





## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**- Through the Lens of Levinas: A Phenomenological Approach within the**

**Dr. Richard Sugarman**, Professor of Religion and Director of the Integrated Humanities Program at the University of Vermont

**Dr. Jeffrey Bloechl**, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Boston College

**Dr. Richard Kearney**, Charles B. Seelig Chair of Philosophy at Boston College

**10:30-10:45 a.m. - BREAK**

**10:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m. - KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

*Session Chair:* **Dr. Ruth Langer**, Professor of Jewish Studies at Boston College and Associate Director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College

**Reading, Writing, and the *Carnets de captivité***

**Dr. Seán Hand**, Professor of French at the University of Warwick

**12:00-12:45 p.m. - BREAK**

**12:45-2:45 p.m. - SPEAKER PANEL**

*Session Chair:* **Dr. David Vanderhooft**, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible at Boston College

**Dr. Olga Kuminova**, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Foreign Literatures and Linguistics Department of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva

**4:15-5:00 p.m. - ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

*Session Chair: Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi*, Professor of Bible at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 2011 National Jewish Book Award Recipient for *The JPS Bible Commentary: Ruth*, and 2012-2013 National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship Recipient

**5:00 p.m. - CONFERENCE ENDS**

## **SPEAKER ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES**

### **The Voice and the Book**

Dr. Catherine Chalier, Professor of Moral Philosophy and  
Jewish Thought at the University of Paris

What does Levinas mean when he writes that we must think of the humaneness of the human being in relation to books? Is indeed what is written in souls first written in books? These two main questions will orientate this paper on the voice and the book. This paper will put an emphasis on the importance of the word *δexpression*” as described in the *Inédits* and also on the necessity to listen to the voice, the master’s voice and the pupil’s voice when reading books. It will explain why human voices, carnal voices, are the necessary witnesses of the Infinite’s voice.

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Catherine Chalier is Professor of moral philosophy and Jewish thought in Paris Ouest Nanterre University. She has written over 25 books dealing with the link between philosophy and the Jewish source of thinking, among them six books on Levinas. The latest books are *La nuit, le jour au diapason de la création* (Seuil, 2009); *Le désir de conversion* (Seuil, 2011); *Kalonymus Shapiro, Rabbin au Ghetto de Varsovie* (Arfuyen, 2011).



**On Seeing With *Two* Eyes: Universalism *and* Particularism in Levinas'  
Philosophical Appropriation of The Hebrew Bible and Talmudic Tradition**  
Dr. Jacob Meskin, Academic Director of Adult Learning,



Dr. Annette Aronowicz, Professor of Religious Studies and the Robert G. and Patricia F. Cohn Weis Chair of Judaic Studies at Franklin and Marshal College

In the two recently published volumes of Emmanuel Levinas's archival material, dating from 1937 to 1964, many of his reflections are devoted to language, and within that, to metaphor. In their introductions to these volumes, the editors, Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalièr, connect these reflections to Levinas's subsequent *oeuvre*. Each notes that metaphor as a category no longer figures in it, but some aspect of these reflections reappear in a reworked form both in the philosophical work and in the Jewish writings. Given the space given to metaphor in the unpublished writings and its ramifications elsewhere, the concern of this paper will be threefold. In the first place, it will focus on the various ways Levinas works out his idea of transcendence in the context of working out his notion of metaphor. At a certain point, he arrives at the conclusion that metaphor no longer seems adequate to express transcendence, but nonetheless, at least in these writings, he does not completely drop the term, and his explorations of the excess metaphor represents vis-à-vis other modes of thought remain very suggestive. Secondly, the author will suggest how his notion of metaphor, and the transcendence associated with it, appear in the hermeneutic he develops to interpret Jewish texts. Finally, the author will turn to two exegeses of biblical texts, one by the poet Yehuda Amichai, and the other his own, to reflect on two paths to biblical interpretation his reflections on metaphor open us for us.

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Annette Aronowicz is Professor of Religious Studies and the Robert G. and Patricia F. Cohn Weis Chair of Judaic Studies at Franklin and Marshal College. She is the translator of *Nine Talmudic Readings by Emmanuel Levinas* (Indiana, 1991), *Jews and Christians on Time and Eternity* (Stanford, 1998) and a series of articles on the Jewish Communist playwright Chaim Sloves.



## **On Holiness - Through the Lens of Levinas: A Phenomenological Approach within the Context of the Jewish Commentary Tradition**

Dr. Richard Sugarman, Professor of Religion and Director  
of the Integrated Humanities Program at the University of Vermont

We will explore some aspects of the phenomenon of Holiness through the lens of Levinas. Special emphasis will be given to Leviticus, chapter nineteen, *Kedoshim*, the *locus classicus* on this subject. For Levinas, holiness is an ethical-metaphysical category, as opposed to "the sacred," which belongs to the realm of ontology and power. Why does the sacred so easily lend itself to idolatry, while the holy expresses itself as a concern for the "widow, the stranger, the orphan, and the poor"? What are some of the primary ways that holiness manifests itself in relation to other people? If Holiness may be viewed as "the surplus of morality," in the thought of Levinas, how does this surplus or excess show itself? More precisely, we will focus on the commandment "to love your neighbor as yourself." We will do so in the context of this portion of the Torah, in which the commandment appears. In following out this approach, we will consider some of the material expressions of the laws of Holiness. Why must there be laws of Holiness? We will ask why, according to the Rabbinic tradition, these laws are distinctive in that they are addressed to the entire nation of Israel. Why is there a reiterated emphasis upon matters of economic justice, such as using honest weights and measures? We will consider in what way Levinas adds to some of the Rabbinic commentaries on the subject before us. How, in turn, does the analysis of these themes help us to better understand the ongoing importance of the radically original philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas?

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Richard Sugarman is presently Professor of Religion and Director of the Integrated Humanities Program at the University of Vermont, where he has taught for the past 40 years. He is a Yale trained philosopher who studied under John Wild, who is responsible for introducing the thought of Emmanuel Levinas to America. Sugarman was one of the first American philosophers to teach *Totality and Infinity*. Sugarman received his B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy from Yale, and his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Boston University. He is the author or editor of several books, including *Rancor Against Time: The Phenomenology of "Ressentiment,"* (Felix Meiner Verlag Hamburg, 1980). He is the co-author of *Reclaiming the Humanities: The Roots of Self-Knowledge in the Greek and Biblical Worlds* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1986). He is the guest editor of *Levinas in a Humanistic Context: Phenomenological Inquiry; Volume 24*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000) and *The Promise of Phenomenology: Posthumous Papers of John Wild* (Lexington Books, 2006). He edited and annotated John Wild's posthumously published commentary *On Totality and Infinity* found in *The Promise of Phenomenology*. Professor Sugarman has published numerous articles on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and given papers at international forums dedicated to the work and thought of Levinas.

At the University of Vermont, Professor Sugarman has received teaching awards at both the college and university levels. Currently, he is working on a book entitled "A Transcending Humanism: Emmanuel Levinas and the Jewish Bible."



## **Literary Levinas: Between Word and Image**

Dr. Richard Kearney, Charles B. Seelig Chair of Philosophy at Boston College

This paper will explore some of Levinas's views on literature and imagination as sketched out in "Totality and Infinity," "Reality and Its Shadows," "Proper Names," and other essays. It will examine the way in which Levinas seeks to distinguish between an imaginative literature (magical) and a thinking literature (ethical) — comparable to Sartre's distinction between poetic and prosaic literature — and ask: does he succeed?

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Richard Kearney holds the Charles B. Seelig Chair of Philosophy at Boston College and has served as a Visiting Professor at University College Dublin, the University of Paris (Sorbonne) and the University of Nice. He is the author of over twenty books on European philosophy and literature (including two novels and a volume of poetry) and has edited or co-edited eighteen more. He is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy and was formerly a member of the Arts Council of Ireland, the Higher Education Authority of Ireland and chairman of the Irish School of Film at University College Dublin. As a public intellectual in Ireland, he was involved in drafting a number of proposals for a Northern Irish peace agreement (1983, 1993, 1995). He has presented five series on culture and philosophy for Irish and/or British television and broadcast extensively on the European media.

Recent publications include a trilogy entitled 'Philosophyline

## **Salvation through Literature: Reading, Writing, and the Carnets de captivité**

**Oral Discourse is the Plenitude of Discourse Emmanuel Levinas'  
Philosophy of Language Applied to Reading**

Dr. Olga Kuminova, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Foreign Literatures and Linguistics  
Department of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva

This paper theorizes reading as an activity that presupposes and is conditioned by a specific mode of intersubjective relationship between the reader and the author. This view of reading is based on Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of language as primarily a mode of relationship between the self and the Other. The author argues that this paradigm, originally relating to spoken language, can be also applied to written language. The key concepts of Levinas' philosophy of language are "the said" vs. "the saying," the speaker *as*

## **On Levinas and the Question of Cardiology**

Dr. Alan Udoff, Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at St. Francis College

Taking as its signpost the master metaphor "heart," a version of the quarrel between the ancients and moderns is staged in the figures of Bahya ibn Paquda and Emmanuel Levinas, and the themes of intellectual and practical virtue, respectively. At ring center is the text of *Genesis* 1.1 as interpreted by Rashi, and Rashi as interpreted by Levinas.

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Alan Udoff teaches at St. Francis College, in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. His areas of study and publication include the history of philosophy, literary/cinematic theory and criticism, Jewish thought, and the Holocaust.



## **Ethical Modulations: Reconciling the Infinite Face with the Unique Face**

Dr. Martin Cohen, Adjunct Associate Professor in the Honors Program at Boston College

The Infinite Face has no attributes. This is what keeps the other from being reduced to the same. Knowing attributes, according to Levinas, despoils the infinite face and deprives it of its otherness. Yet ethical responsiveness requires perceiving and adjusting to the particular attributes of the other. This talk will explore how Levinas' valid ethical cry protecting alterity can be reconciled with the kind of discernment that makes it possible to modulate to the call and challenge of a unique person.

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Martin Cohen is an adjunct associate professor in the Honors Program at Boston College.

## **-d and G-**

### **A Reading of the Moses Nar**

Dr. Marvin A. Sweeney, Professor of Hebrew Bible at the  
Claremont Lincoln University and Claremont School of Theology

This paper will present a reading of the Torah in dialog with Emmanuel Levinas. Its purpose is to explore the encounter with the Other on the part of the TWO major characters, viz., Moses and G-d, insofar as each is revealed to the Other during the course of the narrative and each is transformed as a result of their interaction. It will both affirm and test Levinas's understanding of love or beneficence on the part of the Other by pointing to both the constructive aspects of Moses's and G-d's interrelationship as well as the tensions that emerge between them and the consequences that result. Overall, the paper will argue that Levinas's understanding of encounter with the Other provides an appropriate hermeneutical standpoint from which to read biblical literature, but that his understanding of the beneficence of such encounter must be modified to account for the tensions and conflicts that emerge. The paper will begin with a discussion of Levinas's hermeneutical perspectives, including his rejection of the concept of totality in favor of infinity, his concept of the Self formed in relation to the Other, his understanding of Face in relation to moral summons, and his understanding of ethics applied to both Moses/Israel and to G-d. Issues to be treated include Moses's encounter with G-d in the burning bush and plague narratives (Exodus 3-15); the revelation of Torah at Mt. Sinai and its recapitulation in Moab (Exodus 19-Numbers 10; Deuteronomy); and conflict between Moses and G-d in the Golden Calf episode (Exodus 32-34); the Spy Narratives (Numbers 13-14); and the call for water from the rock at Meribah (Numbers 20) resulting in G-d's barring Moses from the land of Israel (Deuteronomy 34).

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Marvin A. Sweeney is Professor of Hebrew Bible at the Claremont Lincoln University and Claremont School of Theology (1994-present); Professor of Religion at the Claremont Graduate University (1994-present); and Professor of Bible and Faculty Chair at the Academy for Jewish Religion, California (2000-present), where he teaches courses in Hebrew Bible and the History of Judaism and Jewish Thought. He has served as Underwood Professor of Divinity, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea (Fall 2011); Assistant and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Miami (1983-94); Yad Hanadiv/Barecha Foundation Fellow in Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1989-90); Dorot Research Professor at the W. F. Albright Institute for Archeological Research, Jerusalem (1993-94); Lilly Theological Research Fellow (1997-98); and Visiting Professor of Bible at the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles (1995-96, 1999, 2003-04).

He holds the Ph.D. and M.A. in Religion from the Claremont Graduate School (1983, 1981) and the A.B. in Political Science and Religious Studies (with distinction) from the University of Illinois (1975). He has also studied at the Princeton Theological Seminary (1975-76) and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1988-

