



Religious Studies at UNO

January 2005

Rabbi Brooks Lecture to be 14 April

The annual Rabbi Sidney H. Brooks Lecture will be Thursday, 14 April at the William H. Thompson Alumni Center, 6705 Dodge Street.

Dr. Gilya Schmidt will present the lecture, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Her areas of concentration include Modern Western and Central European Jewry, East European Jewry, Zionism, Holocaust, Israel, European Intellectual History, Women's Studies, and Multiculturalism.

A member of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee, Schmidt received her Ph.D. in Comparative Religion (concentration in Judaism) from University of Pittsburgh, 1991.

The lecture is open to the public at no charge. All are welcome to attend.

Williams takes over as editor of *Journal of Religion and Film*

Paul Williams has been named as editor of *The Journal of Religion and Film*. Associate editor for the past two years, he takes over from Bill Blizek, one of two founding editors of the journal.

Blizek's will focus on his work as chair of Religious Studies and as Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He will also be an associate editor of *JR & F*, along with Michele Desmarais and Guy Matalon.

Debate Watch Held

A Debate Watch 2004 viewing of the final presidential candidate debate was hosted by the religious studies program under the direction of Dr. Pamela Owens. Over 200 people attended the event, held in the Milo Bail Student Center Ballroom. Over 100 stayed for the round table discussions following the viewing. Facilitators for the discussion tables were religious studies faculty and students from The Grove and the UNO Nebraskans for Peace. Owens is faculty advisor for both organizations. Funding for the event came from the American Democracy Project mini-grant Owens received this year. In connection with the mini-grant, Owens is also offering a class on Religion and Democracy this semester.

Faculty lecture during trip to Israel and Western Galilee College

Three religious studies faculty members headed a delegation of University of Nebraska at Omaha faculty to Israel at the end of December to make connections with faculty and students at Western Galilee College in Akko, just north of Haifa.

Guy Matalon made the travel arrangements in conjunction with the Jewish Federation of Omaha's Partnership with Israel. Paul Williams, Bill Blizek and Matalon all lectured in several classes at the college while they were there.

Other UNO faculty traveling with the group included Dr. Carol Lloyd (teacher education), Dr. Cassia Spohn (criminal justice), and Gary Day (fine arts).



Guy Matalon (left) entertains at a Druze village. In addition to the visit to Western Galilee College, the group was able to visit Old Jerusalem, Massada, the Dead Sea, the nature preserve at Ein Gedi, Yad Vashem (the Holocaust museum), and the Western Wall. The group spent New Year's Eve at the kibbutz at Maagan, on the south shore of the Sea of Galilee.

JR & F Editors attend and report from Sundance Film Festival

The Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, has invited *The Journal of Religion and Film* to attend the festival and report on movies related to religion for the fourth year. The editor, Paul Williams, and the three associate editors, Michele Desmarais, Guy Matalon and Bill Blizek, of the journal will attend Sundance at certain points during the festival. They will alternate in viewing movies using the press pass provided by the Sundance Film Festival Press Office. A Report from Sundance 2005 will appear in the April issue of *JR & F*, which is due out at the end of March.

Faculty Form Teaching Circle

Those faculty members who traveled to Israel have formed a teaching circle called "Teaching Abroad." They will discuss throughout the spring semester their experiences teaching in a foreign country and teaching students who are not proficient in English. The cultural differences provide rich opportunities for teaching as well as presenting some interesting problems. The teaching circle includes those faculty from other departments as well as the three religious studies faculty.

Mark Your Calendar

14 April, 7:00 p.m. – Brooks Lecture.
20 October, 7:30 p.m. – Goldstein Lecture
Now through May – Silent Spectators of the Sacred, Stones from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on display in Room 343 Arts and Sciences Hall. Open Monday through Friday from noon – 5 p.m. and by appointment evenings and weekends. Call 554-3108 for more information.

Students Excel

Greg Paskach, a religion major and spring 2004 graduate at UNO, has been selected for the Peace Corps. He will be in Mali helping on a clean water supply project.

Faculty Activities

Dr. Bill Blizek chaired a session on religion and film, entitled "Power in the Blood: Images of Evil and Violence," at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Antonio, Texas in the fall. **Dr. Paul Williams** also attended the meetings.

A book review by **Dr. Paul Williams** of Elizabeth Elbourne's book, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853*, has been published in *Itinerario*, a publication of the Institute for the History of European Expansion (IGEER), Department of History at Leiden University in The Netherlands.

Dr. Rory Conces had a book review of *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir of Books* by Azar Nafisi published in the *International Third World Studies Journal and Review*. He chaired a session on "Religion and Politics in the Muslim World I" at the Twenty-Seventh Global Strategic Studies Conference at UNO. He is also the faculty advisor for the UNO chapters of Amnesty International and Socialist Alternatives

Dr. Pamela Jean Owens presented a paper on Native American feminist ecclesiology at the November World Council of Churches North American Consultation on Women's Voices and Visions for the church in Stony Point, NY.

Dr. Rami Arav is a co-editor with Dr. Richard Freund of the newly published *Bethsaida, A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (Truman State University Press, 2004), the third edition in a series on Bethsaida. He also made presentations at the Oklahoma State University, Biblical Archaeology and UNO Batchelder Conference for Biblical Archaeology, October 2004; The national meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research - San Antonio TX and The National meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature - San Antonio TX, November 2004 and Israel Ministry of Tourism Los Angeles and Biblical Archaeology, a conference at Billings MT, January 2005

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