

# BOISI CENTER REPORT



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## FROM THE DIRECTOR



Friends of the Boisi Center: Happy New Year!

This past fall semester was a busy one here at the Boisi Center. The two Boisi Center faculty seminars – on “Thomas Merton and His

Legacy” and on “Liberal Arts Education in the Age of Trump” – met monthly over dinner and lunch (respectively) with lively conversation and delicious food. The faculty attending the two seminars were a diverse lot – from political science, history, philosophy, sociology, english, fine arts, and theology departments of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, and from BC’s Law School and the School of Theology and Ministry. We found the conversations to be so enlightening and enjoyable that we’ll be continuing them this spring, with the Merton group morphing into a Flannery O’Connor symposium.

The Boisi Center also convened three meetings of the Massachusetts Interfaith Climate Change Coalition over the course of the fall semester, for whom we are now the permanent host. This is an exciting initiative representing many faith traditions – Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Unitarian, and Roman Catholic – all of whom are committed to addressing the serious challenges posed by climate change. Among the goals of the group is to present a united face of committed believers from many faith traditions to state elected officials and policy makers. The Boisi Center is honored to host the group and is pleased to have the support of Cardinal Seán O’Malley of Boston, among other faith leaders, toward the group’s efforts.

As is our custom, the Boisi Center sponsored three lunch-time talks. These

are free and open to all members of the BC community, the wider community, and members of neighboring higher educational institutions. Two of the lunch meetings occurred in September: Christian Henkel of Tübingen University in Germany (one of our Visiting Scholars last fall) spoke on “Utopia on the Small Screen: How Political-Theological Thought Translates into Digital Community Organizing,” while Professor Andrew Prevot of BC’s theology department spoke on “Prayer in a Violent World.” Erick Berrelleza, S.J., of Boston University, convened us in October on “Gentrification in an Urban Church: Reproducing Segregation in a Neighborhood Institution.” All three lunch speakers generated lively conversation.

Four panel discussions drew large audiences to signature Boisi Center events. In September we sponsored a screening of Wim Wenders’ film *Pope Francis: A Man of His Word*, which was followed by a panel discussion featuring Mary Ann Hinsdale, IHM, Peter Folan, S.J., of BC’s theology department, and Theresa O’Keefe of BC’s School of Theology and Ministry. Later that same month we hosted an exciting conversation on “Faith and Border Ethics: Immigration and Human Dignity in Trump’s America,” in which Kristin Heyer (BC theology), Daniel Kanstroom (BC Law School), Hosffman Ospino (BC STM), and Peter Skerry (BC political science) led an exciting conversation with much back-and-forth with the audience. In October, Susannah Heschel (Dartmouth), Ruth Langer (BC theology), and Mark Silk (Trinity College/Hartford) led an interesting conversation with the audience on “What Does It Mean to Be Jewish in the Age of Trump?” Finally, in November, the Boisi Center sponsored a well-attended “author meets critics” conversation on my newest book, *The Structure of Theological Revolutions: How the Fight Over Birth Control Changed American Catholicism*. Richard Gaillar-

detz, chair of BC’s theology department, convened a wonderful panel made up of Lisa Sowle Cahill and James Keenan, S.J. (BC theology) and Meghan Clark (St. John’s University), who offered very smart commentary, as did a number of members of the audience.

Mary Elliot, the Boisi Center’s talented and hard-working graduate research assistant, convened a group of undergraduate and graduate women students over the course of the fall semester on the topic of “Young Women and the American Catholic Church.” These conversations represented one component of a new inter-institutional initiative that we are commencing with *America* magazine, the Curran Center and the Center on Religion and Culture at Fordham University, the University of San Diego, and the Cushwa Center at Notre Dame. Mary also convened a series of meetings of this year’s Graduate Symposium (for grad students at BC and from neighboring institutions) on “Vocation in the American Imagination.”

Finally, the Boisi Center hosted a room full of BC seniors at a Student Town Hall with the title of “Who Belongs at BC?: Race, Class, and Community at Boston College.” Susan Richard, our veteran administrator and all-around pro who makes everything run smoothly, and Jack Nuelle, our multi-talented interim assistant to the director who manages our oftentimes challenging online resources, played key roles in setting up this successful event, as they do in so much else. I am very blessed to have Susan, Jack, and Mary, along with our excellent undergraduate research fellows, Jorge Mejía, Monica Orona, and Brian Ward – a team who are the envy of other program directors – working here at the Boisi Center.

Our spring program of events promises to be every bit as exciting as our fall events, and I look forward to seeing you at one or all of them.

~ Mark Massa, S.J.

## POPE FRANCIS: A MAN OF HIS WORD

A film screening of Wim Wenders' recent documentary of the Catholic pope was followed by a timely panel discussion with distinguished Boston College faculty.



From left to right: Jack Nuelle, Mary Ann Hinsdale, IHM, Theresa O'Keefe, and Peter Folan, S.J.

For the first event of the 2018-2019 academic year the Boisi Center welcomed Peter Folan, S.J. (Boston College), Mary Ann Hinsdale, IHM (Boston College), and Theresa O'Keefe (Boston College School of Theology and Ministry) on September 12th for a screening of *Pope Francis: A Man of His Word*, a 2018 documentary by German filmmaker Wim Wenders. Following the screening, interim assistant to the director, Jack Nuelle, guided the panelists through a discussion alternating between a review of the film itself and a discussion of Pope Francis' papacy more broadly. Hinsdale began by noting that Francis seems to be a Catholic particularly formed by the Second Vatican Council and its messages of love, service, dialogue, and difference. O'Keefe echoed the sentiment, adding that the film brought attention to the changing role of the papacy as it becomes a platform increasingly suited to speak with authority on issues of a global nature.



A diverse crowd of faculty, staff, students, and local community members engage in the discussion.

The discussion moved to the topics Francis addressed and those left silent by the film. The panelists reminded the audience that not only was this film released before recent allegations against Francis, but also Francis' interviews were subject to editing and directorial review. With this in mind, all three panelists expressed their satisfaction with the breadth of topics the film portrayed, while questioning the depth and specifics of Francis' answers, particularly regarding the role of women and the problem of clerical abuse. Hinsdale noted that we may be too early to judge if Pope Francis is "a man of his word," adding her unease at the manner in which the Pope responded to the question of the role of women. O'Keefe suggested that the film reflected the director's choice to focus on other issues as the core of the piece and position the Church in a listening stance, but agreed that it left these remaining topics to occur within the film like "cameo appearances."

Folan concluded that while he appreciated that the questions were at least addressed, he disliked the specific phrasing of Francis' answers on the importance of dialogue and the response to clerical abuse. He characterized Francis' response on this last issue as wrongly portraying the clerical abuse problem as episodic rather than systemic. That issue remained the topic for the rest of the evening, with Nuelle's final question as whether the film should be viewed

differently now, post-allegations. Folan stressed that Francis showed authentic anger at the problem, but it is difficult to translate that expression into direct action. Hinsdale agreed, adding that the Pope's emphasis on discernment often leads to careful but slow action. O'Keefe, responding to these critiques, highlighted that the film focused on portraying Francis as a more human character rather than as a bureaucratic leader. Indeed, the panelists concluded that Wenders' film takes the portrayal even further; with interspersed scenes of the life of St. Francis of Assisi, it offers a reverent take on what might be, for Wenders, a hagiographic character.

More information, links to film reviews, and photos can be found on the event page.

[www.bc.edu/boisi-francisfilm](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-francisfilm)



Peter Folan, S.J., appraises the film.



## UTOPIA ON THE SMALL SCREEN

*Boisi Center's visiting scholar Christian Henkel shared how political theology can help us understand the digital utopia.*

Talk of “utopia” often prompts a knowing wink and nod from seasoned consumers of culture: utopia, in life or fiction, is always either a convenient cover for, or a direct precursor to, dystopia. However, Christian Henkel, a fall visiting scholar at the Boisi Center and director of the Institute for Ecumenical and Interreligious Research at the University of Tübingen in Germany, takes a slightly different view. For Henkel, utopian thinking is already all around us. It is embedded in the digital devices and social media that govern our lives. In his September 20th luncheon colloquium at the Boisi Center, Henkel argued that a reimagined understanding of utopia is one way to reframe political theology and social justice.

Henkel prefaced that utopias are likely to be irrelevant or even dangerous if not



*Christian Henkel outlines his project.*

reimagined. Utopias can be easily dominated by singular figures and harmful ideologies. But utopian ideals – both good and bad – have been increasingly accomplished, almost without notice, by technology. Citing Saul Alinsky, Ruth Cohen, and Cornel West, Henkel pushed

for a new, integrative, and interpersonal use of our digital utopias. In Henkel's view, digitization can aid in community organizing, help with religious education, and foster real human relationships. Heeding the warnings of failed utopias and the real limits, problems, and dangers of technology, we can reimagine these digital utopias in ways that better our use of them. A workable utopia cannot forget the world's injustices, and cannot be blind to its own shortcomings. In the end, Henkel's argument relied on a “digital” version of Christian hope: utopia is possible, but only if we go about it in a responsible, ethical, and just way.

*A recording of the colloquium and an interview with Henkel can be found on the event page.*

[www.bc.edu/boisi-henkel](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-henkel)

## FAITH AND BORDER ETHICS

*Prominent Boston College faculty gathered to publicly discuss the ways that the border defines the identity and political conversation of our nation, asking if our religious and ethical obligations extend beyond political boundaries.*

Are borders necessary for modern nation-states? If so, what are its ethical implications? On September 26th, the Boisi Center held a discussion over these questions with Kristin Heyer (BC theology), Daniel Kanstroom (BC Law School), Hosffman Ospino (BC School of Theology and Ministry), and Peter Skerry (BC political science).

Opening the discussion, Kanstroom spoke of the constructed nature of borders that often incites racism and racial discrimination, and ought to push a consideration of open borders. Ospino agreed and argued that nation-state borders ought to be understood as inherently open rather than unchanging; shifts in the natural land over time remind us of the politically constructed nature of modern borders. This constructed nature also makes them necessary, however, as Skerry reminded us that it is through borders that a political community is often defined and understood.

The conversation shifted to discuss the role of Trump and the rhetoric surrounding the U.S. border today. Skerry and Kanstroom both agreed that the contemporary rhetoric employed by the Trump Administration is a culmination of the past forty years of



*From left to right: Mark Massa, S.J., Peter Skerry, Daniel Kanstroom, Kristin Heyer, and Hosffman Ospino.*

fears and anxieties of the American public, especially after 9/11. These anxieties include national security, protection of the rule of law, and border security. Heyer added that during times of economic downturns these anxieties are exacerbated.

The discussion of borders turned to ask whether it is ethical to deny entrance at the border. If so, to whom? Ospino argued that denying immigrants entrance based on their race and socioeconomic status is not morally permissible; we have an obligation to attend to the poor.

Heyer pressed that legal distinctions are necessary to help clarify the discussion, distinctions like that between migrants and refugees. The

media's focus often overshadows these complexities, allowing, Skerry furthered, elite corporations to prey on citizen anxiety in the interest of hiring cheap, undocumented immigrant labor. The fear that immigrants are taking American jobs misses the root cause and further perpetuates it. Without treating the root cause and attending to the need for complex distinctions among kinds of immigrants, ineffective border legislation abounds.

*A video of the event, recommended readings, photos, and an interview with Kristin Heyer can be found on the event page.*

[www.bc.edu/boisi-borderethics](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-borderethics)

## PRAYER IN A VIOLENT WORLD

*Professor Andrew Prevot offered a method of “thinking prayer” that prioritizes the prayers of victims and peacemakers.*

On September 25th the Boisi Center hosted Boston College’s Andrew Prevot for a luncheon colloquium covering questions growing out of his first publication, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality Amid the Crisis of Modernity*.

Prevot opened by articulating traditional arguments in opposition to prayer: some claim it acts as an instrument that causes or encourages violence, citing modern religious violence as an example. Praying may induce greater victimization, critics further, especially when the victim feels that God is not listening. Finally, prayer doesn’t produce action or change and can even inhibit it, as with the call for “thoughts and prayers” in response to American gun violence.



*Andrew Prevot addresses concerns against prayer.*

Prevot offered a different take. He argued that there are ways prayer can play a role against violence: it can serve as a stable ground for victims in need of hope, and it often plays an essential role in the shaping of moral character. Prayer has been

known to play a critical role in shaping the character of major actors in liberation movements across the world. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer have all famously attributed their perseverance and desire for justice to experiences encountered in prayer.

Prevot concluded that one way to begin making a tangible difference against violence in the modern world is to cultivate a prayerful state of mind; one not absent of the desire for change, nor ignorant of the potential harms of prayer, but that remains, instead, in a state of “thinking prayer.”

*A recording of the talk and an interview with Prevot can be found on the event page.*

[www.bc.edu/boisi-prevot](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-prevot)

## GENTRIFICATION IN AN URBAN CHURCH

*Erick Berrelleza, S.J., a Ph.D. student at Boston University, presented research on parish reconfiguration in Charlestown, MA.*

How might religious institutions act as carriers of modern social problems, like gentrification? What can we learn from observing how religious practices change in the everyday lives of those most affected? These are just a few of the questions raised on October 15th during a luncheon colloquium given by Erick Berrelleza, S.J., a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at Boston University. Borrowing from urban ethnography and the sociology of religion, particularly “lived religion,” Berrelleza discussed his study comprised of twenty-eight interviews and participant observations at the recently-merged parish, St. Mary-St. Catherine of Siena in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Located on the banks of the Boston Harbor and the Mystic River, Charlestown is the second smallest of the city’s 15 neighborhoods with a growing population of over 16,800.

Berrelleza segmented the ethno-racial and socioeconomic demographics of Charlestown over the past few decades into “Townies” (long-time residents, mostly Irish Catholics), “Newcomers” (recent movers, typically more affluent and younger), and “Latinos” (long-time residents, either bilingual or only Spanish-speaking, of Latin American heritage). stressing the urgent need for sociological study of parish reconfigu-



*Fr. Berrelleza addresses an engaged audience.*

ration in Charlestown. Charlestown’s churches, Berrelleza emphasized, are neighborhood institutions; as such, they have long been territorial and reflective of community transformation.

Berrelleza critically assessed the challenges parishes like St. Catherine’s face within gentrifying communities. After the loss of a Spanish-only Mass due to the parish merge, the Latinos of St. Catherine’s are increasingly opting to practice religious observances in the private space of their homes, sometimes as a substitute for attending Mass. One interviewee from the Dominican Republic offers a

picture of why this might be the case. The interviewee described a deep loss; the new multicultural and bilingual Mass meant he could no longer “sentir su Misa” (“feel his Mass”).

In addition, the resources are increasingly sparse, leaving only one priest who speaks Spanish. The conversion of the Spanish-only Mass into a bilingual service prompted a provocative conclusion; it is not just that neighborhood change in Charlestown has demographically reconfigured the parish, but also that the parish itself has furthered the spatial displacement and loss of Latinos and low-income residents. Gentrification prompted the parish to reify ideals of multiculturalism, which may have the unintended consequence of slowly relegating the Latinos to its history rather than inviting them into its future.

Berrelleza’s talk invited excitement over the contributions of his future research, notably the ways in which immigrant populations use communities of faith as spaces to maintain, solidify, and merge national, cultural and ethnic identities. The presentation prompted many engaged questions from the audience.

*More photos, recommended readings, and an interview with Berrelleza can be found on the event page.*

[www.bc.edu/boisi-berrelleza](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-berrelleza)



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE JEWISH IN THE AGE OF TRUMP?

*Esteemed scholars from around New England were invited to discuss what it currently means to be Jewish and American at a co-sponsored event with the Jewish Law Students Association at the Boston College Law School.*

On October 16th, the Boisi Center brought together a group of eminent scholars to discuss the condition of Judaism and lived Jewish experience in the United States under the current administration of Donald Trump. Moderated by Mark Massa, S.J., the speakers included Susannah Heschel (Dartmouth College), Mark Silk (Trinity College), and Ruth Langer (Boston College).



*From left to right: Mark Massa, S.J., Susannah Heschel, Ruth Langer, Mark Silk, and Boisi undergraduate research fellow, Jorge Mejía.*

The panelists first assessed connections between the election of Donald Trump and the contemporary resurgence of anti-Semitism in the Western world. Referencing historian Christopher Browning, Heschel spoke of a parallel between the antecedents to the Holocaust and the presently contentious socio-legal landscape in the United States. Such a milieu, Langer further observed, is characterized by political intolerance and economic disillusionment.

The panelists reflected on the specifically political considerations

associated with the lived experience of American Jews. Chief among these was the moral dilemma that Heschel referred to as a “compromise of conscience”: the question of whether Jews should defend Trump’s diplomatic support of Israel or, conversely, rebuke him for his installment of egregious policies such as child-parent separation. Silk noted that even rabbis who make formal judgements against national political issues are beginning to undergo what Massa called a “qualitatively new silencing of violences.”

Prompted by Massa, each panelist then engaged in a mental exercise to close out the event: to role-play a two-minute long sermon about America’s current affairs to a fictitious Jewish congregation. Heschel offered that she would urge listeners to “get beneath the politics of resentment” and write an “ethical will” of how they would like younger Jews to engage with politics.

*A video of the event, recommended readings, photos, and an interview with Mark Silk can be found on the event page.*

[www.bc.edu/boisi-jewishinamerica](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-jewishinamerica)

## CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER: WHO BELONGS AT BC?

*Boston College Class of 2019 gathered to discuss race, class, and community.*

On November 15th, the Boisi Center hosted its inaugural installment of a series of conversations on belonging at BC. Moderated by Kerry Cronin (Boston College) and Barbara Quinn, R.S.C.J. (Boston College STM), a student panel featuring Soyun Chang, Rachel Lim, Ryan Reichert, and Anthony Smith reflected on their experiences of race and class over their time at Boston College.

After offering individual stories, the students addressed the archetype of the Boston College student: monolithic with respect to socioeconomic status and racial background. Nonconformity with this archetype, panelists commented, produced feelings of exclusion, while also instilling a sense of action-oriented consciousness to engage advocacy efforts on campus.



*From left to right: Kerry Cronin, Rachel Lim, Anthony Smith, Soyun Chang, Ryan Reichert, and Barbara Quinn, R.S.C.J.*

Following the panelists’ remarks, Cronin and Quinn engaged the all-senior audience about their own questions and experiences of race and class at BC. Some students questioned the relative primacy of class versus race as the dominant sociological force in the undergraduate experience. Students also brainstormed ways that Boston College could cultivate change and a culture of awareness. This imperative is also an individual one: students must continue to educate themselves on these matters in order to start having “conversations that matter.” The seniors who attended voiced that this was one of the first spaces during their time at BC open to engaging the difficult conversations and questions rather than skirting around the issues. Hopefully it will be the first of many.

*More information, photos, and recommended readings can be found on the event page.*

[www.bc.edu/boisi-whobelongs](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-whobelongs)

## HOW THE DEBATE OVER BIRTH CONTROL CHANGED CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

Mark Massa, S.J. joined a panel of critics to discuss his newest book, *The Structure of Theological Revolutions*.



Mark Massa, S.J. addresses the panelists.

Director of the Boisi Center, Mark Massa, S.J., opens his newest book with Giuseppe Tomasi de Lampedusa: “If we want everything to stay the same, everything has to change.” Change, in Catholic theology more broadly and in natural law specifically, was the subject of a critical panel on November 5th over Massa’s recent publication, *The Structure of Theological Revolutions: How the Fight Over Birth Control Transformed American Catholicism*. Introduced and moderated by Richard Gaillardetz (Boston College), the panelists included Meghan Clark (St. John’s University), James Keenan, S.J. (Boston College), and one of the authors profiled in Massa’s book, Lisa Sowle Cahill (Boston College).

The panelists praised Massa’s fair exposition of four competing natural law paradigms, but pressed him with a further question: What will be the next paradigm? Massa posed several

directions the conversation on natural law may develop. One may be a new paradigm arising from liberation theology in conversation with the global movements of the LGBTQ+ community and the Latinx and Black Lives Matter movements.

Another possibility, Massa hopes, may be a deeper engagement between academic theologians and the papacy. After publication of *Humanae Vitae*, many of the sharpest oppositions to its teachings came from academic theologians who strongly disagreed with the theological assumptions and conclusions as being faithful to natural law. Massa hopes that both sides can take a cue from some of the collaborative relationships found among the medievals, where academic theologians worked closely with the papacy to achieve theologically sound conclusions on religious matters.

The panel concluded with Clark offering a reminder that what

exacerbates the debate on birth control within the Catholic Church is the level of misinformation both ideologically and, especially, historically. Massa agreed that the import of historical knowledge is at the heart of his book, pressing one takeaway as a real understanding of how natural law has developed through the messiness of history, not as one coherent tradition nor one linear progression. Gaillardetz concluded the panel discussion by calling critical attention to the prevailing perception that if the church changes its stance on one issue it risks undermining the authority of the whole institution. Massa’s book, opening up the conversation of natural law to its historicist nature, offers a careful way forward in conceiving of such change without fear.

*A video of the event, recommended readings, photos, and an interview with Mark Massa, S.J. can be found on the event page.*

[www.bc.edu/boisi-birthcontrol](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-birthcontrol)



From left to right: Lisa Sowle Cahill, James Keenan, S.J., and Meghan Clark. Not pictured: Mark Massa, S.J. and Richard Gaillardetz.

## THE LIFE AND WORK OF THOMAS MERTON

*Boston College faculty gather from diverse disciplines to discuss Thomas Merton’s life, writings, and legacy.*

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk, social activist, and appreciative reader of non-Christian religious texts. Mark Massa, S.J. (Boisi Center, BC theology) and Jeffrey Bloechl (BC philosophy) led monthly faculty discussions of selections from Merton’s writings. Other participants included Brian Bra-man (BC philosophy), André Brouillette,

S.J. (BC School of Theology and Ministry), Catherine Cornille (BC theology), Sheila Gallagher (BC art, art history, and film), Kim Garcia (BC English), Kenneth Himes, O.F.M. (BC theology), Cyril Opeil, S.J. (BC physics), and James O’Toole (BC history). Wishing to trace Merton’s remarkable itinerary and thus gain a sense of the development of the man from monk to public figure, the

seminar took up Merton’s works in chronological order. This also became the occasion to reflect on developments in the Church, modern culture and global awareness between 1941, when Merton entered Gethsemane Abbey in Kentucky, and 1968, when he died unexpectedly during a conference in Bangkok. After one year concentrating on Merton, the group will turn in 2019 to the writing of Flannery O’Connor.

## YOUNG WOMEN AND THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The relationship between young women and American Catholicism came into sharp relief with the 2017 *America* survey, commissioned by America Media and conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). The survey found that for millennial Catholic women, Catholic identity does not correlate with institutional involvement, raising concerns about how well the American Catholic community has passed on the faith and the Church.

This prompted a new, inter-institutional initiative between the Boisi Center, *America* magazine, the Curran Center at Fordham, and the Cushwa Center at Notre Dame. This fall, the Boisi Center gathered undergraduate and graduate women to investigate what the findings of the *America* survey look like on the ground. During the discussions, many students identified their primary community outside of Mass and parish life, questioning whether the lack of community – and the variety of individual ways of practicing Catholic devotions – might reflect some of the dissonance between Mass attendance and Catholic identity.

## VOCATION IN THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION

*Ninth Annual Graduate Symposium on Religion and Politics*

What does it mean to view work as a calling? The ninth annual Graduate Symposium centered on this question as it sits within the American imagination, from the Puritans to the present.

The first meeting in October gathered fourteen graduate students from across varying disciplines of history, theology, social work, philosophy, divinity, and political science (including a few students from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) to discuss the sermons of Richard Baxter and Jonathan Edwards. Surveying this foundational view of work as having an ultimately religious meaning, students discussed how, for the Puritans, ordinary time was structured and sacralized, with vocations prioritizing the service of God and the common good placed in a higher order than those seeking to maximize profit.

The second meeting in November was led by Ph.D. student Jacob Wolf (BC political science), and tackled Alexis de Tocqueville and the relationship of religion to the development and dangers of American public life. The readings were supplemented with social-scientific data

Other young women noted it was not until coming to Boston College that they had considered what they learned in school and in their careers as potentially preparing them for leadership roles within the Church. One student said that as she became friends with students of other denominations, she felt she lacked an imagination for, or exemplars of, leading women within the Church.

Many students said the Boisi Center was the first place they found inviting these kinds of conversations. Rarely are they asked how being Catholic, as an identity, has changed and might change as they move to new places and transition into new stages of life. Many said that all the frustrations that might come with the Church or periods of doubt did not sway the solidity they put in describing themselves as belonging to Catholicism. In the words of one woman, “Where else would I go? The Church has raised me.”

The conversations will continue this spring as the Boisi Center works with other institutions to grow the initiative.

on the tendency of Americans to work at the expense of leisure.

Concluding the fall was a session led by graduate students Daniel Gustafson, S.J. (Boston College STM) and Luke Proctor (Gordon-Conwell) on “broken work.” Engaged readings focused on the mores of the Southern planter class as contrasted with the Puritan middle class work ethic of the Northeast. A somber conversation led to questions of how, in a fractioning time, we might narrate America’s history of slavery with proper remorse. Several noted how ideologies of individual success tends to cover over the generational continuity carrying the burden of “broken work.” Taking the recent apology to descendants of slaves of American Jesuits at Georgetown as an example, the semester ended concluding that the deep questions about just and sacred work ought to be tackled together, in communities. “The solution to broken work,” as Proctor put it, “will be a vision of good work.”

*Reading packets for each session are available on the website.*

[www.bc.edu/boisi-vocationsymposium](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-vocationsymposium)

### THE BOISI CENTER FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

24 Quincy Road  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

TEL: 617-552-1860

FAX: 617-552-1863

EMAIL: [boisi.center@bc.edu](mailto:boisi.center@bc.edu)

[www.bc.edu/boisi](http://www.bc.edu/boisi)

### BOISI CENTER STAFF

**MARK MASSA, S.J.**

DIRECTOR

**JACK NUELLE**

INTERIM ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR

**SUSAN RICHARD**

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

**MARY ELLIOT**

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT


**JORGE MEJÍA**

**MONICA ORONA**


**BRIAN WARD**

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWS

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For complete information and resources on all of our events, including audio and video recordings, transcripts, interviews, photos, videos, bibliographies and more, visit our website: [www.bc.edu/boisi](http://www.bc.edu/boisi).

All Boisi Center event photos by: Christopher Soldt  
MTS Photography.



# The Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life

Boston College  
24 Quincy Road  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467 USA

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## BOISI CENTER SPRING 2019 EVENTS

[See our website for an updated schedule.](#)

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|--|---|
| <b>FEB. 7</b><br>Cushing Hall 001<br>5 - 7 pm    | <b>Backs Against the Wall: The Howard Thurman Story</b><br>Amey Victoria Adkins-Jones (Boston College) and Martin Doblmeier (filmmaker and president of Journey Films)<br><i>Documentary screening and panel discussion</i> |
| <b>FEB. 21</b><br>Boisi Center<br>12 - 1:15 pm   | <b>Resetting Christian Theology on Mental Illness and Suicide</b><br>Elizabeth Antus (Boston College)<br><i>Lunch Colloquium *RSVP Required*</i>  |
| <b>FEB. 28</b><br>Fulton Hall 511<br>5:30 - 7 pm | <b>The Challenge of "Us" in Ecological Times</b><br>Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J. (Fordham University)<br><i>18th Annual Prophetic Voices Lecture</i>  |
| <b>MAR. 14</b><br>Gasson Hall 305<br>6 - 7:30 pm | <b>Religion in the White House</b><br>Kenneth L. Woodward (former religion editor of Newsweek)<br><i>2nd Annual Wolfe Lecture on Religion and American Politics</i>   |
| <b>MAR. 26</b><br>Boisi Center<br>12 - 1:15 pm   | <b>What Everyone Needs to Know About Shariah</b><br>Natana Delong-Bas (Boston College)<br><i>Lunch Colloquium *RSVP Required*</i>   |
| <b>APR. 8</b><br>Gordon-Conwell<br>5 - 6:30 pm   | <b>Politics and Evangelical Christians</b><br>Randall Balmer (Dartmouth College) and John Fea (Messiah College)<br><i>Co-sponsored with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary</i>   |
| <b>APR. 10</b><br>Boisi Center<br>12 - 1:15 pm   | <b>Religion and the Whole Human Experience</b><br>Nancy T. Ammerman (Boston University)<br><i>Lunch Colloquium *RSVP Required*</i>  |