

Appendix I: Program in Scripture and the Arts

The Program in Scripture and the Arts focuses attention on sacred texts in religious traditions across time and around the world. The program explores the place of scripture in the sacred and secular arts, including literature, music, performance, and visual arts from painting and calligraphy to film. The program is administered by a faculty committee, composed this year of five members: Amy Appleford (English), Emily Hudson (Religion), Deena Klepper (Religion), Jennifer Knust (STH and Religion), and Thomas Michael (Religion). The committee was chaired once again by Klepper. Our programs this year dealt with material drawn from Hindu, Christian, and Muslim traditions; addressed monumental and manuscript art, literature, film, and the internet; and ranged chronologically from antiquity to the present. The common thread linking programming this year was attention to a gap between ideal and reality, describing ways in which actual engagement with sacred text has deviated in surprising ways from the expectations or assumptions of “tradition.”

Next year the Program Committee will be chaired by Emily Hudson. In addition to her work coordinating programming, Professor Hudson will be making some new additions to the committee to regain the interdisciplinary composition we’ve maintained in the past.

Program Events: Fall 2011

The first event of the 2011-2012 season took place on **Thursday, September 22, 2011**, when the Scripture & the Arts Program together with the Center for the Study of Asia presented a lecture by **Wendy Doniger** and **David Frankfurter** entitled “**Why Do Hindus Argue About Their Scripture and Who Is Allowed to Hear It?**” 80 people packed Room 102 of Sargent College as Professor Doniger recounted the history of Hindu sacred texts, charting their progression from oral to written status, exploring why certain canons came to be regarded as sealed. She used her well-publicized struggles with conservative Hindu factions opposed to her scholarship to consider changes in Hindu reading of sacred text and the rise of Hindu “fundamentalism” in the modern period. Subsequently David Frankfurter offered a response that considered how the status of every religious text changes when contained within a book, framing Professor Doniger’s observations on Sanskrit sacred text in a broader religious studies framework. Attendees included faculty, staff, students and many people from the Boston Community. The program was followed by a well-attended reception, after which a smaller group of faculty joined Professor Doniger for dinner and further conversation.

Our next event was held on **December 5, 2011** when the program had the privilege of hosting long time Program in Scripture and the Arts committee member **Emine Fetvaci**, Assistant Professor, Department of History of Art and Architecture at BU. Her talk on “**Sacred and Secular Art in the Court of Sultan Ahmed I**” focused on a seventeenth-century album made for the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I that brought together Persian mystical poetry, Ottoman paintings, and Netherlandish prints with Christian and

mythological subject matter. The talk also examined the intersection of the sacred and the secular in the album, and discussed the paintings, prints and calligraphies in the context of cross-cultural exchange. A reception immediately followed.

Program Events: Spring 2012

The first event of the spring semester was held on **March 6, 2012** when the Scripture & Arts Program had the honor of hosting Professor **Elizabeth Castelli** of Barnard College to present her lecture entitled “**Translating Pasolini Translating Paul.**” Castelli was the original English translator for Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini’s film “The Gospel According to St. Matthew.” Due to his untimely death, Pasolini was never able to produce the script he wrote for his second film on St. Paul the Apostle. Castelli’s lecture situated Saint Paul in the broader framework of Pasolini's oeuvre and considers how his script relates to the more recent interest in Paul's letters among continental philosophers. The event was held in SED Room 130 and included an introduction and Q&A led by Professor Jennifer Knust. A lovely reception followed where faculty and students from multiple universities in the area socialized and discussed Castelli’s talk, and a small group of invited faculty from BU and elsewhere had the opportunity to continue the stimulating conversation at a dinner afterwards.

The last event of the academic year was a small intimate gathering and discussion led by our own Professor **Emily Hudson** on **March 20, 2012** in the Judaic Studies boardroom on the subject of “**Moral Paragons and Moral Dilemmas in the Indian Epics.**” Attendees included graduate and undergraduate students, religion faculty, and staff members. Professor Hudson offered a rereading of a central text in the study of Hinduism, the Ramayana, by interrogating its central protagonist’s status as a moral paragon. Afterwards, a small reception was held in the neighboring library, where students and other guests had an opportunity to speak informally with Professor Hudson on the subject.