan students. The group will also advise the Director about program ideas that might appeal to students, and may create some special events. The members of the group are Elizabeth Appleyard (*senior,*

communications and journalism major); Stephanie Kimec, (*senior, December 2007, religious studies, political science, and spanish major*); Odessa Knipp (*sophomore, religious studies major*); Julie Maggioncalda, (*senior, health and human services major*); and Kori Robins (*junior, religious studies and history major*).

Members of the group have already been active. Robins (*pictured*) gave a public

continued from page 1

the right to practice no religion. A similarly high value was placed on other First Amendment rights, including freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the rights to assembly and petition. Ironically, only 19 percent could name religious freedom as one of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, and even fewer could name any other First Amendment rights other than free speech. (64 percent knew that freedom of speech was named in the First Amendment, but this should be 100 percent.) Yet despite the widespread and strong support for these basic rights, a quarter of all Americans agreed with the statement: "The First Amendment goes too far in the rights in guarantees." There is clearly a disconnect somewhere.

I suspect this confusion may stem in part from a tendency to see the Constitution as primarily protecting the rights of majorities. The survey bears this out. For example, only half (56 percent) of Americans believe that the freedom to worship as one chooses applies to all religious groups, regardless of how extreme their beliefs. This figure is down from 72 percent in the 2000 survey, which suggests that the events of 9/11 have had an effect on beliefs about religion and religious freedom. By the same token, nearly three in ten Americans (28 percent) believe that freedom of worship was never meant to apply to religious groups the majority considers extreme or fringe, up from 19 percent in 2000.

These findings are disturbing. They indicate widespread misunderstanding about the meaning of the Constitution and the nature of religious freedom. Indeed, they indicate that many of us feel the Constitution must mean whatever we think it means. More importantly, the survey suggests that many Americans believe that what counts as a legitimate religious belief can be determined by majority preference. The republican form of government established by the Constitution does, of course, honor the will of the majority in our system of elected representatives.

But the Bill of Rights, including the First Amendment, was intended precisely to protect minority viewpoints from what Tocqueville called the tyranny of the majority. This includes minority religions, even those that may seem strange and unfamiliar to many Americans.

This majoritarian confusion is related to another basic misunderstanding reflected in the survey. Two-thirds (65 percent) of Americans believe that the nation's Founders intended the United States to be a Christian nation, and more than half (55 percent) think the Constitution actually establishes a Christian nation. But this is simply wrong. Neither God nor Christianity is mentioned anywhere in the Constitution. Moreover, as several of the speakers in our Fall 2007 Symposium *From Jamestown to Jefferson* reminded us, the Founders were very much aware of the religious diversity that existed even in eighteenth century America.

Report from the Center
is published twice a year by
the Center for the Study of
Religious Freedom at
Virginia Wesleyan College.

Paul Rasor
Director

Ann Shappell
Assistant to the Director

757.455.3129

csrf@vwc.edu

www.vwc.edu/csrf

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

in the News

presentation in November entitled *“The Lifestyle of Chinese Buddhist Monastics,”* based on her summer experience living in a Buddhist monastery in Taiwan. And Julie Maggioncalda will give a presentation on Thursday, May 1, entitled *“Religious Institutions as Agents of Social Change,”* comparing the role of Buddhism in the East and Christianity in the West, and exploring some church-state conflicts created by this activity.
(See calendar on page 8 for details.)

And while some states privileged particular churches for a time, the new federal government intentionally did not. That is the meaning of the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause.

In the end, the First Amendment Center survey indicates a compelling need for more and better education at all levels. We are not talking here about complex academic theories or the subtleties of the latest Supreme Court opinion. We are talking about the most basic knowledge of our constitutional system – knowledge of our rights and liberties as a free people. This is what education for citizenship in a democracy is all about, and if the results of this survey are any indication, we are failing. *The full survey is available online at www.firstamendmentcenter.org.* ■

Most of these stories relate to issues to be discussed by our Spring faculty speakers.

Stories relating to holiday displays:

New Rules Permit Menorah Lighting At Rhode Island Town Hall

In Barrington, R.I., this year for the first time a Menorah lighting will take place in front of Town Hall during Hanukkah. This, and a Dec. 2, 2007, tree lighting ceremony, both take place under new policies adopted in November by the Town Council. One policy requires that the town’s holiday display be secular. The second allows individuals or non-profit or religious groups to obtain a permit to conduct a “temporary” event on Town Hall property. A temporary event must be taken down at night and put up the next day. The Menorah will be taken down daily to meet this requirement.

Town Tries to Solve Holiday Display Dilemma

After litigation over its 2005 holiday display, the village of Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., approved a non-religious display for 2007 – a tree with a star, a Hanukkah dreidl and a banner reading: *The Village of Briarcliff Manor Extends Holiday Greetings and Wishes for Peace to All*. The rector of a local Episcopal Church reacted: “if people are so passionate about this, put up a display in your yard, go to church, go to synagogue, go to your religious institution and celebrate. That’s where the energy should be...rather than publicly debating what symbols to put up.”

Michigan Town Votes On Creche Display

In the November 6, 2007, election, voters in Berkley, Mich., rejected by a margin of 55-45 percent, a proposed amendment to the city charter that would have required the city to display a Nativity scene on city hall property every year from the Monday following Thanksgiving until January 6. The ballot measure also called for the display to include gift packages, colored lights, a “Seasons Greetings” sign and a Santa Claus figure.

Stories relating to religious satire:

Student Sues Pat Robertson After Regent Suspension

A Regent University law student who was suspended after posting on the Internet an unflattering photo of televangelist and school founder Pat Robertson sued the religious leader on November 29, 2007, claiming violations of his rights to freedom of religion and speech. Adam Key posted a picture in September on his Facebook Web page showing Robertson making what appears to be an obscene gesture. The second-year law student copied it from a YouTube video in which Robertson scratches his face with his middle finger. “Clearly the picture was of him scratching his face. That’s why it’s funny,” said Key. Key, 23, took the photo down but then wrote an academic critique about religious freedom of speech concerning the picture and posted it on a university e-mail discussion group. He was expelled for violating the school’s obscenity policy. His punishment was later changed to a one-year suspension. (AP)

continued on page 4



Swedish Paper Creates New Muhammad Caricature Controversy

SFGate reported on August 31, 2007, on a new Muhammad caricature controversy, this time in Sweden. The newspaper *Nerikes Allehanda* recently published a picture, drawn by artist Lars Vilks, of what was apparently the head of the Prophet Muhammad on the body of a dog, standing in the middle of a traffic circle. Both Pakistan and Iran have summoned Swedish diplomats to complain about the drawing. Australia's *Herald Sun* reported that the drawing was part of a series that Swedish art galleries had declined to display. *Nerikes Allehanda* defended its publication of the drawing, criticizing the galleries for unacceptable self-censorship.

Stories relating to religion in China:

Rules on Bibles For Spectators and Athletes at 2008 Olympics Attract Notice

After being widely criticized for including Bibles among items banned from housing units for athletes in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Beijing Olympic officials announced on November 7, 2007, that the government would allow athletes and tourists to bring Bibles and other religious objects for their personal use during the Olympics. However, this does not apply to Falun Gong practitioners since Falun Gong texts and activities are outlawed in China. Another entry restriction for visitors posted on the Olympic site states: "Any printed material, film, tapes that are 'detrimental to China's politics, economy, culture and ethics' are also forbidden to bring into China."

China Appoints Vatican-Approved Bishop

In another step toward reconciliation with the Vatican, China's state-controlled Catholic Church on September 21, 2007, appointed as bishop of Beijing a cleric who has the approval of the Vatican. The Associated Press reports that Joseph Li Shan, in taking the traditional oath to the Church, also added a promise to "lead all the priests, seminarians and nuns of this diocese in adhering to the nation's constitution, maintaining national unification and social stability."

2008 Elections:

New Poll Shows Voters Oppose Candidates Using Religion To Influence Election

The Interfaith Alliance released a new poll on October 30, 2007, showing that 68 percent of all Americans, and 60 percent of those who attend religious services regularly, oppose presidential candidates using their faith or religion to influence voters. 81 percent of all those polled and 75 percent of those who attend religious services regularly believe it is important that the next president nominate Supreme Court Justices who will protect the separation of church and state. When respondents were asked how much influence clergy should have on voters' decisions, 57 percent of all respondents thought none or not much, while over 70 percent of those who do not attend religious services regularly thought clergy should have little or no influence on voting.

All of these stories are from the Religious clause blog unless otherwise noted.

For more information on these and other stories, visit the CSRF Web site at www.vwc.edu/csrf.



Center Library Tops 1,000 Volumes

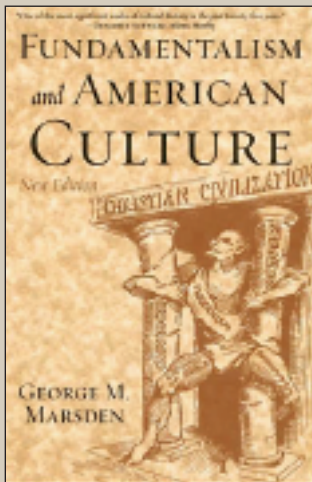
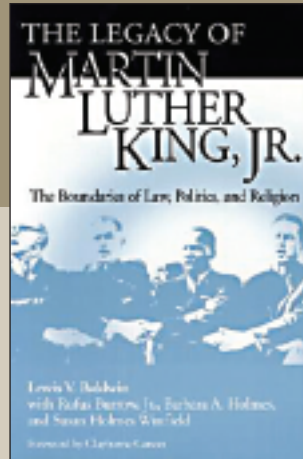
The Center's library now contains more than 1,000 books, and new titles continue to be added through purchases and donations. The collection emphasizes topics related to the Center's mission, including religious freedom and church-state relations, religion and law, and the role of religion in public and political life. The library also includes books on a variety of religious traditions, theology and religious studies, philosophy and education. This collection is a valuable research tool for students, faculty and other interested persons.

BORROWING POLICY

All books in the CSRF collection are included in the College library's online catalog, and most are available to Virginia Wesleyan faculty, students and other interested users. If you would like to borrow a book, simply come to the Center office, located on the first floor of Clarke Hall, during normal College business hours. If you are unable to come to the Center during these hours, please call the office at 757.455.3129, and we can make other arrangements. Specific policies can be found on the Center's Web site at www.vwc.edu/academics/csrfeducation/library.php.

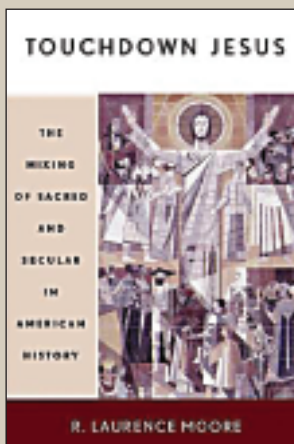
RRR Rasor's Recommended Reading

BALDWIN, Lewis V., et al.,
*The Legacy of Martin Luther
King, Jr.: The Boundaries of
Law, Politics, and Religion*
(2002)

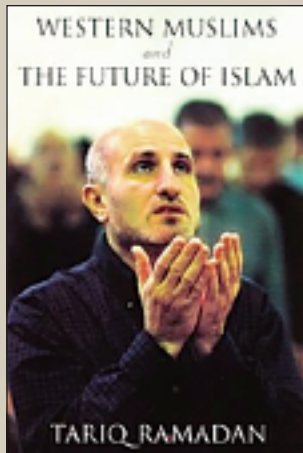


MARSDEN, George,
*Fundamentalism and American
Culture: The Shaping
of Twentieth-Century
Evangelicalism,
1870-1925* 2nd ed. (2006)

RAMADAN, Tariq,
*Western Muslims and the
Future of Islam* (2005)



MOORE, R. Laurence,
*Touchdown Jesus: The Mixing
of Sacred and Secular in
American History* (2003)



BOOKS RECEIVED

*The Center continues to add more titles
to its collection. Some recent acquisitions:*

ARIENS, Michael S., and Robert A. DESTRO,
Religious Liberty in a Pluralistic Society 2nd ed.
(2002)

BOYD, Gregory A., *The Myth of a Christian
Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is
Destroying the Church* (2006)

EISGRUBER, Christopher L., and Lawrence G.
SAGER, *Religious Freedom and the Constitution*
(2007)

GAMWELL, Franklin I., *Politics as a Christian
Vocation: Faith and Democracy Today* (2004)

GILL, Sam D., *Native American Religions: An
Introduction* rev. ed. (2004)

GREENAWALT, Kent, *Religion and the Constitution,
Volume 1: Free Exercise and Fairness* (2006)

HARRIS, Sam, *A Letter to a Christian Nation* (2006)

HART, D.G., *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity
Favors the Separation of Church and State* (2006)

MARSH, Charles, *The Beloved Community: How
Faith Shapes Social Justice, from the Civil Rights
Movement to Today* (2005)

MARSHALL, Paul A., *God and the Constitution:
Christianity and American Politics* (2002)

MCGREEVY, John T., *Catholicism and American
Freedom: A History* (2003)

NORRIS, Pippa, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and
Politics Worldwide* (2004)

PHILLIPS, Kevin, *American Theocracy: The Peril
and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed
Money in the 21st Century* (2006)

SHELER, Jeffrey L., *Believers: A Journey Into
Evangelical America* (2006)

SWEETMAN, Brendan, *Why Politics Needs Religion:
The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public
Square* (2006)

WALZER, Michael, ed., *Law, Politics, and Morality
in Judaism* (2006)

NEXUS

Highlights

Finding Passion in Faith Series Continues

Religious faith is not simply about belief and doctrine, or even morality and ethics. Beneath these elements lies something deeper, something that can generate passion and commitment. The 2007-2008 **Nexus Interfaith Dialogue Series** explores how this deeper faith element touches and motivates us in the spiritual, emotional, aesthetic, and social dimensions of our shared religious lives. The series began in September and continues through March. Dates and program times are listed in the calendar on page 8. *The specific program themes are as follows:*

FAITH AND JUSTICE (Feb. 11)

How does your faith motivate your justice work in the world?
How does your faith inspire your compassion for others?
What does "justice" look like for you?

FAITH AND DESPAIR (March 31)

How does your faith help you respond to burn-out or despair?
Have there been times when your religious passion has waned?
What rituals or practices help you restore it?



DIRECTOR'S ACTIVITIES

Center Director Paul Rasor had several conferences, speaking engagements during the fall.

HIGHLIGHTS

September 17, 2007: Participated in an informal debate with Dean Timothy O'Rourke on the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Morse v. Frederick*, involving issues of freedom of speech in the public schools, as part of Constitution Day 2007.

September 21, 2007: Spoke at the United Nations International Day of Peace celebration at First Unitarian Church, Norfolk, Va.

September 27, 2007: Served as a panelist for the program *VWC and the Wesleyan Tradition: Why It Matters* sponsored by the Religious Studies Department and the Center for Sacred Music.

October 9-10, 2007: Presented two papers on the theme *Reclaiming Prophetic Liberalism: Liberal Religion in the Public Square*, and conducted a workshop for the Prairie Star District of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, Windom, Minn.

November 3, 2007: Gave keynote address at a conference on Peacemaking in Pittsburgh, and led a workshop. Title of talk: *Toward a Unitarian Universalist Theology of Prophetic Nonviolence*.

November 16-19, 2007: Attended the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Diego, Cali., and presented two papers: *Public Prophetic Religion and the Separation of Church and State*, and *Liberal Prophetic Praxis and Constructive Liberal Public Theology*.

Diana Eck to give 2008 Cookson Lecture

Diana L. Eck, Ph.D., one of the world's leading authorities on religious pluralism, will speak at Virginia Wesleyan on Monday, Oct. 13, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. This event is part of the ongoing *Cookson Religious Freedom Lecture* series, named for the Center's founding director, Dr. Catharine Cookson. The Cookson lecture series was inaugurated in 2006 by Dr. Martin Marty. Eck will speak on the relationship between religious pluralism and religious freedom.

Eck is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University and director of the Harvard Pluralism Project, which explores issues of religious pluralism in American society. She also works closely with her own United Methodist Church and the World Council of Churches on issues of interfaith dialogue. Her many publications include *A New Religious America: How A "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*, published in 2001.



*The Center
for the Study
of Religious
Freedom needs
your support.*

You can support the Center in many ways: by attending Center programs, by sharing news of the Center's work with others and by your financial contributions. Please share this newsletter with your family and friends, and encourage them to come to Center events.

If you would like to make a financial gift to the Center, you may use the form below, or you may make a gift through our Web site at www.vwc.edu/csr/f.

Your gifts allow us to improve our programs, strengthen our library and other resources, and continue our work of promoting religious freedom.



Financial Gift to The Center for the Study of Religious Freedom

☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other \$_____

Name(s) _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Home Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please designate my gift for:

☐ Program Enhancement Fund ☐ Publication Fund ☐ Catharine Cookson Endowed Visiting Scholar Fund

Enclosed is a check for \$_____ payable to Virginia Wesleyan College. (Note fund on memo line of check.)

OR Charge my credit card \$_____ ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA Card# _____

Expiration Date _____ Signature _____

My gift is ☐ in honor of ☐ in memory of _____

Please notify: _____

Name and Address

Please mail to: College Advancement, Virginia Wesleyan College, 1584 Wesleyan Drive, Norfolk, VA 23502-5599

Calendar

OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Monday, Feb. 11, 2008

**NEXUS Interfaith Dialogue: Finding Passion in Faith
Faith and Justice**

7:30-9:30 p.m., Boyd Dining Center



Thursday, Feb. 28, 2008

**Heaven as Hell: The First Amendment
as a Refuge for Religious Scoundrels**

Terry Lindvall, Ph.D., *C. S. Lewis
Endowed Chair of Communication and
Christian Thought*, Virginia Wesleyan
College, looks at the history of religious

satire and its place in the freedom of religious expression.

11 a.m., repeated at 7:30 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

MARCH

Thursday, March 13, 2008



**Bubbe Got Run Over by a Reindeer:
Using Hanukkah to Justify Christmas
in the Public Square**

Eric R. Mazur, Ph.D., *Gloria and David
Furman Endowed Chair of Judaic Studies*,
Virginia Wesleyan College, explores
the rise of Jewish cultural religious

practices in public settings, the emergence of Hanukkah as
a presumed Jewish counterpart to Christmas, and the
significance of its use in the so-called "war on Christmas."

11 a.m., repeated at 7:30 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

Monday, March 31, 2008

**NEXUS Interfaith Dialogue: Finding Passion in Faith
Faith and Despair**

7:30-9:30 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

APRIL



Thursday, April 3, 2008

**Religion and Religious Freedom
in the People's Republic of China**

David Lorenzo, Ph.D., associate
professor of political science, Virginia
Wesleyan College, speaks on Chinese
religious traditions (including

Christianity), historical conflicts between them and the
government, and their resurgence and current status.

11 a.m., repeated at 7:30 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

MAY

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Religious Institutions as Agents of Social Change

Julie Maggioncalda '08, health and human services major,
Virginia Wesleyan College, compares the role of Buddhism
in the East and Christianity in the West and explores some
church-state conflicts created by this activity.

11 a.m., Clarke 118

All events are free and open to the public.

For more information, call 757.455.3129.



1584 Wesleyan Drive
Norfolk, VA 23502-5599

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Norfolk, Virginia
Permit 27