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# Oregon Humanities Center

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## Richard Thompson Ford Will Speak About “Racial Culture” as O’Fallon Lecturer

What is black culture? Does it have an essence? What do we lose and gain by assuming that it does, and by building our laws accordingly?

**Richard Thompson Ford**, George E. Osborne Professor of Law, Stanford Law School, and the **2005-06 O’Fallon Lecturer in Law and American Culture**, will raise these and other bold and provocative questions in his lecture entitled **“Racial Culture: A Critique,”** scheduled for **Tuesday, April 11, 2006.** The lecture will take place in **175 Knight Law Center at 7:30 p.m.** and will be followed by a book sale and signing.

In his lecture, Richard Ford questions the common assumption that social categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality

are defined by distinctive cultural practices, and he argues against law reform proposals that would attempt to apply civil rights protections to “cultural difference.”

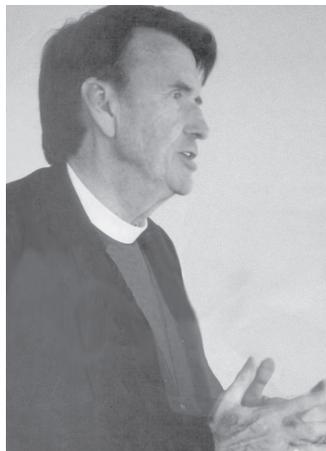
Ford argues that multicultural accounts of cultural difference do not accurately describe the practices of social groups. He further suggests that the “rights to difference” discourse is a misguided one that can lead to policies which threaten to exacerbate social divisions that



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## Prolific Author and Former Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong to Discuss Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Retired Episcopal Bishop **John Shelby Spong** will visit Oregon to give two thought-provoking public lectures on the future of Christianity as the Oregon Humanities Center’s



**2005-06 Kritikos Professor in the Humanities.**

His **Eugene lecture “Who is the Popular God in Public Life in the 21st Century?”** will take place on **Wednesday, May 24, 2006 at 7:30 p.m.** in **150 Columbia Hall.** Spong will explore a variety

of timely and important questions concerning faith and living in the modern world. He will ask: “What has happened to God in our generation, when that holy name is invoked to support a method of teaching about human origins which is universally dismissed in the world of academic science? When God is invoked to justify violence against whoever one’s enemy is? When America’s leaders lecture the people of Iraq about why they cannot install a fundamentalist Islamic government, but defend a Supreme Court nominee on the basis of being an Evangelical Christian? When Congress—in the name of God—passes a bill to interfere with the decision of a [terminally ill] patient’s family and doctor? When God is invoked to support a Constitutional amendment to discriminate against homo-

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## David Wacks Shares His Fellowship Experience

I spent Fall term 2005 at the Oregon Humanities Center working on a book manuscript about how Muslim, Jewish, and Christian medieval Spanish authors shared a common culture of narrative fiction. *Framing Iberia: Multicultural Narrative in Medieval Spain* views Hebrew, Arabic, and Spanish texts as strands of a single tradition of storywriting. I focus on the textual storytelling tradition of 12<sup>th</sup>- to 15<sup>th</sup>-century Spain, a multicultural society with important lessons to teach us about how literary traditions are enriched by being open to multiple religious and linguistic practices.



During my fellowship, I worked on three chapters in particular. The first is a study of Petrus Alfonsi, a Jew who grew up in Muslim Spain during the late 11<sup>th</sup> century and converted to Christianity after the Christians conquered his Aragonese homeland. He was the author of a Latin collection of stories and fables from Arabic and Hebrew tradition, the *Disciplina Clericalis* (“Scholar’s Guide”), that became wildly popular in Christian Europe, and eventually inspired Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. The second chapter deals with the work of Juan Ruiz, an Archpriest who wrote the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish classic, *Libro de buen amor* (“Book of Good Love”), a highly idiosyncratic work whose unique narrative style is best explained by the author’s familiarity with the Spanish Hebrew *maqamat*, a type of rhymed prose narrative. The final chapter of *Framing Iberia* examines the similar case of the *Libre de les dones* (“Book of Ladies”) by Jaume Roig, a mid-15<sup>th</sup>-century physician and author from Valencia, who wrote a very idiosyncratic misogynist narrative poem about the episodic adventures of a young man who suffers four catastrophic marriages in a row. As with Ruiz, the idiosyncrasies of Roig’s book are best understood as part of a medieval Iberian narrative tradition spanning nearly four centuries of Muslim and Christian rule, uniting frame tales and *maqamat* written in Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, Castilian, and Catalan.

Thanks to the Oregon Humanities Center, I was able to complete the bulk of the manuscript, and to work on article-length contributions to a forthcoming special issue of *Diacritics* on Medieval Iberia and critical theory, as well as to a collection of essays on the literature of the *conversos*, Spanish Jews who converted to Christianity (ed. Amy I. Aaronson-Friedman, forthcoming from Brill Academic Publishers). During the fellowship I gave a talk that was attended by a wide range of people, including undergraduates, faculty, and community members with an interest in medieval culture. I very much enjoyed this rare opportunity to discuss my work with people outside of the university. The time and space afforded me by the Humanities Center has been indispensable in bringing this project toward publication. I arrived at the Center with a loose collection of ideas and essays, and ten weeks later emerged with a book. The Oregon Humanities Center’s research fellowship was a unique opportunity to dedicate myself exclusively to thinking and writing, and to share my work with the local community.

## Louis Menand’s *The Story of the Soup Cans* Is Published

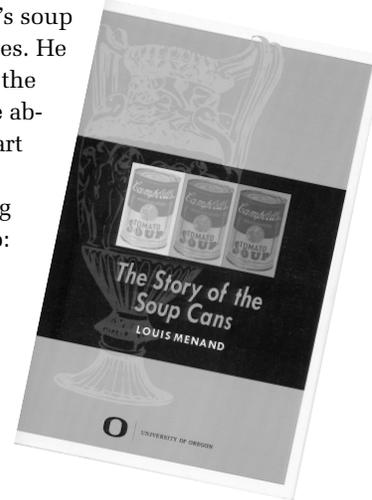
A printed version of Louis Menand’s May 11, 2005 Portland Kritikos lecture, *The Story of the Soup Cans*, is now available through the Oregon Humanities Center.

Louis Menand is the Bass Professor of English and American Literature and Language at Harvard University. His book *The Metaphysical Club* won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 2002.

In *The Story of the Soup Cans*, Menand sketches out the historical context for understanding the emergence of Andy Warhol’s 1962 exhibition of Campbell’s soup cans at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. He places the soup cans in the context of the distinction between the high art of the abstract Expressionists and the “kitsch” art of mass culture.

The cost is \$5 plus \$3 for shipping and handling. Make checks payable to: The Oregon Humanities Center  
5211 University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403.

Other Kritikos lectures are also available for purchase. To view our collection of publications, or to download an order form, visit the Humanities Center homepage at <http://uoregon.edu/~humanctr/> and click on the “Publications” link at the top of the page.



## O’Fallon Lecture

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we should be working to lessen; which unduly impinge on individual liberties; and which distract from the most pressing contemporary social concerns, particularly those related to the distribution of wealth and income. Ford’s focus is on the law and legal institutions, and the effects—often unintended—that multiculturalist legal policies can have.

One of the most distinctive and important young voices in America’s legal academy today, Richard Ford makes a bold argument against the liberal emphasis on diversity—which, he says, often results in a “difference discourse” that forces minority groups to accept the very stereotypes they are trying to oppose. In so doing, he makes a major contribution to our understanding of today’s politics of race.

This lecture, sponsored by Betsy Mayer and the O’Fallon family, is free and open to the public. For more information, or for disability accommodations (which must be made by April 4<sup>th</sup>), please call (541) 346-3934.

**Find a complete listing of “UO Today” episodes available in digital form by going to our web page at:**  
**<http://uoregon.edu/~humanctr/uotonline.htm>**

*The Oregon Humanities Center would like to thank the UO Knight Library and Media Services for making these digital versions of “UO Today” programs available.*

## Spong

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sexual persons? Is this who God has become? How did that happen? What is the future of this kind of religion?"

For his **Portland lecture**, scheduled for **Thursday, May 25th at 5:45 p.m.** in the **Mayfair Ballroom of the Benson Hotel**, 309 SW Broadway, Portland, Spong will ask "**Can 21st-Century People Believe in God with Integrity?**" In this talk, Spong will pose the following questions: "Who is God for us today? Does this concept of God, given its present cultural use, still have meaning? Is there a God experience that can be understood in a new way by postmodern people, and if so, how does this relate to the idea of God that is still present in traditional religious settings?"

John Shelby Spong was the Bishop of Newark, N.J. for more than twenty years and is one of the leading spokespersons in the world for an open, scholarly, and progressive Christianity. He has taught at Harvard and at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. He is the author of more than twenty books, including the best-selling *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism* and *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*. His most recent book is entitled *The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love* (2005).

Both lectures are free and open to the public. The Portland lecture will be preceded by a reception at 5 p.m. For more information or for disability accommodations (which must be made by May 17th), please call (541) 346-3934.

### Have you considered leaving a gift to the Oregon Humanities Center in your will?

The Office of Gift Planning can help you craft language in your will to support the UO, or find ways to fund a life-income gift that can save you taxes and increase your income while supporting the UO. Call (541) 346-1687 for more information.

## 2006-2007 OHC Fellowships Announced

### Research Fellowships

**Monique R. Balbuena**, Clark Honors College: *Diasporic Sephardic Identities: A Transnational Poetics of Jewish Languages* (Fall)

**Leonard Feldman**, Political Science: *A Genealogy of Necessity* (Fall)

**Sangita Gopal**, English: *No Place to Hide: Conjugal and Nationalism in Contemporary Hindi Film* (Fall)

**Jenifer Presto**, Comparative Literature: *The Other Motherland: Italy and the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Russian Imagination* (Spring)

**Ellen Rees**, Germanic Languages and Literatures: *Genre and Space in Cora Sandel's Short Prose* (Winter). Professor Rees is also the recipient of the **Ernest G. Moll Research Fellowship in Literary Studies**.

**Stephen Rodgers**, Music: *Berlioz and the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century French Romance: Convention, Ingenuity, and Autobiography in His Late Songs* (Spring)

**Daniel Wojcik**, English: *Outsider Art and Vernacular Traditions* (Winter)

### Alternates (in ranked order):

**Steve Larson**, Music: *Musical Forces and Music Analysis* (Winter)

**Garrett Hongo**, Creative Writing: *The North Shore* (Fall)

### Teaching Fellowships

**Heather Briston**, Knight Library, and **Suzanne Clark**, English: *Writing and the New Research* (Fall: WR 399)

**Evlyn Gould**, Romance Languages, and **Karen McPherson**, Romance Languages: *Great Romances: The World of Proust* (Fall: RL 410/510). Professors Gould and McPherson have also been awarded a **2006-2007 Robert F. and Evelyn Nelson Wulf Professorship in the Humanities**.

**Anita Weiss**, International Studies: *Islam and Global Forces* (Spring: INTL 399). Professor Weiss has also been awarded a **2006-2007 Robert F. and Evelyn Nelson Wulf Professorship in the Humanities**.

### Coleman-Guitteau Teaching-and-Research Fellowships

**Martha Bayless**, English: *Oral Traditions in Ancient and Modern Culture* (Winter: ENG 407)

**Elizabeth Reis**, Women's and Gender Studies: *Sex and Medical Ethics* (Winter: WGS 415)

### Graduate Research Fellowships

**Amanda Adams**, English: *In Person: Authorship, Performance, and the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Lecture Tour* (Winter)

**Celia Bardwell-Jones**, Philosophy: *Travel, Identity and Community: Transnationalizing the Social Self* (Fall)

**Zhihong Chen**, History: *Going to the Frontier: Chinese Intellectuals' Reconceptualization of Chinese Geography and Peoples during the 1930s* (Fall)

**Ann Laudati**, Geography: *The Greening of the Fortress: Rethinking the Conservation and Development Discourse in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda* (Fall)

### Alternates (in ranked order):

**Tim Dalton**, Creative Writing: *Enumeration: A Novel* (Winter)

**Torrie Hester**, History: *Deportation: Origins of a National and International Power* (Winter)



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Call 541-346-3934 or send an e-mail to: [peg@uoregon.edu](mailto:peg@uoregon.edu).

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## ***Le Jeu d'Amour: Songs and Dances from 1200-1400***

World-renowned musicians **Anne Azéma** and **Shira Kammen** will return to Eugene on **Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>** for a free concert at **8 p.m.** in **Beall Hall**. Through accompanied song and instrumental music, Azéma and Kammen will transport their audience to the medieval world of music and poetry centered on the theme of courtly love. Songs of encounter, narrative lays, legends of lovers true and false, and dances and instrumental fantasies form the core of this program of works by Thibault de Champagne, Colin Muset, Moniot D'Arras, Jehannot de l'Escurel and others.

Anne Azéma (voice) and Shira Kammen (strings) are leaders in the field of medieval singing and accompaniment. Each has recorded prolifically and toured worldwide; together, they devote their enormous skill, insight, and fantasy to the magnificent repertoires of medieval France, Provence, and Spain. French-born Azéma brings unusual language skills, a crystalline voice, and a gift for theater; Kammen brings virtuoso technique on vielle, rebec, and harp, as well as flair, drive, and humor.

This concert, co-sponsored by the School of Music and the Oregon Humanities Center's Public Outreach Endowment for Arts, Sciences and the Humanities, is free and open to the public. For more information, or for disability accommodations, call the Humanities Center at 346-3934.



*Anne Azéma (right)  
and Shira Kammen*

## **Work-in-Progress Series**

We continue our series of work-in-progress talks by University of Oregon faculty and graduate students on their current or recent research on Fridays at noon in the Humanities Center Conference Room, 159 PLC. All faculty and graduate students are encouraged to attend. The conference room seats eighteen; early arrival is recommended. Brown-bag lunches are welcome!

- 4/21/06 Thomas Dolack**, graduate research fellow, comparative literature, will speak on "Imitation and Literary Evolution."
- 5/5/06 Deborah Green**, religious studies, will speak on "Soothing Odors: Cultural and Material Evidence for the Use of Perfume and Incense in Ancient Israel."
- 6/2/06 Maram Epstein**, EALL, will speak on "Embodied Emotions and Constructed Virtue: Filial Piety in 18th-Century China."
- 6/9/06 George Evans**, economics, will speak on "Bounded Rationality and Macroeconomics."

*The University of Oregon is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To arrange disability accommodations for Humanities Center events or to obtain this newsletter in an alternative format, call 541-346-3934.*