

THE SALEM ATHENÆUM
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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR 2005-2006

An exciting year of lectures, readings, and courses—perhaps the most varied in the institution's history—is scheduled for the members of the Salem Athenæum and the community. Topics will range from poetry, fiction and drama to history, biography and current events—with several more surprises still awaiting confirmation. For the latest information, you can telephone the Director or turn to the greatly improved and frequently updated Athenæum web site at www.athenaeum.net.

Unless otherwise noted, Athenæum members are requested to pay an admission charge of **\$5.00**, non-members **\$8.00**. Evening events usually start at 7 PM and Saturday afternoon programs at 2 PM. Lectures and readings will be followed by a wine and cheese reception.



The season will begin on Thursday, September 22, 2005 with a lecture by MEGAN MARSHALL, author of *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism*. Writing in *The New York Times*, reviewer William Grimes praised the book Ms. Marshall spent nearly 20 years researching and writing. He called it a “stunning work of biography and intellectual history,” which presents “vivid portraits of three distinct, and distinctly engaging, personal personalities, placing them at the center of the seismic disturbances associated with writers like Hawthorne, Emerson, and Thoreau.”

One of the world's foremost Bible scholars is coming to Salem to offer a weekend of world-class Biblical scholarship and cultural commentary. Dr. JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN will present three seminars on Saturday afternoon, September 24. He will then deliver the **Bentley Memorial Lecture** on Sunday, September 25th. These programs are sponsored jointly by The Salem Athenæum and by The First Church in Salem, Unitarian. For more information on Dr. Crossan, the programs and tickets, see page 3.

On Wednesday, October 5, novelist MARGOT LIVESEY will return to the Athenæum to read from her latest novel, *Banishing Verona*. Richard Eder describes its story line as “one of fiction's four or five classic chestnuts....Margot Livesey, though British, has whipped hers into the airborne delicacy known to the French as a

Mont Blanc. Use the finest ingredients, the French advise, and Ms. Livesey has. Lace it with a curious home-distilled intoxicant; the French probably wouldn't, but Ms. Livesey certainly has.”

“UNDERSTANDING ISLAM”

The centerpiece of our fall programming will be a two-part mini-course on one of the most important challenges of our time: “Understanding Islam: Going Beyond the Headlines.” It will be led by a world-class scholar, ALI ASANI, Professor of the Practice of Indo-Muslim Languages and Culture at Harvard.

Professor Asani holds a joint appointment between the departments of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and the Study of Religion. He also serves on the faculty of the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies; and offers instruction in a variety of languages such as Urdu/Hindi, Sindhi, Gujarati and Swahili as well as courses on various aspects of the Islamic tradition. His numerous books include *Celebrating Muhammad: Images of the Prophet in Muslim Devotional Poetry*. Among his scholarly journal articles is “Pluralism, Intolerance and the Quran,” *American Scholar* (Jan. 2002). He was recently awarded the Harvard Foundation Medal for promoting intercultural and racial understanding at Harvard and in the nation.

The sessions will be held on Thursday evening, October 6 at 7 PM and on Saturday afternoon, October 15 at 2 PM. The topic of the first lecture will be “What Is Islam? Who Is a Muslim?: A Framework for Understanding Contemporary Expressions of Faith in Muslim Societies.” The second lecture will focus on “Movements of Reform and Revival in Contemporary Muslim Societies: Causes and Manifestations.”

Discussion will follow each talk. Advance registration is required; tuition for the two sessions will be \$45 for members and \$55 for non-members.

On Thursday, October 27, Cambridge poet JUNE BEISCH will read from her volume of poems entitled *Fatherless Woman*, winner of the 2004 Cape Cod Literary Press Poetry Prize. Beisch is an adjunct lecturer at Emerson College and works as a Poet in the Schools in Stoneham and Belmont. Her essays, poems, and literary criticism have appeared widely in numerous publications.

Thursday, November 17 brings CHARLOTTE GORDON, author of *Mistress Bradstreet*, to the library. Her book focuses on the life of Anne Bradstreet, America's first woman poet, author of the first American best-seller, daughter of one of Massachusetts' Puritan founders, and wife of Governor Simon Bradstreet. The book was praised by Ray Olson in *Booklist* for its "vibrant, engaging, realistic portrayal of early colonial Massachusetts and of its fascinating biographical subject."

On Thursday, December 1, LAWRENCE BUELL, Powell M. Cabot Professor of American Literature at Harvard, will give a talk about his prize-winning new book, *Emerson*. Ralph Waldo Emerson could be called America's first public intellectual and was the first to articulate to a general audience the implications of what it meant culturally, politically, and philosophically to be American and to consider in practical terms what the United States' role in the world should be.



Two speakers will visit us in January 2006. Dr. ROBERT ALLISON, Chairman of the Department of History at Suffolk University, author of *A Short History of Boston* and editor of *The Revolutionary Era and The Development of a Nation*, will deliver a talk on the 300th anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin—on the exact date, January 17, 2006. The continuing influence of Franklin's multi-faceted genius—as writer, journalist, inventor, founder of public institutions (including America's first subscription library), and statesman—will be discussed.

In conjunction with Historic Salem, Inc., the Athenæum will also sponsor a lecture at 7 PM on Tuesday, January 24 by EMERSON W. BAKER II, Chairman of the Department of History at Salem State College and a specialist in the material culture of 17th-century New England. He recently served as advisor to the PBS Television series "Colonial House." Dr. Baker's subject will be "Quakers in early Salem and New England"—who they were and why they were treated so badly by many Puritans. (Free)



A fantastic new 12-week course will begin in February, taught by Dr. MAURA HENRY, formerly of Harvard's History and Literature Department. "Jane Austen's World Through History, Literature, and Film" will examine late 18th- and early 19th- century British history through the lens of Austen's novels and their filmic representations, focusing on the ways in which gender and class shaped the lives of the landed elite in cultural institutions as diverse as marriage, education, religion,

and economics. The course will also consider how each medium—the historical text, the novel, and the film—serves as a means of interpreting and understanding the past. The course will be held on Wednesday evenings from February 1 to April 19. Advance registration required; tuition will be \$240 for members, \$260 for non-members.



March will inaugurate an annual **Shakespeare Lecture**, a tribute to the most influential writer in world literature. This seems a particularly apt time to initiate such a tribute, for 2006 is the 400th anniversary of two of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies—*King Lear* and *Macbeth*.

On Tuesday, March 7, one of the most notable Shakespeare scholars of our time, MARJORIE GARBER, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English and American Literature and Language and of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard, will discuss the enduring influence of Shakespeare and the special attraction that these two plays hold for modern audiences. Dr. Garber is the author of four books on Shakespeare, including the highly praised *Shakespeare After All* (2004), which has been described as a "magisterial work of criticism" and a "landmark work that enlarges our understanding of the most celebrated writer of all time." (Members \$15, Non-members \$20)

Two events will occur in April: the **Adams Lecture** will be presented by the renowned historian DAVID HACKETT FISCHER, winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize in History for his monumental work, *Washington's Crossing*. (Date not yet set; see below for more information on Dr. Fischer and the Adams Lectures.)

In honor of **National Poetry Month**, on Thursday, April 27 we will have another delightful evening when members and their guests bring in favorite poems to read aloud together.

On Wednesday, May 17 we are planning a "Night of Rare Books"—a kind of "Antiques Roadshow" for bibliophiles. Members and their guests will be invited to bring a rare book from their private collection to share with everyone. Guest experts will be on hand to discuss the care, handling, and valuing of antique books.

Still other plans are in the works.



You will notice from the schedule that lectures and courses are being offered outside of our usual hours, including Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons.

We hope that the Athenæum will be teeming with activity and intellectual stimulation and that the educational program we have assembled will have a very broad appeal.

I look forward to seeing you at each of these events.

Sue Weaver Schopf
Chair, Education Committee

The Adams Lecture

This lecture series began in 2004. It was named to honor our Librarian of 10 years, JOHN ADAMS. The speaker in 2004 was Chief Justice Margaret Marshall.

This year we have been fortunate to attract David Hackett Fischer as our speaker. Dr. Fischer is University Professor and Warren Professor of History at Brandeis; in addition to his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Washington's Crossing*, he is the author of *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*; *Paul Revere's Ride*; *The Great Wave: Price Movements in Modern History*; and *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement*. The date will be announced in the near future. Tickets are \$20 for members, \$25 for others.

The reviewer in *Publishers Weekly* states: "at the core of an impeccably researched, brilliantly executed military history is an analysis of George Washington's crossing of the Delaware River in December 1776 and the resulting destruction of the Hessian garrison of Trenton and defeat of a British brigade at Princeton. Fischer's perceptive discussion of the strategic, operational and tactical factors involved is by itself worth the book's purchase." And Steven Lagerfeld, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, states, "*Washington's Crossing* is a rebuke to those who believe that scholarly seriousness and popular appeal cannot exist together. This superbly wrought book, with its open invitation to a wider public, is just the sort of democratic scholarship that the soldiers of 1776 would have hoped for."



WEEKEND SERIES ON "THE BIBLE IN CRISIS" September 24 and 25, 2005

Fundamentalism has recently achieved unprecedented political influence with its simplistic literal reading of selected texts. Dr. John Dominic Crossan, a former monk and priest, and others of like stature bring to sacred texts the tools of history, literary criticism, anthropology, archeology and other disciplines.

This weekend with Dr. Crossan is a refresher course in the best modern scholarship on the New Testament Gospels and on the Bible as a whole, and a guide to the wisest application of Biblical texts to current issues—conducted by a master teacher/lecturer who believes that the Bible and the sacred texts of other religions are embedded at the heart of every contemporary crisis from Middle Eastern politics to the validity of science to the nature of marriage to personal sexual morality.

Dr. Crossan is the author of more than 20 books on the New Testament, of which four are national

religious bestsellers. These include *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991); *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (1994); *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (1995); and *The Birth of Christianity* (1998). His most recent book is *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (2004). Some of Dr. Crossan's books will be available for purchase and signing in the interval between the first and second seminars and The Bentley Memorial Lecture.

Saturday Seminars at the Salem Athenæum:

Dr. Crossan's seminars on September 24 focus on "The Past of the Historical Jesus and the Future of American Christianity." The first session, "The Life of Jesus," is from 2 to 3:30 p.m. The second, "The Death of Jesus," is from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The third session, "The Resurrection of Jesus," is from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Each session is \$15 for members of First Church or the Salem Athenæum, \$20 for non-members.

Bentley Lecture at First Church, Unitarian

The title of the Bentley Memorial Lecture on Sunday, September 25 is "Empire and Bible: From Ancient Rome to Modern Washington." It will begin at 4 p.m. at The First Church in Salem, Unitarian, 316 Essex Street, Salem. Ticket cost is \$15 for members of First Church or the Athenæum, \$20 for non-members.

Note: Parishioners of First Church and members of The Salem Athenæum receive a courtesy discount that reduces the cost of all four sessions to a total of \$50. For non-members, the three Saturday sessions are reduced to \$50, and all four to \$60.

ABOUT THE BENTLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Bentley Memorial Lecture series is named in honor of Reverend William Bentley, who served as Pastor in Salem from 1783 to 1819. Dr. Bentley was known for his intelligent, tolerant voice of reason. He was one of the first Unitarian ministers in the country.

The First Church and The Salem Athenæum have jointly sponsored The Bentley Memorial Lecture for the past five years. Notable guest speakers have included the late Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard University's influential evolutionary biologist, on science and religion; Pulitzer Prize-winning author Louis Menand, Jr. on literature and religion; Anthony Lewis, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and former columnist for *The New York Times*, on human rights; and James Carroll, winner of the National Book Award for his Vietnam-era memoir, *An American Requiem*, and author of *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* and other works.



Essex Street in Salem was alive with music this summer when DONALD CUTLER, Past President of the Salem Athenæum, introduced jazz masters BUTCH THOMPSON (seated) of National Public Radio's "Prairie Home

Companion" keyboard fame, ELI NEWBERGER on tuba, HERB GARDNER on trombone, and TED CASHER on clarinet to an audience of nearly 100 people at "An Evening of Jazz in the Athenæum's garden.

Photos: Jessica Barnett

