

# O

UNIVERSITY  
OF OREGON



# Oregon Humanities Center

154 PLC | 541-346-3934 | [ohc.uoregon.edu](http://ohc.uoregon.edu)

## Winter 2015

### Scholar makes vital connections: ethics and scholarship, faith and social activism

Dartmouth professor of Jewish Studies **Susanah Heschel** will explore the theme of “connection” from two different angles when she visits Oregon in January as the OHC’s 2015 **Tzedek Professor in the Humanities**.

Heschel’s Eugene lecture, “**Ethical Challenges of Scholarship**,” will take place on **Wednesday, January 28th at 7:30 p.m. in 182 Lillis Hall** on the UO campus. On **January 29th at 7:30 p.m.** at the **UO in Portland**, 70 NW Couch Street, Heschel will give a second talk about the life and career of her distinguished rabbi father, Abraham Joshua Heschel, titled “**Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: The Life and Legacy of Abraham Joshua Heschel**.”

“Scholarship,” Heschel maintains, “is an

ethical endeavor...It is first and foremost about the pursuit of truth.” Yet, she insists, our choices of topics and the material we present, our evaluations and interpretations, and the conclusions

we draw are infused with the politics and cultural commitments of our era, and they reflect our moral judgments. In her Eugene lecture Heschel will examine some of the ethical challenges scholars face using three case studies: 1) the 19th-century development of Christian scholarship on Judaism and Jewish scholarship on Christianity; 2) the politicization of

scholarship in universities in Nazi Germany in the 1930s; and 3) contemporary debates over

*continued on page 3*



### Astrophysicist/writer explores connections between “Time, the Universe, and Everything”

What is the benefit to humanity of understanding black holes and theories about how the Universe began? If you ask theoretical physicist **Janna Levin**, she’ll tell you that astrophysics can help us understand some of life’s most important questions—like who we are in the bigger scheme of things, and how we are all connected. In her **Cressman Lecture**, “**From the Big Bang to Black Holes: Time, the Universe, and Everything**” on **Thursday, February 19th at 7:30 p.m. in 182 Lillis Hall**, Levin will offer “an epic tour through time, from the beginning of the universe in a big bang, through black holes, past the emergence of life on at least one little planet spinning in a conceivably infinite cosmic ocean, to the possible end of time.”

We tend to think of the Universe as a vast—perhaps even infinite—expanse of silent space. Levin maintains that “most of what we know about the Universe so far comes to us through light across vast eras of cosmic history... like a stunning silent movie.” But, she continues, the Universe is not silent—it has a sound track that is played on space itself. She believes that



*continued on page 3*

**Paul Peppis**  
Director  
*Professor of English*

**Julia J. Heydon**  
Associate Director

**Melissa Gustafson**  
Program Coordinator

**Peg Freas Gearhart**  
Communications Coordinator  
and Producer of UO Today

#### 2014–2015 Advisory Board

**Carlos Aguirre**  
*History*

**Martha Bayless**  
*English*

**Elizabeth Bohls**  
*English*

**Deborah Green**  
*Religious Studies*

**Sara Hodges**  
*Psychology*

**Peter Laufer**  
*Journalism and Communication*

**Susanna Lim**  
*Clark Honors College*

**Karen McPherson**  
*Romance Languages*

**Leah Middlebrook**  
*Comparative Literature and  
Romance Languages*

**Jeffrey Ostler**  
*History*

**Scott Pratt**  
*Philosophy*

**Stephen Rodgers**  
*Music*

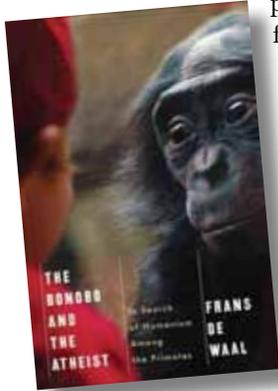
**Carol Silverman**  
*Anthropology*

**David Wacks**  
*Romance Languages*

**Malcolm Wilson**  
*Classics*

## Frans de Waal on morality: “What if it is biological?”

Until fairly recently, it has been assumed that the behaviors that form the basis for human moral systems such as cooperation, altruism, sympathy and empathy, fairness, reconciliation—generally, those



positive traits that foster connectivity—were distinctly human qualities. But Dutch/American primatologist **Frans de Waal**, who has been studying primates and other non-human mammals for more than 40 years, asserts that animals share many of these characteristics with us.

Humans have long assumed that morality comes from religion or civilization or tradition. But de Waal asks, “What if it is biological?” He has devoted his career

to exploring this and related questions through the study of the behavior and social intelligence of primates and other mammals.

De Waal will share some of his research findings on socially-positive behaviors in animals and humans in his **2014–15 Clark Lecture, “The Evolution of Connectivity: Empathy, Altruism, and Primate Social Skills,”** on **Tuesday, March 10th at 7:30 p.m. in 182 Lillis Hall.** He notes, “To endow animals with human emotions has long been a scientific taboo. But if we do not, we risk missing something fundamental, about both animals and us.” He adds, “The evidence is overwhelming that we are not the only species to value a well-integrated society, and like us, many other species seek this integration as a survival strategy: they do better together than alone.”

Frans de Waal is C. H. Candler Professor in the Psychology Department of

Emory University, and Director of the Living Links Center at the Yerkes National Primate Center in Atlanta, GA. He has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences (US) and the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences.



He has published hundreds of articles in journals such as *Science*, *Nature*, and *Scientific American*. His popular books have made him one of the world’s most visible primatologists. His latest books are *The Age of Empathy* (2009) and *The Bonobo and the Atheist* (2013).

The lecture is free and open to the public, and will be followed by a book sale and signing. For information, or for disability accommodations (which must be made by Mar. 3, 2015), contact [ohc@uoregon.edu](mailto:ohc@uoregon.edu) or (541) 346-3934.

## Director’s Report

“Only connect”—the evocative epigraph to E. M. Forster’s great and beautiful novel about the passing of the Edwardian era in England, *Howards End*—calls out to us at a tense moment dominated by controversy and conflict as a plea to reach across the myriad lines of difference and discord that divide us and attempt to (re)establish contact and understanding.

As its name implies, the humanities places this essential project of connection at its very core: the humanities is profoundly concerned to explore the fullest range of human experiences and cultural productions, to foster understanding and appreciation of differences, and to create art and expressive culture devoted to representing and responding to all that makes us human in our rich and complex diversity. Accordingly, we have chosen “Connection” as this year’s Oregon Humanities Center theme.

The Connection lecture series got off to an amazing start in November with the annual Colin Ruagh Thomas O’Fallon Memorial lecture, delivered by renowned artist, architect, and memorialist, Maya Lin. As a leader in art and American culture, whose work and career have consistently explored connections between art and architecture, nature and technology, animal and human, history and the present, Lin seemed the ideal first speaker for the Connection series, and she did not disappoint. Before an overflow audience of nearly 800, Lin presented an inspiring lecture surveying her remarkable career. Discussing her newest works, the *Con-*



*fluence Project*, a series of public art installations at significant points along the Columbia River system, and her interactive, web-based memorial on species extinction and conservation, *What Is Missing?*, Lin called on her audience to become aware of and respond to the long history of degradation and destruction of cultures and habitats, both human and animal, and to acknowledge and strengthen connections to

our fellow human beings and to the non-human animals and habitats we live among. The audience’s standing ovation suggests a collective determination to meet that challenge. Both Lin’s lecture and my UO Today interview with her are available for viewing at the OHC’s website.

Maya Lin’s lecture marked an auspicious beginning to a series of Connection lectures that each promises to be comparably stimulating. We hope you will join us for these exciting presentations; fuller descriptions appear elsewhere in these pages.

As always, our calendar of events provides details on the numerous exciting humanities events taking place on campus, often co-sponsored by the OHC, as well as our regular Work-in-Progress talks (WIPs), and our new Books-in-Print talks (BIPs), an occasional series of presentations by UO scholars speaking about their recently-published books supported by the OHC. I look forward in the New Year to experiencing with our loyal friends and generous supporters the wondrous and enlivening connections that only the humanities can provide.

*Paul Peppis, Director*

## Heschel *continued from page 1*

the presentation of the Israel-Palestine conflict within the fields of Middle East Studies and Israel Studies. Her conclusion will emphasize the importance of the Humanities as a guide to dealing with the thicket of ethical quandaries facing scholars in a wide range of fields.

In her slide-illustrated Portland lecture, Susannah Heschel will focus on the deep moral connection between social activism and a life of faith as exemplified by her father, Abraham Joshua Heschel. Born in Warsaw, Poland in 1907, Rabbi Heschel got his PhD from Berlin University in 1933, and taught in Germany, Poland, and London before emigrating to the U.S. in 1940. In 1945 he joined the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary in NYC, where he taught until his death in 1972. A professor of Jewish ethics and mysticism, Rabbi Heschel was one of the leading Jewish theologians and philosophers of the 20th century. He was active in the American Civil Rights movement, and ardently believed that one needed to “pray with one’s feet.” A close friend and colleague of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.,

Heschel was invited by MLK to join in the march in Selma, Alabama in March of 1965. He was also one of the first religious leaders in the U.S. to speak out against the war in Vietnam.

Susannah Heschel is the Eli Black Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College. Her scholarship as an historian of religion has taken her in many directions, including feminist theology, Jewish-Christian relations in 19th-century Germany, the history of biblical scholarship, and the history of anti-Semitism. She is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, and *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*. She is the editor of *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays of Abraham Joshua Heschel*. She currently



Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (center) marching with Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, Alabama in March 1965.

holds a Guggenheim fellowship, and has also received grants from the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations, and the National Humanities Center. The recipient of four honorary doctorates, Heschel is currently writing a book on the history of European Jewish scholarship on Islam.

Both lectures are free and open to the public. For more information, or for disability accommodations (which must be made by Jan. 21, 2015), contact [ohc@uoregon.edu](mailto:ohc@uoregon.edu) or (541) 346-3934.

## Levin *continued from page 1*

we will be able to tune into this celestial sound track within the next few years, and hear black holes beating on the space-time continuum like a sonic drum. This song will give us important information about our origins—how the Universe was formed, and what our place in it is.

A professor of Physics and Astronomy at Columbia University’s Barnard College, Levin is also an acclaimed writer. Her first book, *How the Universe Got Its Spots*, synthesizes geometry, topology, chaos and string theory for the lay reader to show how “the pattern of hot and cold spots left over from the big bang may one day reveal the size and shape of the cosmos.” Her second book, a novel titled *A Madman Dreams of Turing Machines* (Knopf, 2006), won the PEN/Bingham Fellowship for Writers, which “honors an exceptionally talented fiction writer whose debut work...represents distinguished literary

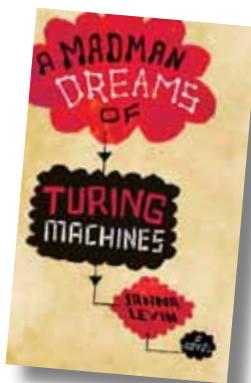
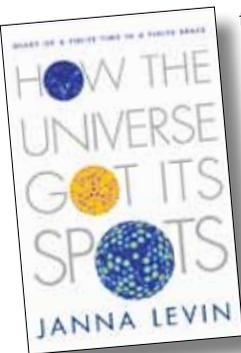
achievement...” It was also a runner-up for the PEN/Hemingway Award for debut fiction.

Levin holds a BA in Physics and Astronomy from Barnard College with a concentration in Philosophy, and a PhD from MIT in Physics. She worked at the Center for Particle Astrophysics (CfPA) at the University of California, Berkeley before moving to the UK, where she worked at Cambridge University in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics (DAMTP).

Just before returning to New York, she was the first scientist-in-residence at the Ruskin School of Fine Art and Drawing at Oxford with an award from the National Endowment for Science, Technology, and Arts (NESTA). She has written for many artists and appeared on several radio and

television programs.

The lecture is free and open to the public, and will be followed by a book sale and signing. For more information, or for disability accommodations (which must be made by Feb. 12, 2015), contact [ohc@uoregon.edu](mailto:ohc@uoregon.edu) or (541)-346-3934.



Help the Oregon Humanities Center (OHC) cultivate vibrant, intellectual activity at the University of Oregon and beyond.

Consider including the OHC in your estate plans. Through charitable gift planning, you may find that you are able to make a much larger gift than you thought possible to support and strengthen the humanities at UO and to create opportunities for UO students and faculty for generations to come.

Let us know if you have already included the OHC in your will or estate plan. We want to thank you and ensure that your gift can be used as you intend.

Contact the University of Oregon’s Office of Gift Planning at 800-289-2354 or [giftplan@uoregon.edu](mailto:giftplan@uoregon.edu)



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
OREGON HUMANITIES CENTER  
5211 University of Oregon  
Eugene OR 97403-5211

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EUGENE OR  
PERMIT NO. 63

This newsletter is available on our  
website: [ohc.uoregon.edu](http://ohc.uoregon.edu)

If you receive this newsletter  
through U.S. mail and wish to be  
removed from our mailing list,  
please let us know.

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

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 report in an alternative format, call 541-346-3934.



## New series!

# BOOKS-IN-PRINT

## FACULTY AUTHOR SERIES

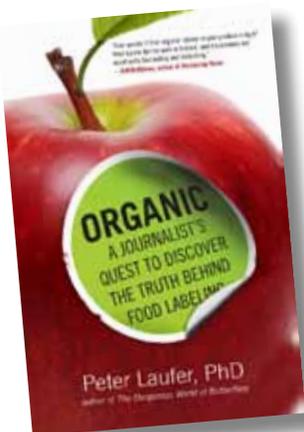
### Organic: A Journalist's Quest to Discover the Truth Behind Food Labeling

Peter Laufer, Journalism

Thursday, January 22, 2015

3:30 p.m.

Humanities Center Conference Room (159 PLC)



Part food narrative, part investigation, part adventure story, *Organic* is an eye-opening and entertaining look into the anything-goes world behind the organic label. It is also a wakeup call about the dubious origins of food labeled "organic." Veteran journalist Peter Laufer chooses a few items from his home pantry and traces their origins back to their source. Along the way he learns how easily we are tricked into taking "organic" claims at face value.

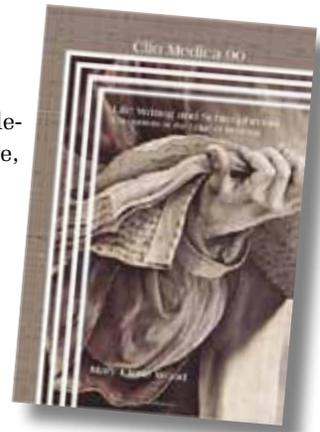
### Life Writing and Schizophrenia: Encounters at the Edge of Meaning

Mary E. Wood, English

Tuesday, March 3, 2015

3:30 p.m.

Humanities Center Conference Room (159 PLC)



Challenging the romanticized connection between literature and madness, *Life Writing and Schizophrenia* explores how writers who hear voices and experience delusions write their identities into narrative, despite popular and medical representations of schizophrenia as chaos, violence, and incoherence. The study juxtaposes these narratives to case histories by clinicians writing their encounters with those diagnosed with schizophrenia, encounters that call their own narrative authority and coherence into question.