

DO POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE A GOD PROBLEM?

RMC ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM DEALSWITH RELIGION & POLITICS

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BILLINGS – This year’s annual Rocky Mountain College Symposium on Religion and Culture will focus on a timely theme: Religion and politics.

Three internationally known speakers will deliver speeches on the topic during two evening presentations, Monday, Oct. 6, and Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2008, beginning at 7 p.m. The lectures will be held in Losekamp Hall. They are free and open to the public.

This is the fourth year that RMC has held the Symposium on Religion and Culture. Seating is limited so those interested in attending are urged to arrive early.

This year’s speakers are Sheila Suess Kennedy, professor at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI); Richard Parker, a lecturer in Public Policy and Senior Fellow of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government; and Brendan Sweetman, a native of Dublin, Ireland who is professor of philosophy, Rockhurst University.

The speakers Monday evening will be Shelia Suess Kennedy, whose lecture is titled, “God and Country: The Religious Roots of Public Conflict.”

Brendan Sweetman, whose topic is “Why Religion has a Place in Politics”, will follow her.

Tuesday evening Richard Parker will speak on “Do the Political Parties have a God Problem?”

There will be a panel discussion following the Tuesday evening lecture. Serving as panelists for the Tuesday evening panel discussion will be Dr. Jay Cassel, RMC professor of religious thought; Dr. Ellie Bagley, RMC assistant professor of philosophy and religious thought; and Dr. Walter Gulick, professor emeritus, philosophy, humanities

and religious studies, at Montana State University-Billings.

In addition to the evening lectures, the three guest speakers will be lecturing in classes at RMC and conducting a discussion for a clergy lunch. Those interested in attending the clergy lunch on Tuesday, Oct. 7, need to register with Shanna Semmens, 657-1020.

Kennedy is also a member of IUPUI's Philanthropic Studies faculty, a Faculty Fellow with both the Center for Religion and American Culture in the School of Liberal Arts and the Tobias Center of the Kelley School of Business, and an adjunct professor of political science. Kennedy's fields of interest include civil liberties and civil rights, religion and public policy and nonprofit organizations. Her books include 2007's "God and Country: America in Red and Blue," "What's a Nice Republican Girl Like Me Doing at the ACLU," "Free Expression: A Documentary History," "To Market, To Market: Reinventing Indianapolis" (with Ingrid Ritchie), "Pickin' Fights with Thunderstorms," and "Charitable Choice at Work: Faith-Based Partnerships in the States."

An economist by training, Parker is a graduate of Dartmouth College and Oxford University. He has worked as an economist for the UNDP, as cofounder of Mother Jones Magazine, and as head of his own consulting firm, serving congressional clients including Senators Kennedy, Glenn, Cranston, and McGovern, among others. Parker has held Marshall, Rockefeller, Danforth, Goldsmith, and Bank of America Fellowships. His books include "The Myth of the Middle Class," a study of U.S. income distribution; "Mixed Signals: The Future of Global Television News"; and the intellectual biography "John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics."

Sweetman teaches philosophy of religion, religion and science, contemporary European philosophy, political philosophy, and ethics, in addition to introductory courses in philosophy. His latest books are "Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square" and "Religion: Key Concepts in Philosophy." He has also co-authored or co-edited several other books, including (with Curtis Hancock) "Truth and Religious Belief" and (with Douglas Geivett) "Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology."

All three have had numerous articles published in magazines, literary journals and law reviews.

This symposium is funded in part by a grant from Humanities Montana, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the NEH.

For more information on the Symposium, contact Dr. Elizabeth McNamer, (406) 657-1076, email: mcnamere@rocky.edu.