

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE HUMANITIES**

SAMPLE APPLICATION NARRATIVE



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Summer Seminars for College and University Teachers  
Institution: Boston College



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS

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## **National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Education Programs**

### **Narrative Section of a Successful Application**

This sample of the narrative portion from a grant is provided as an example of a funded proposal. It will give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. It is not intended to serve as a model. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with staff members in the NEH Division of Education Programs well before a grant deadline. This sample proposal does not include a budget, letters of commitment, résumés, or evaluations.

**Project Title:** *Religious Diversity and the Common Good*

**Institution:** Boston College

**Project Director:** Alan Wolfe

**Grant Program:** Summer Seminars for College and University Teachers

Religious Diversity and the Common Good  
2009 Summer Seminar for College Teachers  
A Proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities

Alan Wolfe

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Religious Diversity and the Common Good  
2009 Summer Seminar for College Teachers  
A Proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities

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**Intellectual rationale**

“Providence,” wrote John Jay in The Federalist Papers, “has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people – a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who, by their joint counsels, arms, and efforts, fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established general liberty and independence.” He was not the only Founder who assumed that political freedom required common beliefs and customs. As George Washington said in his Farewell Address: “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. What ever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

At the time these men wrote, it was common to assume that, despite sectarian differences, there existed a unified Christian, indeed Protestant, morality. Those assumptions were never, in fact, accurate, since Catholics and Jews could be found in the United States from the earliest days. Still, it was not until the massive immigration of the nineteenth century – a situation that produced America’s first culture war between native-born Protestants and recently arrived Catholic and Jewish immigrants – that religious diversity came to be accepted as an American fact of life. That diversity was further strengthened in the twentieth century after the Immigration Act of 1965 brought large numbers of people from religious backgrounds that were neither Christian nor Jewish. And on top of all these changes, a growing number of Americans belong to two or more religious traditions through intermarriage or personal choice or belong to none. Today, in other words, the existence of a common morality based on either a Christian or generally religious worldview can no longer be assumed.

The question of whether individuals with radically different religious views can live together in the same society is one that few countries have been able to solve, including the United States. Is the United States still a Christian country, as many evangelicals leaders insist, or should it be? Was the United States in fact more unified when a greater percentage of its citizens were Christian? Can we insist on a common culture that has been so strongly influenced by one religious tradition, now that we are more diverse, when it comes to matters involving marriage, work, educational values, or the definition of when life begins? Does such an insistence violate the rights of those whose cultural roots and traditions have had little purchase in American history? Are there principles that can guide answers to these questions likely to be widely accepted as legitimate? Recent decisions by American courts involving issues as diverse as whether a Muslim woman can wear a head covering in her driver's license photo, whether the words "Under God" should appear in the Pledge of Allegiance, whether gay marriage is permissible and whether such marriages would apply both to civil and religious ceremonies, whether the placing of a statue of the Ten Commandments in a courtroom violates the rights of non-believers or adherents to minority religions, and whether public comments by religious leaders questioning Islam's claims to religious truth are a form of hate speech – all of these reflect the fact that while our Constitution insists on separation of church and state (at the national level), it says nothing about church and culture, leaving considerable confusion for future generations.

These are enormously important questions to ask at any time, but they are especially important to address in the wake of September 11. Some responded to those attacks by denouncing Islam as a false faith, but for others the reaction was more complicated. The aftermath of that event, on the one hand, revealed to many Americans as never before how many of their fellow citizens (or future citizens) come from religious traditions dramatically at odds with their own. But it also demonstrated that American culture, which has shaped Catholicism and Judaism in distinctly American ways, is shaping Islam (and other religions such as Buddhism) in similar ways. It may not be an exaggeration to say that the way we find answers to the question of common moral values in the face of religious differences is vital to the future security of the United States.

The questions this seminar proposes to address are ones to which scholars from the humanistic disciplines can make an important contribution. I propose to bring together college teachers from a wide variety of academic backgrounds to discuss them. For the seminar to be successful, I would hope to have participants from theology, American history, political philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and law, much as I did in the 2005 and 2007 summer seminars. I would also welcome participants with expertise in literature, film, psychology, women's studies, African-American studies, and religious studies, especially Islam. (No specialists in Islamic Studies applied to the 2005 seminar, although one did, and was accepted into, the one in 2007; targeted advertising may be helpful if I were to conduct the seminar again). My aim is to have teachers from, say, history, develop and inform an examination of the contemporary sociology of religion; to have sociologists, who look at religion in practice, engage with theologians who address questions of religious truth; to have scholars from fields such as literature and psychology contribute insights into the spiritual imagination to others whose focus is more on the public policy questions raised by the seminar; and to ask whether U. S. Supreme Court decisions, in theory guided by the Constitution, should also take into account the historical and sociological realities of religion in America?

Even more than encouraging interdisciplinary study, I aim to assemble materials that college teachers can take back to their classes so that they will be able to address contemporary problems dealing with religion and morality in ways that will help their students become not only better educated, but also more informed citizens. It has been my experience that undergraduate students can become extremely engaged by the subjects with which this seminar will be concerned, and I hope to encourage the faculty who participate to develop courses dealing with these materials. I will of course share materials and insights from my own teaching with the group.

### **Content and Implementation**

The seminar will meet for six weeks. Each week will contain two three-hour sessions devoted to a specific reading assignment and one two-hour session reserved for synthetic discussion. I will lead each

discussion, although, depending on the expertise of the participants, it may make sense to have specific individuals take responsibility for particular texts, especially in the fifth week. This narrative highlights some of the major readings; a proposed syllabus can be found in the Appendix. This syllabus has been modified to include suggestions made from participants in both previous iterations of the seminar.

The first week will be dedicated to *philosophical* concerns. One school of political philosophy, originating in Kant and developed by John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas, argues that citizens, even when they strongly disagree, can at least agree to deliberate rationally over their differences. Although philosophers such as Ronald Dworkin have been influenced by this tradition, two contemporary political philosophers in particular, Amy Gutmann and Stephen Macedo, have extended this position to some of the contemporary controversies which the seminar will address; both insist, for example, that because good citizens ought to be thoughtful and deliberative ones, public schools can legitimately turn down requests by fundamentalist parents not to have their children exposed to literature they consider irreligious or immoral. (Macedo goes further and suggests that liberal democracies ought to prevent fundamentalist parents from enrolling their children in private schools that teach from a fundamentalist perspective). There is, in this tradition, a strong affirmation of a common morality, one rooted in the Enlightenment and then applied in the United States through our commitments to liberal democracy.

But critics have pointed out that the Enlightenment is itself partisan and partial, defending one particular understanding of morality against others, a position articulated by Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue*. If MacIntyre is right, then so is Stanley Fish, who argues in *The Trouble With Principle* that deliberative democracy is not neutral between various religions or between religion and non-religion but represents an effort by liberals and secularists to impose their values on others who do not share them. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas goes one step further and calls on religious believers to consider themselves “resident aliens” in a liberal democratic society on the assumption that their faith commitments will never be welcome so long as a common morality is based on liberal assumptions.

I believe that the texts that explore these positions are generally written with sufficient verve and clarity of thought to constitute an excellent beginning for the seminar. They will help us address

questions such as these: What role does reason play in religious faith? Is the influence of reason different between religions? Is religion a category like race or gender that involves discrimination by some against others? Are fundamentalist Christians in particular, as critics such as anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano have suggested, hostile to reasoned debate? Is America a primarily religious society, as secularists often charge, or a primarily secular society, as believers often conclude? Does liberal democracy involve faith commitments of its own? What *are* the prospects for a common morality in a society composed of so many different beliefs? If those prospects are good, do they come at the cost of discriminating against those who reject modern assumptions about the common good? If those prospects are bad, do liberal democracies face an uncertain future?

The second week of the seminar will offer an overview of the *historical* transformation of the United States from a predominantly Protestant to a religiously diverse society. That transformation has involved at least four phases: from Protestant to Christian (e.g., including Catholics), from Christian to Judeo-Christian, from Judeo-Christian to Abrahamic (e.g., including Islam), and an emerging situation (without a name) that includes not only the three so-called religions of the book, but a variety of Eastern religions, people who call themselves spiritual but not religious, and, in the aftermath of the “Under God” controversy, a more assertive atheism.

There is no one text that covers all of these phases. For this week of the seminar I would assign chapters from a number of important books that cover various aspects of these changes, including Winthrop Hudson’s [American Protestantism](#); Will Herberg’s [Protestant Catholic Jew](#); John McGreevy’s [Catholicism and American Freedom](#); Diane Eck’s [A New Religious America](#); and Susan Jacoby’s [Freethinkers](#). (One of the 2005 summer seminar participants worked with Eck on her book

Among the questions to be addressed from the historical materials are these: Is the United States an exception to the so-called “secularization thesis,” which holds that as societies become more modern, religion loses its hold on people’s attachments? Is it true, as Samuel P. Huntington argues, that American identity is so tied up with the Protestant faith that the recent religious diversity of the society can



undermine that identity? Is separation of church and state a secular idea or a specifically Protestant one? What does it mean for a tradition that has generally been identified with a state church in Europe – Catholicism – to flourish in a Tocquevillian environment of voluntary associations? Why have Jews historically been the one religious group most committed to separation of church and state in practice? Will Islam follow the historical patterns of other religions in accommodating itself to American life? Does freethinking have religious roots? What does it mean – in other words, is it possible – to be spiritual but not religious? I want to emphasize in this section of the seminar the difference between “religion” and “religions.” When we debate the role of “religion” in shaping a common morality, we tend to forget that people do not believe in religion in general but in specific religions with their own traditions and histories. This fact both complicates the role that religion does or should play in fashioning a common morality, but it also adds the richness of different experiences with the question. In 2007, Jytte Klausen, professor of political science at Brandeis University and an expert on Islam in the West, addressed these issues with the group, and she will be invited again.

The third week of the seminar will deal with *sociological* changes in the contemporary practice of religion. The philosophical and historical literature on religion makes some assumptions about people of faith that require further examination. For example, in the debate between Fish and Gutmann or Macedo, both sides agree that religious people are to some degree counter-cultural; the latter view them as never having fully subscribed to the rules of modern liberal democracy, while Fish (or Hauerwas) suggest that it is precisely the fact that believers are not liberals that make them different from everyone else. But are religious believers really that distinctive? The sociology of religion has an answer, and it is that modern American religion is as modern and American as it is religious. In the way they worship, honor (or dishonor) tradition, treat creeds and doctrines, relate to institutions, and search for identity, religious believers have been influenced by the same forces – individualism, popular culture, democracy – that have shaped non-religious activities from sports to politics.

This, at least, is the argument I make in my recent book, The Transformation of American Religion, which would form the basis of the discussions for this week. In the book I argue that while

religion and culture influence each other, in America, culture has shaped religion more than the other way around, which leads me to question the view of those, from both sides of the political spectrum, who argue that the faithful either resist the culture or question its basic values. I will supplement the treatment of Transformation with some of the excellent ethnographic work on American religion done by R. Marie Griffith (Pentecostal women), Omar McRoberts (African-Americans), and Lynn Davidman (Orthodox Jews).

Among other issues, we will discuss in this week whether all religions in America, despite the distinct histories examined in the previous week, will blend into a particularly American synthesis; whether in an unexpected fashion a common morality can be determined through a generalized religion detached from the moorings of all religions; and, if so, whether such a common morality would violate the beliefs of people who are not religious at all. In short, I see a tension between the historical work in the field and the sociological, with the former emphasizing what makes religions different and the latter dealing with some of the commonalities. Can both be correct? If so, what does this teach us about the relative salience of religion and culture, both enormously powerful forces that shape how people act and think, but also ones that can come into conflict with each other?

For the fourth week, the seminar will turn to the question of whether or not the perspective being developed in the seminar is helpful in treating important *legal* cases in the United States. Here the readings will be of two kinds. On the one hand, participants ought to be familiar with some of the important attempts to provide an overview dealing with questions of religious establishments and separation of church and state in America. Fortunately, Philip Hamburger has recently published the seminal text on this question, Separation of Church and State, which will be required reading. Not unlike MacIntyre, Hamburger argues that separation of church and state is not neutral; its historical origins, he claims, have much to do with the anti-Catholicism of the eighteenth century Republic (a point underscored by John Locke's A Letter Concerning Religious Toleration, which found the basis for toleration in Protestantism theology and which contains, as does John Stuart Mill's On Liberty much later, some pretty harsh words about Catholics). In addition, he points out that few if any of the Founders

believed that church and state are divided by, to use the commonly cited term from Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists, a wall between them.

Hamburger's analysis is helpful in understanding what can be called the decline of strict separationism. Since the 1960s, when the U. S. Supreme Court generally decided against allowing religious displays or religious sentiments in public places, there has been, depending on which side you are on, a retreat from strict separationism or a greater attempt to be fair to people of faith. The seminar will examine such decisions as Lee v. Weisman, which held that it was unconstitutional for clergy to offer graduation remarks at public schools and will contrast it with Rosenberger v. Rectors of the University of Virginia, which allowed public funds to be used to publish an evangelical student newspaper. The Rosenberger case is especially interesting because it was decided not on First Amendment grounds (that is, whether the provision of public funds for a religious newspaper violates the Establishment Clause) but on Fourteenth Amendment grounds (that is, whether denying evangelicals funds that are available to non-religious students constitutes discrimination against them). Can liberals, who generally support separation of church and state, be unconsciously supporting discrimination? If conservatives adopt Fourteenth Amendment grounds for religion in public life, can they then oppose strong efforts to overcome racial or gender discrimination?

This week will also examine in some detail cases involving school vouchers, such as the Zelman decision, which gave the green light to a school voucher program in Cleveland. School vouchers, which enable parents to use government funds to send their children to private schools, including religious schools, are a particularly good example to be used in the seminar, not only because the cases are difficult to resolve, but because such scholars as Nancy Rosenblum, Michael Perry, Richard Mouw and Martha Minow (along with Amy Gutmann and Stephen Macedo) contributed to a book I edited called School Choice: The Moral Debate, which explores all these issues. I plan to invite a legal scholar who has worked in this area to join the seminar for one of these discussions. Jay Wexler, a specialist in church-state issues, spoke to the 2007 group and will be invited again. It has been my experience with previous

NEH summer seminars that non-lawyers benefit greatly reading and discussing U. S. Supreme Court cases.

In this week of the seminar, we will ask whether the attempts by the Court to reach a consistent jurisprudence in this area is doomed to failure because, as MacIntyre and others would argue, there is no common position to be found. Or is the problem that those who adhere to separation of church and state, recognizing that their position might be unpopular in the country as a whole, have been reluctant to follow constitutional logic where it ought to lead? Or is there no inherent problem at all because the correct answer to how best to treat church and state has simply not yet been found? The legal questions are important in the context of the seminar because they deal so directly with contemporary realities. Even if a common morality is possible in the face of religious differences, and even if the contemporary sociology of religion were to make possible such a common morality, would it matter if those conditions could not be translated into legal rules that would be accepted as legitimate by all, or at least by most, people in the society?

Each seminar participant will be encouraged to undertake a research project related to the themes of the seminar, and the fifth week will allow them to present their ideas and to receive feedback from other participants. (Participants may also report on their projects during other weeks of the seminar if relevant to the topic). Although members of the seminar can use this opportunity to strengthen their areas of expertise, the interdisciplinary nature of the group will hopefully encourage members to explore new areas for research and writing beyond their disciplinary affiliations. By “research” I would include efforts on the part of the participants to incorporate materials from the summer seminar into their teaching. The fifth week will also offer an opportunity for participants with special expertise in the subjects we have been discussing to lead discussions and to frame questions for the other participants. In the 2005 summer seminar, participants spoke about a biography of Pat Robertson that was in progress and has since been published, an evangelically-inspired criticism of liberal conceptions of separation of church and state, and a nation-wide effort to test the moral and cultural attitudes of college students. In addition, four participants in the seminar, including the director, regularly teach a seminar on “Religion and Politics.”

They shared their syllabi and approaches; the director was especially grateful for their input and his altered his own course significantly as a result of these discussions. As far as the 2007 seminar is concerned, one participant has been actively publishing articles on the dilemmas facing traditional Jews in a secular society, while another is finishing a major book on the role of women's groups in the heavily male-led Catholic Church of the 1920s and 1930s.

The sixth and final seek of the seminar will seek to bring all the material together by reading Gene Outka's Prospects for a Common Morality, which contains a number of essays that are generally optimistic toward the prospects for a common morality, as well as The Culture of Disbelief by Yale law professor Steven Carter, which tends to be more pessimistic. This issue has also been addressed with considerable insight by David Hollenbach, S. J. from Boston College's theology department, who addressed the 2005 and 2007 seminars and will be invited again. It is also a question to which I devote myself in the final chapter of The Transformation of American Religion.

The answer to the question of whether a common morality can be fashioned in the absence of a common religion ought to develop out of the seminar itself. Nonetheless, I have my own perspective on this question. I believe that, in theory, there is no solution to the problem; MacIntyre and other critics are correct that what liberal secularists see as a neutral position to a believer looks like a biased one. But nor am I pessimistic on the subject. For I believe that religion in practice looks very different than religion in theory. The more we rely on the humanistic tools in the social sciences, studying what people are actually like in their religious practices, the more striking are the similarities between them. People pray to different gods but worship in similar ways. Or, as I put it in my book, study theology, and one is impressed by the differences between religions; study the sociology, and one is impressed by the similarities. This approach does not have a satisfactory solution for how the views of the non-religious can be incorporated into a common morality that has cross-religious sources, and the seminar will conclude with questions about whether that invalidates the approach or whether other alternatives can be found.

## **Project faculty and staff**

I led NEH summer seminars for College Teachers in 1994, 1996, and 1999. On all three occasions, the seminar was called “Morality and Society.” When I decided to apply once again to direct a seminar, I thought it best to change the topic to “Religious Diversity and the Common Good.” My experiences with the 2005 and 2007 groups organized under this title have convinced me that the change was a good idea.

There can be little doubt that framing the seminar around the ideas of MacIntyre and Fish on the one hand and Rawls, Gutmann and Macedo on the other stimulated intense discussions. If anything, our 2005 discussions were too intense, as one of the participants, an evangelical Christian with strongly conservative theological beliefs, made a passionate defense of MacIntyre and an equally passionate critique of liberalism. Although the initial reactions were at first combative, other members of the group quickly realized that his style of presentation grew out of his strong personal convictions, and this, in turn, led others in the group to pick up the case for liberal tolerance and church-state separation. Finally, to the relief of nearly all, another conservative Christian in the group introduced us to his mentor, Franklin Gamwell, offering a perspective on these issues unfamiliar to the others in the group (including the director). Starting off the seminar at such an intense level proved to be enormously beneficial. We all realized from the start the importance of the topic that had brought us together.

A similar situation from the other hand of the political/theological spectrum took place in 2007, when one member challenged the group for being too focused on Western religion to the exclusion of people from other religious traditions. Once again, there was considerable give-and-take, and the ultimate effect was to improve the quality of the group’s discussions. This was not always to the satisfaction of the participant who raised the issue; he continued to believe until the end that the seminar paid insufficient attention to religious minorities, a point with which I simply disagreed.

Both seminars were helped by the range of interests among the participants. Having a sociologist of religion with training in demography, as in 2005, allowed us to bring empirical data into what could

easily have been more abstract theoretical discussions. That seminar also had an expert in the way the U. S. Supreme Court has interpreted church-state decisions, and her participation was invaluable. Two members of the group were clergy: a rabbi and a Protestant minister; they could tell us about personal experiences that shed light on the discussions. In 2007, by contrast, the seminar contained an unusual number of historians, which insured that we would not overemphasize the significance of contemporary developments. On the other hand, the 2007 group lacked the diversity of religious and political views that characterized the previous meeting. I tried quite consciously to include people of different views, but none of the people who accepted in 2007 could be characterized as conservative Christian evangelicals. (The 2005 group had three such individuals). If I do the seminar again, I will advertise it, besides the usual places, in venues specifically designed to reach those who teach at evangelical and religiously oriented colleges. I try to remain sensitive to the fact that a broad group of participants can contain people with different methodologies, questions, and perspectives and that it is important always to resist the pressure to confine the discussions to topics of interests only to a few of the disciplines in the humanities.

My research and writing in the area of religion and politics helped shape both seminars and in turn have been influenced by the group. Indeed, I have just finished a book on the development of modern liberalism that owes its origins specifically to the questions raised by participants in the 2005 group. It has been my experience in the past that participants are very interested in the role I play as a public commentator on religion and politics and I usually devote at least one of the lunch meetings to that role and the opportunities and problems raised when academics speak to the general public.

It is also relevant for this seminar to note that I am the director of Boston College's Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life. This Center engages in research and public activities concerning religion's role in American society in a non-partisan and independent manner. We hold conferences, sponsor lectures, support graduate and undergraduate research, offer awards, and sponsor symposia on questions of the day. Although regular programs of the Center will not be taking place during the summer, the experiences I have had in organizing and leading summer institutes for Islamic scholars from the Muslim world under the auspices of the U. S. Department of State have provided experiences worth

sharing to the potential participants of an NEH Summer Seminar. A description of the Boisi Center and an account of our activities can be found at <http://www.bc.edu/centers/boisi/>.

As the overview of the weekly presentations suggests, I will pay special attention to guest speakers. Four of those who came in 2007 – Michael Sandel, Jay Wexler, Jytte Klausen, and David Hollenbach, S. J., who were all given high praise by the group in their evaluations, will be invited again.

### **Selection of Participants**

In 2007 I created a committee composed of  
to serve with me to  
choose members. Both were chosen because they are broad intellectuals with special skills in judging people. Their advice was indispensable. I hope to use them again.

### **Institutional Context**

Boston College is a coeducational university with an enrollment of 9,000 undergraduate and 4,700 graduate and professional students. Founded in 1863, it is one of the oldest Jesuit, Catholic universities in the United States. Boston College supports more than 50 fields of study through 11 schools and colleges. The University's 117-acre main campus is located in an open suburban setting six miles from downtown Boston, with direct access to the city via trolley. Facilities for recreation, including tennis, jogging, and swimming, are widely available on campus.

Boston College is a member of the Association of Research Libraries and its combined libraries, including the Thomas P. O'Neill Memorial library, has a collection that recently passed two million volumes. Seminar participants will have full library privileges, including lending privileges with a consortium of Boston area colleges through the Interlibrary Loan department. Participants will also have access to group study rooms, computers, on-line electronic databases, and a computerized search catalog within the library. The library is currently open from 8 am to 1 am on weekdays, 9am to 10pm on Saturdays and 11am to 1am on Sundays.



The seminar will be held at the Boisi Center and participants will have access to phones, photocopying, and limited secretarial support during their stay. We have one large and quite pleasant office that can be made available to participants. The Boisi Center is located in a 1920s-Tudor style house adjacent to the main campus, giving us the advantage of a central location.

The 2005 seminar experienced a major problem with the housing offered by Boston College. Based on their complaints, documented from the evaluations from the group, I was able to negotiate far better terms for the 2007 seminar. Indeed, Boston College went out of its way to accommodate the latter group, with the result that I now feel I can strongly recommend BC housing to any participants for whom it is appropriate.

As was the case with my previous seminars, participants will be able to enjoy the benefits of the greater Boston area during the summer. As I did in 2005 and 2007 I will host at least two social gatherings, one at my home in Brookline and the other at my summerhouse on Cape Cod. The group will also meet informally for picnics and for an outing to Fenway Park. We will plan on holding a concluding banquet at a local Chinese restaurant as was the case in previous years. Information about concerts and art exhibits can be provided to seminar participants in advance of their arrival.

### **Dissemination and Evaluation**

Another important amenity Boston College offered the participants, at the suggestion of my teaching assistant, was access to a WebCT page. WebCT is a secure, online site that allowed me to post items of interest and importance to the course for the participants to access and, most importantly, gave participants a forum to discuss the ideas from class outside of class. There was a message board function of WebCT, the access to which created many interesting dialogues among the participants, Boisi Center staff and myself outside of explicit class time. WebCT was something not previously used for past seminars, but it turned out to be a great success.

We will also develop a website for the seminar so that participants can view one another's background and CV before the seminar begins and final papers from the seminar can be posted. Boston

College is strongly committed to information technology. In addition, the availability of the Boisi Center makes it possible to use specialists in web pages and other forms of electronic technology.

I continue to be in communication with members of both 2005 and 2007 seminars. One member of the 2005 seminar, at my invitation, joined the American Political Science Association's Task Force on Religion and Democracy in America, which I chair. I was able to help one of the 2007 seminar participants land a position as director of Jewish studies at a college in the Baltimore-Washington area. I feel that the participants in the NEH seminars I have led constitute a community of scholars and teachers interested in each other's work. For me, these are individuals that I believe I have an obligation to help as they explore new careers and new venues for their work. Witnessing their success is as valuable to me as the actual discussions and intellectual exchanges offered by the seminars themselves.