_DIGITAL RELIGION:

Transforming Knowledge and Practice

hosted by NYU's Center for Religion and Media

DIGITAL RELIGION:
TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE
A **two-day workshop March 25-26, 2010**

NYU Center for Religion and Media
 http://crm.as.nyu.edu/page/home
Organizers: Angela Zito, Faye Ginsburg
NYU Kimmel Buliding, 50 Washington Square South, Room 405

Interaction with digital technologies expands the experience and reach of religious communities and their social networks across vast territorial space, generating new symbols and signifiers, and constituting new social networks. As the internet facilitates the swift spread of religious enthusiasms, knowledges and forms of practice across boundaries of nations, cultures and classes, it has also stretched and transformed the mediation of information about religious experiences and their politics in the public sphere. Reactions to such developments range from the suspicious to the celebratory as digital media also allow for new forms of transnational knowledge production and circulation. The Center for Religion and Media is using this workshop to help us launch a multi-year project that will help us break new ground in understanding the implications of these distinct but interrelated changes for scholars, practitioners, activists and journalists. We ask:

* How is *religious practice* being transformed and challenged by digital technologies across national and cultural boundaries?

* How is *knowledge about religion* and *its implications for international politics, diplomacy and human rights* being transformed via online commentary/journalism?

Thursday, March 25, 2010_____

1:00-3:00pm

Welcome: **Angela Zito**   (NYU, CRM)

1: Digital challenges by and for religious life
How is religious life challenged through digital capabilities: ie. Anti-semitism online, the spread of extremist religiously motivated forms of intolerance and violence? How can understandings of digital religion take into account the ways that digital practices intersect with the everyday lives of those who are not necessarily connected in either wired or wireless form? How is the digital (in its various forms) understood to function "religiously"?

Moderator: **Faye Ginsburg** (NYU CRM)

Ramesh Srinivasan (UCLA)
Exploring How Indigenous Ontologies Are Refracted Via Networks and Databases

Brigitte Sion (NYU)
Antisemitism 2.0: production, dissemination and agency.

Gabriella Coleman (NYU)
Old & New Net Wars Over Free Speech, Freedom & Secrecy or How to Understand the Hacker & Lulz battle against the Church of Scientology

Elizabeth Castelli (Barnard College, Chair, Religious Studies)
 "First They Came for the Swingers": Christian Warriors, Digital Surveillance, and Spiritual Mapping in the Texas Panhandle

Patsy Spyer (Leiden/NYU Global Fellow)
 "Online/Offline: Circulation, Amplification, and the City at War

3:00-3:30 coffee break

Digital Stories, Religion, and Human Rights Activism

3:30- 5:00pm   Public Program/Film screening: **Burma VJ**
(2008, *Anders Østergaard, 90 minutes*)

5- 5:30 pm   Q & A w/, U Pyinya Zawta (All Burma Monks' Alliance) and Sam Gregory, Program Director, Witness

5:45-7:45 pm
Roundtable on "Witnessing, reporting, and digital mediation of religious conflict: challenges for human rights"
How has religious conflict and persecution been changed, exacerbated or eased, through use of digital technologies among the protagonists? How have crowd-sourcing and citizen journalism changed aspects of coverage of political and religious life? How have digital media transformed the politics of human rights organization?

Moderator: **Julie Sulc** (The Pew Charitable Trusts)

Annabelle Sreberny (SOAS, London)
 Iran eats its Greens. An analysis of the election and post-election emergence of the 'green movement', its varied uses of digital technologies and Islamic symbolism to promote democratic procedures and broader human rights, and the highly repressive response from the Islamic Republic.

Sam Gregory (Witness, Program Director)
 The ethics of ubiquitous witnessing: Human rights online and the contemporary opportunities and dilemmas

Peter Manseau (Writer; PhD candidate, Georgetown)
"Turning the Law Wheel, Breaching the Green Dam: How a rag tag exercise group called Falun Gong got religion and might just change the world"

Robbie Barnett (Columbia University)
Tibet, Buddhism and the desire for visible truths

Friday, March 26, 2010_____

9:00 am —noon
2: Religious Practice Digitally Transformed
How have new media influenced aspects of life and practice across transnational diasporas of religious people? How do the religious actively integrate the digital into practice or cosmology? How does this vary across national boundaries to unite or drive apart communities?

Moderator: **Erica Robles** (NYU Media, Culture and Communication)

Heidi Campbell (Texas A&M)
Religious authority and the internet

Kristin Sands (Sarah Lawrence)
Muslim and Sufi Anarchists on the Internet

Oren Golan (NYU CRM)
Religious Communities Online: The (Re)Construction of Jewish Communities Over the Internet

Lynn Schofield Clark (University of Denver U)
 Digital Storytelling and Religious Identification in the World of YouTube

Gregory Grieve (UNC Greensboro)
Transforming Meditation: Second Life's Zen Buddhist Community and the Ideology of Spiritual Cultivation

Rachel Wagner (Ithaca College)
Me, Myself, And Ipod: Hybrid, Wired And Plural Selves

Noon- 1:30 Lunch for participants
Lunch served in the 900 series, Kimmel Center, 9th fl.

1:30-3:30 pm
3:   Writing on religion in an online world
How have writers and activists incorporated digital practices into their own writing about and treatment of religious life and its varied spiritualities and politics? What specific challenges does religion present for storytelling? How does journalism and storytelling about religion fit into the world of blogging and online writing? How can Humanities-driven academic environments, where you find programs like Religious Studies and Centers for Religion and Media, engage this digital world?

Moderator: **Brooke Kroeger** (NYU, Journalism)

Jeff Sharlet (Assistant Professor, Dartmouth; writer, associate editor therevealer.org, and killingthebuddha.com)
 http://jeffsharlet.com/

Debra Mason (Director, Center on Religion and the Professions, University of Missouri)
 http://journalism.missouri.edu/faculty/debra-mason.html

Peter Manseau (Writer, editor at www.killingthebuddha.com)

Evan Derkasc (Editor at Religion Dispatches)
http://www.religiondispatches.org/bloggers/evanderkacz/

Haroon Moghul (Columbia and NYU) writer of the blog http://avari.typepad.com/avari/, contributor to http://www.altmuslim.com/

Gordon Knox (Director, ASU Art Museum) http://asunews.asu.edu/20091118_NewASUArtMuseumdirector

3:45-5:00 pm
4:   Gathering threads, future agendas: reports from workshop commentators
Our report-back scholars, charged with listening during the conference, will start off our final round of discussion with concentrated commentary and feedback.

Moderator: **Angela Zito** (NYU, CRM)

Diane Winston (USC, Knight Professor of Journalism)

Jeremy Stolow (Concordia, Montreal, Director Deus in Machina Project)

biographies_____

Robert J. Barnett, Assistant Professor at Columbia University in Contemporary Tibetan Studies. He has edited or written a number of books on modern Tibet, most recently *Tibetan Modernities: Notes from the Field on Social and Cultural Change,* co-edited with Ronald Schwartz (Brill, 2008).
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/faculty/barnett.html

Heidi Campbell, Assistant Professor of Communication at Texas A&M University, has written *Exploring Religious Community Online: We are one in the network* (Peter Lang, 2005) and the forthcoming book *When Religion Meets New Media* (Routledge, 2010).
http://comm.tamu.edu/people/campbell.html

Elizabeth Castelli, Professor and Director of the Department of Religion at Barnard College. She edits a journal devoted to the analysis of "scriptures" and their legacies in contemporary life: *Postscripts: The Journal of Sacred Texts and Contemporary Worlds.*
http://www.barnard.edu/religion/castelli.htm

Lynn Schofield Clark, Associate Professor and director of the Estlow International Center for Journalism and New Media at the University of Denver. Her publications include *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural* (Oxford University Press, 2003/2005) and, as co-author, *Media, Home, and Family* (Routledge, 2004).
http://mysite.du.edu/~lclark29/bio.html

Gabriella Coleman, Assistant Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University Steinhardt. She is completing a book manuscript "Coding Freedom: Hacker Pleasure and the Ethics of Free and Open Source Software" for Princeton University Press, andstarting a new project on peer to peer patient activism on the Internet.
 http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/faculty_bios/view/Gabriella_Coleman

Evan Derkacz, managing editor of Religion Dispatches, was an editor and writer at the award-winning web magazine, AlterNet.org, from 2003-2007. Previously, he was Tikkun magazine's media coordinator. His writing has appeared in McSweeney's, AlterNet, The Huffington Post and Start Making Sense (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004).
http://www.religiondispatches.org/about/1129/staff_%26_bios

Faye Ginsburg, David B. Kriser Professor of Anthropology, director of the Graduate Program in Culture and Media Culture, and co-director of the Center for Religion and Media. She is completing a book based on research over the last decade with indigenous filmmakers entitled "Mediating Culture."
http://as.nyu.edu/object/fayeginsburg.html

Oren Golan, a Fulbright postdoctoral scholar at NYU's Center for Religion and Media. He has lectured at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at the unit for Informal Education at Beit Berl College. His PhD, "Computing Friendship: the Social Construction of Relationships within CMC among Israeli Adolescents" is available on his website http://cyber-youth.blogspot.com/. http://www.blogger.com/profile/15683755121967145846

Sam Gregory, Program Director at WITNESS, which trains and supports people to use video in human rights advocacy. Videos he has co-produced have been screened to decision-makers at the US Congress, the UK Houses of Parliament, the United Nations and at film festivals worldwide.
http://www.witness.org/index.phpoption=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=21&Itemid=51

Gregory Price Grieve, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is the author of *Retheorizing Religion in Nepal* and co-editor of *Historicizing Tradition in the Study of Religion.* He is currently working on *Digital Dharma: Buddhism, Second Life and the Reenchantment of Late Modernity*
http://gpgrieve.org/

Gordon Knox is currently director of the Arizona State University Art Museum. Knox, whose work explores the transformative role of the arts in society, was recently recognized by Forbes Magazine for his work on collaborative projects at the SHL that brings together experts in the arts, humanities and sciences and engages them in on-the-ground efforts to effect social change.
http://asunews.asu.edu/20091118_NewASUArtMuseumdirector

Brooke Kroeger is the director of the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute. She is the author of *Passing: When People Can't Be Who They Are* (2003) and two biographies: *Fannie: The Talent for Success of Writer Fannie Hurst* (1999) and *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist* (1994). Currently she is researching a book on undercover reporting.
http://journalism.nyu.edu/faculty/kroeger.html

Peter Manseau has written the memoir *Vows*, the travelogue *Rag and Bone*, and the novel *Songs for the Butcher's Daughter*, and a recipient of the National Jewish Book Award. His work has appeared in the New York Times Magazine, the Washington Post Magazine, among others, including the online religion magazine he co-founded in 2000, KillingTheBuddha.com. He lives in Washington, DC, where he lectures in Journalism and is a doctoral student in theology at Georgetown University.
 http://www.petermanseau.com/about.html

Debra Mason is a award-winning former religion journalist with more than 15 years of work aimed at improving the public understanding of religion. She directs both Religion Newswriters Association and The Center on Religion & the Professions, housed at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. She created ReligionLink.org and envisioned and edited *Religion Reporting: A Guide to Journalism's Best Beat*.
 http://journalism.missouri.edu/faculty/debra-mason.html

Haroon Moghul, Executive Director of The Maydan Institute, a consulting and communications project devoted to enhancing understanding between Muslims and the West. Selected a global Muslim Leader of Tomorrow, Moghul is the author of *The Order of Light* (Penguin 2006). His work has appeared on CNN, The History Channel, The New Yorker, Dawn, The Friday Times, and Tikkun. Through the Islamic Center at NYU new media services, his sermons reach 30,000 listeners per month in about 125 countries. He is currently a PhD candidate at Columbia University.
 http://avari.typepad.com/about.html

Erica Reyna Robles, Assistant Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at NYU Steinhardt. Her research focuses on the role media technologies play in the production of space. She is currently writing a book about the 20th century transformation of Protestant worship space into a highly mediated, spectacular "mega-church."
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/mcc/faculty_bios/view/Erica_Robles

Kristin Zahra Sands, Professor of Islamic Studies at Sarah Lawrence College.
Her research and teaching interests include Sufism, Quranic exegesis, religion and media, and political theology. She is theauthor of *Sufi Commentaries on the Quran in Classical Islam* (Routledge 2005).
http://www.slc.edu/undergraduate/study/humanities/religion/faculty.html

Jeff Sharlet, Assistant Professor of English at Dartmouth College and the author of *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*, a national bestseller. A longtime associate of NYU's Center for Religion and Media, he was the founding editor of the Center's review, therevealer.org, and is a contributing editor for Harper's and Rolling Stone. He is co-founder, with Peter Manseau, of KillingTheBuddha.com and co-author with Manseau of *Killing the Buddha: A Heretic's Bible*.
http://jeffsharlet.com/content/about-jeff-sharlet/

Brigitte Sion, Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow in New York University's Program in Religious Studies. She is the author of four books on the Holocaust, the history of the automobile, and Reform Judaism; she is currently working on a book about memorials, and editing a volume on memory, trauma and performance in Argentina.
 http://www.brigittesion.com/

Patricia Spyer holds the chair of Anthropology of Indonesia at Leiden University, the Netherlands, is Global Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at NYU, and a CRM fellow. She has published widely on violence, historical consciousness, the media and photography and materiality and religion, including her edited volume *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*. http://anthropology.as.nyu.edu/object/PatriciaSpyer.html

Annabelle Sreberny, Professor of Global Media and Communications and Director of the Centre for Media and Film Studies at SOAS, University of London (http://www.soas.ac.uk/mediaandfilm/) and President of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (http://iamcr.org/). She is the author of *Small Media, Big Revolution*, an analysis of the 1979 revolution; Blogistan (IBTauris, forthcoming) and is currently working on a book on the Iranian 'green movement' for Paradigm Publishers.
 http://www.soas.ac.uk/staff/staff31856.php

Ramesh Srinivasan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Information Studies and Design| Media Arts at the UCLA. His research focuses on the interaction between new media technologies and global cultures and communities, studying how information technology shapes global education, health, economics, politics, governance, and social movements. He works in such diverse parts of the world as Kyrgyzstan, India, Native America.
http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/index.html

Jeremy Stolow, Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University, Montréal, Canada. His published works include *Orthodox By Design (*University of California, 2010) as well as the edited volume *Deus in Machina: Exploring Religion and Technology in Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Fordham, forthcoming 2009-10)
http://www.jeremystolow.com/content/blogsection/1/2/

Julie Sulc works with the Pew Charitable Trusts in the area of information initiatives. The organization seeks to improve public policy by studying and promoting nonpartisan policy solutions for pressing and emerging problems affecting the American public and the global community.
 http://www.pewtrusts.org/about_us_board_staff.aspx

Rachel Wagner, Assistant Professor of Religion in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Ithaca College. She specializes in religion and culture, especially religion, film and virtual reality. Currently, she is working on a book on the intersection of religious studies and virtual reality entitled *Godwired: Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality* (Routledge, expected 2011).
http://faculty.ithaca.edu/rwagner/

Diane Winston holds the Knight Chair in Media and Religion at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California. Her published works include *Red Hot and Righteous: The Urban Religion of the Salvation Army* (1999) and, as co-editor, *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture* (2002) A journalist and a scholar, Winston's current research interests are media coverage of Islam, religion and new media, and the place of religion in American identity.
http://uscmediareligion.org/?About

U Pyinya Zawta, born in 1960 in Burma, entered a monastery at eleven, and was ordained as a monk at twenty. He has attended Swedawsyn Pali University and taught Buddhist literature and Buddhist doctrine. His activism on behalf of Daw Aung Su Kyi's party landed him in prison twice, from 1990-1993, 1998-2004. After his release, in summer and fall of 2007 he helped form and lead the All Burma Monks Alliance to protest the policies of military rule in Burma, the protests documented in *Burma VJ*. He escaped Rangoon after his monastery was attacked by the regime, who then arrested his family. They were released in 2008, when he moved as a refugee to the USA. He lives in Utica NY with three other monks, serving the Burmese community there, and supporting refugee Buddhist monks in and out of Burma.

Angela Zito is Associate Professor of anthropology and religious studies at NYU where she also co-directs the Center for Religion and Media. She studies embodied life and ritual in many of their mediated forms, including film and especially in China.
http://www.angelazito.com/

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