



The UVU Religious Studies Program presents the
Eighth Annual Mormon Studies Conference

Mormonism in the Public Mind

Perceptions of an Emerging World Faith

April 2 - 3, 2009

Lakeview Room, UVU Library (Thursday)
Ragan Theater, UVU Student Center (Friday)

Conference Description

The past few years have seen an unprecedented public discussion of Mormonism. From the 2007 PBS documentary "The Mormons" to Mitt Romney's run for the White House, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other Mormon groups have been the subject of nearly unceasing scrutiny. 2008 was a year in which we witnessed the raid of an FLDS compound in Eldorado, Texas and the tumultuous debate over Proposition 8 in California.

Throughout their history, Latter-day Saints have struggled with the public image of their faith. This challenge has persisted from early confrontations in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and territorial Utah to the ongoing attempt to gain acceptance within the broader streams of American culture. Media attention on the peculiarities of Mormonism has shown that, as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints emerges as a world faith, the challenges of understanding and respectability are far from over.

This conference will address the place of Mormonism in public discourse and examine the strategies involved in the Latter-day Saint response to skepticism and prejudice. Pertinent questions include: What are the current perceptions of Mormonism? What is the extent of misinformation? Have the attempts by Latter-day Saints to shape their image been successful? To what extent is media coverage accurate and fair? How has the Internet impacted public discussion of Mormonism?

Co-Sponsors

Religious Studies Program, Utah Valley University
College of Humanities and Social Sciences, UVU
Department of Communication, UVU

Department of English, UVU
Department of Humanities and Philosophy, UVU
Utah Democracy Project

For more information

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or visit

www.uvu.edu/philbum/religious/index.html

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Schedule of Events

all sessions are free and open to the public (seating is limited)

Thursday, April 2

*Lakeview Room
UVU Library (4th Floor)*

8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Welcome

Brian D. Birch

Director of Religious Studies, UVU

“Mormonisms”

Daniel Stout, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Dan Wotherspoon, Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy

10:00 – 11:15 a.m.

Keynote Address

Michael Paulson

Religion Reporter, The Boston Globe

11:30 – 12:45 p.m.

Brownbag Lunch Panel

“The Mormon Beat”

Michael Paulson, Boston Globe

Lynn Arave, The Deseret News

Peggy Fletcher Stack, The Salt Lake Tribune

Jennifer Dobner, Associated Press

1:00 – 2:15 p.m.

“New Media and Pop Culture”

Jana Riess, Westminster John Knox Press

Stephen Carter, Sunstone Magazine

Kristine Haglund, Dialogue

2:30 – 3:45

“Symbols and Boundary Maintenance”

Joel Campbell, The Mormon Times

Charles Randall Paul, Foundation for Interreligious

Diplomacy

David Scott, Utah Valley University

7:00 p.m.

Eighth Annual Eugene England Lecture

Lakeview Room

“The Prehistory of the Soul”

Terryl L. Givens

Bostwick Professor of English, University of Richmond

Friday, April 3

*Ragan Theater
UVU Student Center*

8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Welcome

Boyd J. Petersen

Program Coordinator for Mormon Studies, UVU

“Political Discourse and the Latter-day Saints”

Boyd Petersen, Utah Valley University

Kirk Jowers, Hinckley Institute of Politics

Morris Thurston, Joseph Smith Papers Project

10:00 – 10:50 a.m.

“Public Relations for the Twenty-First Century”

Val Edwards, LDS Public Affairs Department

Richard Bushman, Claremont Graduate University

11:00 – 11:50 p.m.

“LDS Public Relations: Strategies and Applications”

Gary Lawrence, Lawrence Research

Claudia Bushman, Claremont Graduate University

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Brownbag Lunch Panel

Val Edwards, Claudia Bushman,

Gary Lawrence, Richard Bushman

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

“The Mormons in American Religious Thought”

Grant Underwood, Brigham Young University

Terryl Givens, University of Richmond

Brian Birch, Utah Valley University

2:00 – 3:00

Panel Discussion

Grant Underwood, Terryl Givens, Brian Birch

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Participants

LYNN ARAVE is the community edition editor and writer for the Deseret News and has covered a wide range of issues related to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints including Mormon culture, blogging, scholarship, and media.

BRIAN BIRCH is director of the Religious Studies Program at Utah Valley University and editor of *Element: The Journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology*. He is the chair elect of the Board of Directors for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and serves on the Steering Committee for the American Academy of Religion's Mormon Studies Consultation.

CLAUDIA BUSHMAN teaches in the School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University and is the author of *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* and co-author of *Building the Kingdom: The History of Latter-day Saints in America*. She is a co-founder of *Exponent II* and currently serves on the Board of Directors for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.

RICHARD BUSHMAN is the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University and the author of *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, and the essays in *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*. He is the Gouverneur Morris Professor of History Emeritus at Columbia University and winner of the 1968 Bancroft Prize in American history for *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and Social Order in Connecticut*.

JOEL CAMPBELL is the "Mormon Media Observer" for the Mormon Times and former reporter and editor for the Deseret News. He is also assistant professor of Communications at Brigham Young University. He is the recipient of the Roy B. Gibson Freedom of Information Award and Clifford P. Cheney Service to Journalism Award.

JENNIFER DOBNER is a writer for the Associated Press and covers the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Her articles have covered a wide range of events and issues in Mormonism including the Mitt Romney presidential campaign and Mormon fundamentalism.

VAL EDWARDS is Director of Research and Analysis for the Public Affairs Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With over twenty years in the department, he most recently coordinated the department's initial efforts with "new media."

TERRYL GIVENS is the Bostwick Professor English at the University of Richmond and author of *The Latter-day Saint Experience in America*, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy*, and *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture*.

KRISTINE HAGLUND is the editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. Recently appointed following Levi Petersen's term, her first issue was released in February (Spring, 2009). A frequent commentator on Mormon blogs, she is currently a contributor to *By Common Consent*.

KIRK JOWERS is the Director of the Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah and the Associate Director of the Institute of Public and International Affairs. He also is a partner in the Washington, D.C. law firm Caplin & Drysdale, Vice Chairman of the Governor's Commission on Strengthening Utah's Democracy, and a Member of the Utah Constitutional Revision Commission.

GARY LAWRENCE founded Lawrence Research, an opinion polling firm in Santa Ana, California and is the author of *How Americans View Mormonism: Seven Steps to Improve our Image*. He is also a contributor to Meridian Magazine.

MICHAEL PAULSON is a religion reporter for the Boston Globe who writes frequently on Mormonism. He is the co-recipient of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for public service and winner of the numerous awards including the 2008 Templeton and Supple Awards. He also writes for the Boston Globe's blog Articles of Faith.

BOYD PETERSEN is the program coordinator for Mormon Studies at Utah Valley University and author of *Hugh Nibley: A Consecrated Life*. He is the president of the Association for Mormon Letters and a board member for Mormon Scholars in the Humanities.

CHARLES RANDALL PAUL is founder and president of the Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy. He is currently completing two books, *Fighting about God: Why We Do It and How to Do It Better* and *Converting the Saints: An American Religious Conflict*.

JANA RIESS is an acquisitions editor at Westminster John Knox Press and author of *Mormonism for Dummies*, *What Would Buffy Do?*, and *American Pilgrimage*. She is the former Religion Book Review Editor at Publisher's Weekly.

DAVID SCOTT is chair of the Department of Communication at Utah Valley University specializing in religion and media. He is author of the forthcoming "Religious Community on the Internet: An Analysis of Mormon Websites" and "Constructing sacred history: Multi-media Narratives and the Discourse of 'Museumness' at Mormon Temple Square," both in the *Journal of Media and Religion*.

PEGGY FLETCHER STACK is religion reporter for the Salt Lake Tribune and a widely consulted source for journalists covering the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She is also the co-author of *A World of Faith* and a former editor for Sunstone Magazine.

DANIEL STOUT is professor of journalism and media studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and co-author of *Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations*, and *Religion and Popular Culture: Studies on the Interaction of Worldviews*. He is also co-editor of the *Journal of Media and Religion* and the *Encyclopedia of Religion, Communication and Media*.

MORRIS THURSTON is co-editor of the Joseph Smith Papers Project Legal and Business Series. He retired in 2004 as a senior partner at Latham & Watkins in Los Angeles and is author of *Breath Life Into Your Life Story: How to Write a Story that People Will Want to Read*.

GRANT UNDERWOOD is professor of history at Brigham Young University and author of *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* and *Voyages of Faith: Explorations in Mormon Pacific History*. Prior to his current appointment, he served as a research historian in the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History at Brigham Young University. He currently serves as co-chair of the Mormon Studies Consultation in the American Academy of Religion.

DAN WOTHERSPOON is director of operations for the Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy. He also served as editor of Sunstone Magazine and executive director of the Sunstone Foundation and has lectured widely on Mormons in American thought and culture.