Dean’s Lecture and Concert Series

Fall 2017

**“Divided Souls: An Introduction to *The Merchant of Venice*”**

**Matthew Davis, St. John’s College, Santa Fe**

**Friday, August 25, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

Set largely in modern, commercial Venice, Shakespeare's play features several characters who are at odds with themselves, none more so than Antonio, the melancholy Venetian merchant. Shakespeare contrasts the drab, sea-level world of Venice with Belmont, a place of beauty, comedy and music, whose primary resident, the classically named Portia, turns out -- instead of Antonio or anyone else in Venice -- to be the hero of the play. Does the modern, commercial world put us at odds with ourselves, alienating us from our deepest concerns and our ability to pursue them? Does the classical world offer us a possible remedy?

**“God and Philosophy in Descartes’ *Meditations*”**

**Henry Higuera, St. John’s College, Annapolis**

**Friday, September 1, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

It would seem that philosophy must rely solely on unaided human reason—at least philosophy in the purest sense. In this regard it must face two serious challenges. First, it seems that there are matters beyond the capacity of human reason to come to definitive conclusions about. Compounding this first challenge are claims that there are divine sources of being and of truth that are beyond reason and thus beyond any possible refutation based on reason. I hope to show that Descartes takes these challenges very seriously and, contrary to appearances, nevertheless tends to side with philosophy as against revelation.

**“The Doubleness of Self-Consciousness: The Political-Theological Theme in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*”**

**Paul Wilford, Boston College**

**Friday, September 8, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* is an infamously complex and grandly ambitious work that claims to bring philosophy to the goal “where it can lay aside the title love of knowing and be actual knowing.” At the heart of this ambition is an investigation into the peculiar character of the self-conscious being and what would be required for such a being to be “at home in the world.” The lecture aims to explore the grounds of the dual character of self-consciousness, the basis of its seemingly irreconcilable longings, and Hegel’s attempt at harmonizing our competing demands for political recognition and religious satisfaction.

Paul T. Wilford teaches political philosophy at Boston College. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Tulane University in 2016. He holds a B.A. in liberal arts from St. John’s College as well as a B.A. in Classics and an M.Phil. in Political Thought and Intellectual History from King’s College, Cambridge University. He is currently working on a book on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit.*

**“The Intermittencies of the Self: Philosophic and Poetic Inquiries into the Nature of Selfhood (Or: Is Literature the Most Important Activity a Human Being Can Engage in, and Should You Dedicate Your Life to It?)”**

**David Carl, St. John’s College, Santa Fe**

**Friday, September 15, 7:30 p.m., The Great Hall**

Apollo’s temple at Delphi enjoined visitors to “know thyself,” and the search for self-knowledge is generally taken as among the first goals of philosophy in both the East and the West. But what is this self we are trying to know? What kind of thing are we asking about when we ask, “Who am I?” What if the best way to approach this question were not by trying to find an answer, but by working to move beyond our everyday sense of the “I” that asks the question in the first place? We will consider a range of responses to the problem of selfhood, focusing on how Schopenhauer’s philosophy and the poetics of Fernando Pessoa formulate a theory of aesthetic experience which responds to the challenge of dismantling the *I* of the self, in order to see more clearly what it may be concealing.

**“Lincoln’s Eulogy: A Constitution Day Talk”**

**Frank Pagano, St. John’s College, Santa Fe**

**Wednesday, September 20, 3:15 p.m., The Junior Common Room**

Lincoln seemed to have only praise for the founders and the framers. About the fundamental questions of American government, especially slavery, Lincoln claimed to follow them entirely. In fact he revised the founding understanding and implicitly criticized the founders, especially Thomas Jefferson. Some of this criticism is contained in Lincoln’s Eulogy of Henry Clay. In it Lincoln showed that Jefferson had no solution to the problem of the existence of slavery in the United States. Jefferson’s Lockean principles as expressed in the Declaration of Independence clearly announced that slavery is wrong. But the same principles, once the wrong was committed and a society practiced slavery, led to the conclusion that the self-preservation of the enslavers does not allow for the freeing of those wrongly enslaved. This wrong put the enslavers and the enslaved in the state of nature with respect to each other. Lincoln reconsidered the relationship between the enslaved and enslavers. It was a matter of sentiment and sentiments may be altered. Ironically it is Lincoln’s efforts to transform the sentiments grounding the antipathy between the races that contemporarily provides the evidence for his racism.

**Stephanie Houtzeel, Mezzo Soprano**

**Evening Concert**

**Saturday, September 23, 7:30 p.m., The Great Hall**

**“Nostalgia”**

This evening’s concert explores nostalgia in the music of three distinct parts of the world: Mahler's Vienna, Charles Ives' New England and the Buenos Aires of a wonderful group of Argentinian Composers.

The music unfolds in four thematic groups: "Tales and Memories" "Love" "The Senses" and "Regret/Loss."

Ms. Houtzeel will present a short intro about the unusual program order at the beginning.

**“The Beauty and Complexity of Islamic Geometric Patterns: Historical Development and Traditional Design Methodology”**

**Jay Bonner, Independent Scholar and Ornamental Design Consultant**

**Friday, September 29, 7:30 p.m.**

This lecture and book launch will cover the historical development and traditional design methodology of Islamic geometrical design.

Jay Bonner is a consulting specialist in the field of Islamic architectural ornament, as well as an unaffiliated scholar of Islamic geometric design. He received his MDes from the Royal College of Art in London in 1983, and has lived in Santa Fe since 1992. Since receiving his master’s degree, he has worked as an architectural ornamentalist specializing in Islamic geometric and floral design. Most of his projects are in the Middle East, but he has also worked on projects in the United Kingdom and the United States. He has provided architectural ornaments for many international projects, including: the expansion of the al-Masjid al-Haram (Grand Mosque) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia; the expansion of the al-Masjid an-Nawabi (Prophet’s Mosque) in Medina, Saudi Arabia; the Abraj al-Bait Clock Tower in Mecca, Saudi Arabia; the Tomb of Sheikh Hujwiri in Lahore, Pakistan; and the Ismaili Centre in London, England. His work for the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca includes the ornamental design for the marble minbar for the Kaa’ba Courtyard. More recently, he has been engaged as the senior ornamental consultant for the American Institute of Mathematics Research and Conference Center in Morgan Hill, California. This large mathematics complex is designed in the style of the Alhambra, and is in the early stages of construction.

As an unaffiliated scholar of Islamic geometric design, he is committed to the revitalization of geometric patterns thorugh the teaching of traditional methodological practices. To this end, he has lectured and taught design workshops and seminars at many universities and conferences in North America, Europe, North Africa and Asia. He has published multiple peer-reviewed papers and contributed to multiple books on this subject.

**“From Unreadability to Unreading: in the shadow of *Pierre*”**

**Eyal Peretz, Indiana University**

**Friday, October 6, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

This lecture will consist of a reading of Herman Melville's enigmatic novel, *Pierre, or the Ambiguities*, in juxtaposition with an examination of the question of the self-portrait in Rembrandt.

**“Poetic Justice and Lyric Memorialization”**

**Kenneth Haynes, Brown University**

**Friday, October 20, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

**This lecture is part of the annual Worrell Series on Literature**

The poet Geoffrey Hill (1932–2016) created a distinctive body of poetry in which the problem of

witness — of how to remember the dead — was at the center of his attention. The specific nature of this problem changed throughout his career, however, as he responded to different threats contaminating the act of witnessing, such as the imperfect motivations of the witness, the indifference or condescension of potential audiences, and the nature of aesthetic creation itself. In his search for poetic justice, Hill developed a number of lyric styles locating the act of true witness in the midst of different forms of false witness.

Kenneth Haynes is Professor of Comparative Literature and Classics at Brown University, where his main fields of interest are the classical tradition in English and American literature, the poetry of Geoffrey Hill, and the German philosophical tradition. He has published editions, translations, and works of criticism in these areas.

**“Goat Songs and Underworlds: Classical Influences on Contemporary Poetry”**

**David Mason, Colorado College**

**Friday, October 27, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

**“Humanity Dehumanized: Hegel’s Reflections on the Enlightenment and the French Revolution…and their other Legacy”**

**David Levine, St. John’s College, Santa Fe**

**Friday, November 3, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

**Atrium Quartet**

**Friday, November 10, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

**Program to be announced**

**“What Distinguishes a Person from a Word? An Invitation to the Thought of Charles Sanders Peirce”**

**Grant Franks, St. John’s College, Santa Fe**

**Friday, November 17, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

**“Nietzsche’s Culture War: The Unity of the *Untimely Meditations*”**

**Shilo Brooks, University of Colorado, Boulder**

**Friday, December 8, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**

In a letter written six months before his mental collapse at the age of forty-four, Friedrich Nietzsche called his *Untimely Meditations* “the work of youth in a certain sense, [which] deserves the greatest attention for my development.” Scholars agree that the four essays, which Nietzsche began writing when he was only twenty-nine, are exceedingly important for understanding how the young professor became a towering philosopher. It is surprising, therefore, that a book length study of the *Untimely Meditations* has never been published.

Shilo Brooks teaches in the Herbst Program of Humanities in Engineering at the University of Colorado. His new book, *Nietzsche’s Culture War*, examines Friedrich Nietzsche’s critique of modern politics, culture, and science. He has also written on liberal education and the role that philosophy and the humanities should play in STEM education. He was previously a fellow in the Program on Constitutionalism and Democracy at the University of Virginia, where he taught courses on American politics and economics. He was also a visiting assistant professor at Bowdoin College, where he taught political theory. A graduate of the Great Books program at St. John’s College, he earned his PhD in political science from Boston College.

**“How to Destroy Modernity”**

**Michael Grenke, St. John’s College**

**Friday, December 15, 7:30 p.m. The Great Hall**