



## **2014 American Lecture in the History of Religions**

**Catherine L. Albanese**  
J. F. Rowny Professor Emerita,  
University of California, Santa Barbara

Sponsored by the American Academy of Religion,  
Agnes Scott College, Emory University, Georgia State University,  
Mercer University, and Spelman College

### ***In an American Kaleidoscope: Revisiting Two Centuries of American Religious History***

***The Smell of Spirit: What Caused the Great Awakening and Was There One Anyway?***

Monday, April 7, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm

Agnes Scott College, Luchsinger Lounge, Alston Campus Center

***The Religions of the American Revolution and Why They Matter***

Tuesday, April 8, 4:00 pm-5:30 pm

Spelman College: Ennis Cosby Reading Room, Cosby Academic Center

***When is God's Time? Watching the Religious Clock in Antebellum America***

Wednesday, April 9, 3:30 pm-5:00 pm

Mercer University, Atlanta Campus, Trustees Dining Room

***Hiding in Plain View: The New Nineteenth-Century Religious Woman***

Thursday, April 10, 4:00 pm-5:30 pm

Emory University, Psychology and Interdisciplinary Sciences Building, Room 290

***From Methodism to Mind Cure: The Evangelical Origins of New Thought***

Friday, April 11, 3:30 pm-5:00 pm

Georgia State University: 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Arena, SunTrust Building, 25 Park Place

A reception will follow this fifth lecture at Georgia State University, from 5:00-7:00pm, and is intended to celebrate the conclusion of this exciting week-long event. All participating students, faculty and friends are warmly invited to attend.

**The American Lectureship in the History of Religions (ALHR)** was established by a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) in 1891 to encourage path-breaking scholarship through a lecture and book series. A contractual agreement with Columbia University Press in 1936 established that the book manuscripts this Lecture series was designed to promote would be published in a special Series by the Press. The list of ALHR Lecturers, beginning in 1893, reads like a “Who’s Who” in the History of Religions, and the list of books generated by this Lectureship offers eloquent testimony to the influence this Award had in the fostering and development of that field.

At the request of the ACLS, the American Academy of Religion (AAR) assumed administrative responsibility for the series in 1994. The last ALHR Lecturer was Bruce Lawrence in 1999. Publication of the book that grew out of his lectureship, *New Faiths, Old Fears*, was scheduled for fall 2001 but was delayed by Columbia University Press after the September 11, 2001 attacks (the book was eventually published in 2002). During the 2003 calendar year, the lecturer was Willard G. Oxtoby, University of Toronto, emeritus. Due to his unexpected death, the series for 2003 was cancelled.

After a 10-year hiatus in the lecture series, the AAR is now relaunching the program but with a new administrative structure, and a streamlined academic format. Whereas the previous format for the ALHR Lecturer provided an opportunity to offer lectures in multiple cities over a nine-month period, that format is no longer feasible, for budgetary and administrative reasons. We have therefore opted for a new model, based upon a one-week series of lectures to be offered in multiple academic venues in a single North American city. The AAR kicked off the new ALHR series in its hometown of Atlanta with a series of lectures in 2013 by John G. Gager, Jr., Princeton University, and is following up this success with a series of lectures by Catherine Albanese, the J. F. Rowley Professor Emerita and Research Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

## **Catherine L. Albanese**

Catherine L. Albanese is J. F. Rowley Professor Emerita and Research Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is the author of the award-winning *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (Yale, 2007), *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago, 1990), the textbook *America: Religions and Religion*, now in its fifth edition (Cengage, 2013), and numerous other books and articles. She was the President of the American Academy of Religion in 1994.

## **The 2014 American Lecture in the History of Religion** ***In an American Kaleidoscope:*** ***Revisiting Two Centuries of American Religious History***

Kaleidoscopes mean connections and surprising collisions, instances of one thing bouncing off another in unexpected ways. This lecture series will explore two centuries of American religious history with an eye for the kaleidoscopic. The lectures will uncover connections hidden in plain view as well as ironic collisions and reconfigurations—this mostly for the Anglo-Protestant "mainstream," and the spin-offs it never anticipated or thought it wanted. Lectures will focus on the long season of eighteenth-century revivals often called the Great Awakening, the religions of the American Revolution, God's time in American evangelicalism, new nineteenth-century religious women, and the high road from evangelicalism to mind cure. The lecture course will be offered as follows:

**Monday, April 7, 7:00pm**

**Agnes Scott College, Luchsinger Lounge, Alston Campus Center**

***The Smell of Spirit: What Caused the Great Awakening and Was There One Anyway?***

This lecture uses the reputed "Great Awakening" to ask questions about history and what historians do. Citing a major textbook in American religious history that calls the causes of the Great Awakening "something of a mystery," the lecture counters by pursuing social historical and social psychological tracks to explain the eighteenth-century season of evangelical revivals. Here the reification of a Great Awakening comes off as a historical construction—a self- and community-serving strategy to bless and buttress American evangelicalism. As the lecture argues, the spirit that causes and explains the revivals turns out to be not the Holy Spirit but the *human* one.

**Tuesday, April 8, 4:00pm**

**Spelman College: Ennis Cosby Reading Room, Cosby Academic Center**

***The Religions of the American Revolution and Why They Matter***

This lecture moves beyond accounts of winners and losers among the denominations during the American Revolution. The lecture instead divides the religious territory into three broad-based categories. First, there was church religion, for which the tale of denominational winners and losers provides a good beginning. This religion included Revolutionary War leaders as well as a debatably sized popular following. Second, the Enlightenment religion of the leaders, especially in its Freemasonic expression, receives attention, and so does its pervasive (non-Enlightenment) metaphysical counterpart among ordinary folk. Third, the lecture looks to civil religion, an invention of elite propagandists that caught fire among ordinary folk and became a foundational ideology.

**Wednesday, April 9, 3:30pm**

**Mercer University, Atlanta Campus, Trustees Dining Room**

***When is God's Time? Watching the Religious Clock in Antebellum America***

With the climactic time of national beginnings behind, Americans stood in tension between the now-ordinariness of time and the un-ordinary effervescence of building a democratic nation. The lecture argues that, for evangelicals, three distinct ways sprang up to deal with the discomfort of time by sacralizing it. First, in restoring New Testament times, evangelicals found refuge in an age of origins with its renewing strength. Second, in perfectionism, Methodists especially stopped time by maintaining the fullness of an uncompromised present moment as a permanent state. Third, among their Adventist cohort, evangelicals drew meaning from the future as they waiting for the millennium to come. In the end, none of them addressed the problems of a real historical present.

**Thursday, April 10, 4:00pm**

**Emory University, Psychology and Interdisciplinary Sciences Bldg, Room 290**

***Hiding in Plain View: The New Nineteenth-Century Religious Woman***

This lecture recalls social historian Arthur Mann's search for new antebellum woman among factory girls, home-centered women reading *Godey's Lady's Book*, and feminists working for suffrage and equality. Adapting Mann's research, the lecture looks for new nineteenth-century *religious* woman before and after the Civil War. Three collective candidates appear, each in some way radical. First come the radically revolutionary feminists who brought religious alienation to their work, as in *The Woman's Bible*. Second are the radically obedient church woman who found power within their denominations (to use Rosemary Ruether's and Eleanor McLaughlin's term). Third and perhaps newest are the radically sympathetic woman who were spiritualist mediums.

**Friday, April 11, 3:30 pm**

**Georgia State University: 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Arena, SunTrust Building, 25 Park Place, Atlanta**

***From Methodism to Mind Cure: The Evangelical Origins of New Thought***

This lecture offers an untold story of the origins of New Thought to be set alongside the standard narrative of its liberal and radical religious roots. The lecture begins with spiritualism and notices the prominence of Methodists at the beginning of that movement. It also looks to the perfectionist theology that characterized many Methodists as well as fellow travelers. For some of them, perfected humans should be able to communicate with spirits and, later, even to use their minds to effect cures. The Methodist and evangelical trajectory leads then to prominent leaders in the New Thought movement. Meanwhile, the prosperity gospel in both New Thought and evangelical quarters suggests their connection, as does the New Thought practice of tithing.