

INSTITUTE FOR  
ADVANCED STUDIES IN CULTURE



## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Over the last two centuries, one found in America and in the West more generally a pervasive sense that progress in human affairs was not merely possible but inevitable. Prejudice, ignorance, and inhumanity, daunting though they remained, were destined to evaporate in the face of science and technology, reason and civilization. Indeed, it seemed at times as though we stood at the very threshold of a new era of truth, justice, and human flourishing.

At the start of the twenty-first century, this confidence has waned. Despite the varied achievements of modernity—the accomplishments of scientific knowledge, the advancement of democracy throughout the world, and the fruits of free market capitalism—a profound uneasiness marks our time. We sense that something is missing, that we are, in terms of the cultural resources available to us, impoverished. Such are the contradictions of our time.

Today, one finds this predicament manifested in almost all spheres of modern culture: in the polarization of our political discourse, in the current corporate scandals, in the ethical confusion of our biomedical institutions, and in the shallowness of our celebrity entertainment culture—the list goes on. Nor is the world of scholarship immune from this impoverishment. In contemporary academic life, there is a pervasive skepticism toward the very possibility of understandings capable of grounding ideals of human dignity, standards of decency, codes of character, and public moral obligation.

Clearly, then, ours is a time of dramatic change. But wise engagement with our changing world requires that we first understand it well. What are the deeper movements of our culture and how do these play out in the public ordering of an increasingly complex and interdependent world? What changes are taking place in the ways that people make sense of their lives and engage the world around them?

Over the last decade, the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture has hammered away at these critically important questions. Not only this, the Institute has become the auspices under which a vibrant scholarly community has been born. With a growing network of Fellows and friends at the University of Virginia and increasingly throughout the world, and with an ever-expanding list of accomplishments, the Institute has in only a short time become a premier research center for the study of contemporary culture. To all seeking to make sense of our times, we offer fresh ways of understanding the significant transformations taking place in our world today.

—James Davison Hunter



## WHO WE ARE

## A PREMIER RESEARCH CENTER

The Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, an interdisciplinary research center at the University of Virginia, investigates the most fundamental cultural changes taking place in the contemporary world. These rapid and far-reaching changes are not merely new fashions or trends, but rather transformations occurring deep within our cultural structures. They have profound implications for our ideals about what constitutes the good life, what it means to be human, and what kind of world we want to live in and work towards. Through its research, programs, and publications, the Institute engages in sustained and rigorous analysis and assessment of these implications. Committed to responsible and significant research that meets the highest standards of excellence, the Institute seeks to offer resources to those inside and outside the academy who are trying to understand and respond to the challenges of our moment.

## AN INTERDISCIPLINARY, INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

While many praise interdisciplinarity and speak wistfully of intellectual community, the realization of either is rare in the academic world. The lone scholar working in a specialized sub-field of his or her discipline and writing in a discourse inaccessible to those outside that discipline is all too common. In contrast, the Institute pursues its scholarly mission as an interdisciplinary, intellectual community of scholars. Coming from disciplines throughout the humanities and social sciences, these scholars engage in collaborative research and ongoing discussion about their individual work, drawing on the different resources and perspectives that other disciplines and other scholars offer to their own.

Part of building an intellectual community involves finding like-minded scholars to participate in the conversation and join in the Institute's mission. The Institute pursues this community building through its mentoring of graduate students and recent Ph.D.s, as well as its development of a network of senior scholars at other institutions and its partnerships with other academic institutions.



STEPHANIE GROSS



*Institute Fellow Edward Song*

### *A Mentoring Program*

Through the Fellows Program, the Institute provides professional, collegial, and financial resources to assist scholars in the early stages of their academic careers. Towards this end, the Institute mentors and supports the most promising graduate students and recent Ph.D.s working on contemporary culture. At the Institute, the Fellows are able to pursue their work in an environment that is intellectually and financially supportive, surrounded by conversation partners doing like-minded work. The first generation of Institute Fellows now hold tenure-track and tenured positions at research universities and liberal arts colleges around the country, including Duke University, Williams College, Wellesley College, Temple University, and Gordon College, among many others.

### *A Growing Network of Scholars*

While centrally based at the University of Virginia, the Institute's intellectual community extends into a growing network of scholars in universities around the country and in other parts of the world—all interested in shedding light on the changes taking place in our world today. These scholars come to the Institute to give public lectures and participate in panel discussions, present papers to the Fellows, hold seminars with students and faculty, conduct research, and take part in workshops where scholars read and comment on each other's work. Committed to the idea that collaborative work often results in much more than the sum of its parts, the Institute has a strong history of partnering with other academic institutions on specific projects.



## WHAT WE DO

## CURRENT RESEARCH INITIATIVES

At the heart of the Institute's work is the prolific research generated by its Fellows. Over the last few years alone, Institute scholars have produced over two dozen major works of scholarship on such topics as the culture wars, identity and social change, evil and postmodernism, democracy and public life, evangelical feminism, character, narratives of social change, revolutionary ideas and ideals, conflict resolution and humanitarian intervention, and the therapeutic aspect of contemporary culture. The Fellows have also written scores of scholarly articles, conference papers, and popular essays. In addition, the Institute is involved in a number of research initiatives on significant topics.

### *American Political Culture*

The politics of a society may change quickly, but the moral context of a society tends to change only very slowly, and when it does, these changes are of great consequence. The Survey of American Political Culture is an ongoing series of public opinion surveys that investigate political culture and the normative, foundational frameworks within which politics takes place. These frameworks include ideals, beliefs, values, symbols, stories, and public rituals that bind people together and direct their common actions. So far we have published three surveys: *The State of Disunion*, *The Politics of Character*, and *Difference and Democracy*.

### *Biotechnology*

The Institute has initiated an in-depth study of American perceptions of medical technologies that alter the workings of the mind or body. These technologies are creating new possibilities for modifying and controlling human emotions, cognition, and behavior, and they are seriously challenging our notions of what it means to be human. Rapid developments in biotechnology, along with public debates over stem cell research, mood- and behavior-altering drugs, cosmetic surgery, and other topics, have created the need for a serious assessment of public perceptions of these developments. Our aim is to probe deeper than past surveys on this topic to gain a more substantive picture of the public perceptions and cultural beliefs that shape the demand for and objections to new medical biotechnologies. The project involves a series of focus groups in cities around the United States and lengthy qualitative interviews, based on findings from the focus groups, with a sample of American citizens.

### *Religion and Democracy*

Contrary to past theories that predicted the demise of religion and its significance in the modern world, religion is not only flourishing, but also playing an increasingly important role in the world. The consequences can be enormously constructive or profoundly destructive, depending on the circumstances. Given recent developments in the Middle East, the Balkans, Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Europe, and the United States, fresh thinking is urgently needed. It is to this end that our initiative on Religion and Democracy is committed. In partnership with the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Celerity Foundation, we sponsor conferences, colloquia, film projects, and other strategic educational initiatives.

*Samuel Huntington, Lionel Jospin, and Robert Kaplan discuss the role of America in the world.*





*Community member Cynthia Yates asks about the fate of the arts.*

## *South Africa*

The world has long recognized that a catastrophe is taking place on the African continent. Billions of dollars of international aid have gone into efforts to alleviate poverty, disease, corruption, and war with little long-term improvement. One very important, but poorly understood development has been overlooked: the rise of Pentecostalism. The Faith for Development in South Africa Project, a collaboration between the Institute; the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs at Boston University; and the Centre for Development and Enterprise in Johannesburg, South Africa, seeks to remedy this oversight. The Pentecostal Movement has millions of members in Africa and is characterized by charismatic leadership, exuberant worship, and, frequently, a synthesis of Christianity and traditional African religions. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that the behavior it inspires corresponds to what social theorists have called “the Protestant ethic.” With its emphasis on marital fidelity, an ascetic lifestyle, disciplined work habits, and a positive attitude, this moral system is highly conducive to modern economic development in its formative phases. The economic and political implications are enormous.

## *Thrift and American Culture*

The Thrift and American Culture Project is a two-year, multi-disciplinary initiative that examines the significance of thrift in American society. More than mere fiscal frugality, thrift includes a range of ideas and practices, including self-restraint, reticence, temperance, conservation, and stewardship, and functions as a lens through which to explore deeper cultural realities. The thrift ethos was once at the heart of mainstream American thought and practice, but gradually it lost its normative appeal, became marginalized, and was superseded by the emergence of rival cultural dispositions. This complex story of structural and cultural realignment in an increasingly pluralistic society undergoing the profound social transformations of industrial and post-industrial (and now global) capitalism plays out in manifold, and often cross-cutting ways, affecting the ordering of our individual daily lives as much as our attempts to define public virtue and the good society. The project, done in collaboration with the Institute for American Values, will result in a three-volume series of books featuring the work of 27 leading scholars from across the social sciences and humanities, and a jointly authored public report intended for leaders in government, business, education, the media, and beyond.

## *The End of the West?*

In recent years more and more writers have come to agree that the West—the once-cohesive cultural and political group comprising the societies of Western Europe and North America—is either dead or dying. Westerners themselves increasingly perceive a gulf between the United States, on the one hand, and Western Europe and Canada, on the other. The former is said to be more individualistic, more oriented towards the free market, and more bellicose, while the latter are seen as more communitarian, socialistic, and pacifistic. Perhaps the deepest and most fundamental divide is over religion, with the United States remaining a nation largely of religious believers and Canada and Europe becoming increasingly secularized. A group of international scholars gathered in Vienna in 2005 to explore the empirical validity, explanations, meaning, and political ramifications of the “End of the West” thesis.



*Adam Zagajewski gives a poetry reading at the University of Virginia Art Museum.*

## PUBLIC EVENTS

Faculty and Fellows of the Institute regularly share their research with the broader public through lectures and presentations, delivered locally, nationally, and internationally. Moreover, the Institute has brought dozens of the world's most eminent intellectuals together in multiple forums to address the most pressing issues of our time. The Institute's two most important annual events are the Colloquium on Cultural Change and the LaBrosse-Levinson Lectures on Religion, Culture, and Social Theory.

### *The Colloquium on Cultural Change*

The Colloquium on Cultural Change brings together leading scholars and cultural critics in a public forum to address significant cultural issues. In the last decade, the Institute has hosted over 50 of the world's leading intellectuals for this purpose, including Terry Eagleton, Richard Rorty, Michael Sandel, Elaine Scarry, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and many others. While at the Institute, these scholars give public lectures, participate in panel discussions, and, frequently, host seminars for the Institute Fellows and the larger University community. The Colloquium often brings together scholars who would never otherwise have the opportunity to converse, coming as they do from disciplines that rarely intersect or from different cultural spheres. The conversations among the speakers, and between the speakers and the audience, are lively, well informed, and productive—challenging prevailing assumptions and moving beyond tired debates. The Colloquium has taken on such topics as identity, the question of evil, the purpose of the university, commodification, the impact of technology on our understanding of the self, the fate of the arts, and celebrity culture.

### *The LaBrosse-Levinson Lectures*

The LaBrosse-Levinson Lectures on Religion, Culture, and Social Theory give distinguished speakers from the worlds of academia, politics, journalism, and civic life a public forum in which to address, in an interdisciplinary and broadly accessible fashion, a current, central concern at the intersection of religion, culture, and social theory. The range and eminence of the speakers attests to the significance of these lectures. International relations expert Samuel Huntington joined journalist Robert Kaplan and Lionel Jospin, the former Prime Minister of France, to address the changing role of America in the world. Renowned theorist René Girard, leading French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Leger, and Islamic jurist and scholar Khaled Abou El Fadl wrestled with the relationship between religion, justice, and violence in contemporary affairs. Sociologist of religion Peter Berger led a discussion of religion and globalization. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks and the eminent philosopher of mind, John Searle, contributed to a conversation about contemporary political discourse. Each event has been extremely well attended by University of Virginia faculty and students, Charlottesville residents, and out-of-town guests.

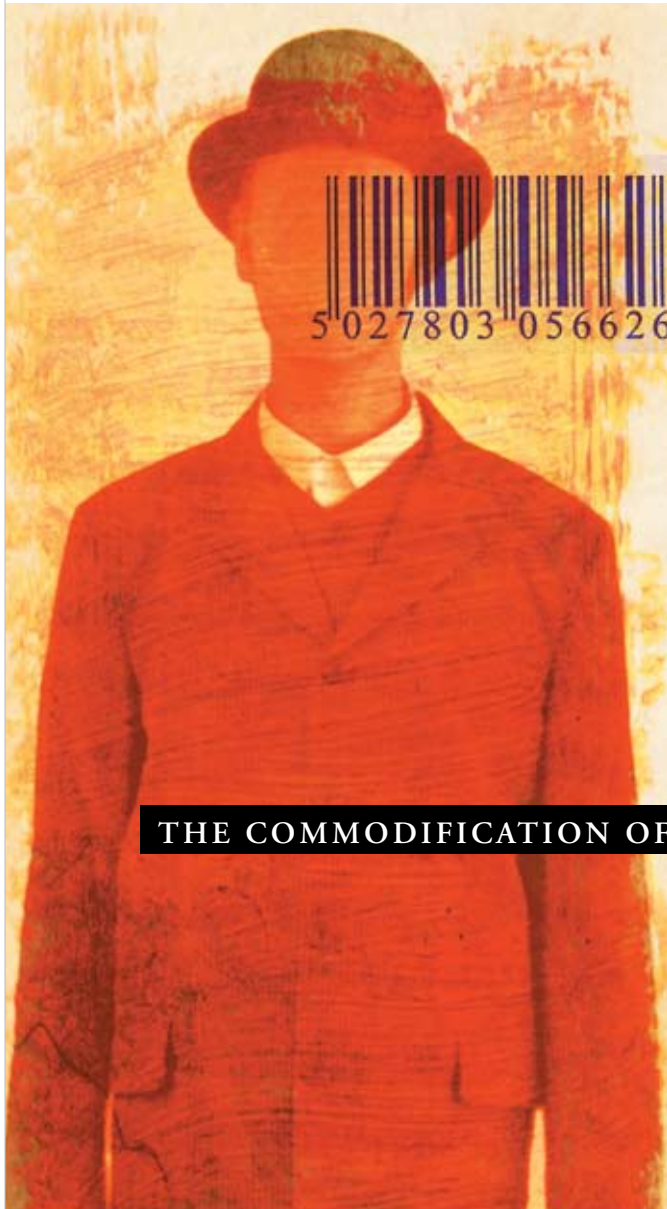
*Wendy Kaminer speaks on celebrity culture.*



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# THE HEDGEHOG REVIEW

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY CULTURE



THE COMMODIFICATION OF EVERYTHING

SUMMER 2003

Volume Five  
Number Two

## PUBLICATIONS

“There is a line among the fragments of the Greek poet Archilocus which says:  
“The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.”

—Isaiah Berlin

### *The Hedgehog Review*

In an age where knowledge is fragmented and academic discourse so specialized that communication across disciplines sometimes seems impossible, *The Hedgehog Review* offers a refreshing alternative. Departing from the standard academic journal fare of only very loosely related essays, *The Hedgehog Review* focuses each issue on “one big thing”—one pressing contemporary concern. This award-winning journal of critical reflections on contemporary culture has taken on such topics as the purpose of the university, the challenges of living with our deep differences, the body and being human, religion and violence, the role of America in the world, the commodification of just about everything, and the fate of the arts. Each of the three issues per year brings together the finest scholars from throughout the humanities and social sciences to use the resources and perspectives of their disciplines to shed light on the chosen topic in a way that is accessible to those outside their disciplines. With essays, interviews, book reviews, and bibliographic reviews, *The Hedgehog Review* offers coherent explorations and analyses of each topic. Described as “ambitiously conceived,” “thought-provoking and useful,” and “intellectually vibrant,” the journal poses hard questions, pursues knotty controversies, and pushes intellectual debates beyond their current impasses, making it a unique resource for those concerned with making sense of the puzzles, perplexities, and promise of our times.

### Recent Contributors & Interviewees

Khaled Abou El Fadl  
Akbar S. Ahmed  
Linda Martín Alcoff  
Lori B. Andrews  
Zygmunt Bauman  
Robert N. Bellah  
Peter L. Berger  
Albert Borgmann  
Leo Braudy  
David Brooks  
José Casanova  
John Patrick Diggins  
Terry Eagleton  
Jean Bethke Elshtain  
Joseph Epstein  
Amitai Etzioni

Francis Fukuyama  
Sander L. Gilman  
René Girard  
Amy Gutmann  
Samuel P. Huntington  
Lionel Jospin  
Wendy Kaminer  
George Kateb  
Robert D. Kaplan  
Margaret Lock  
Jessica Mathews  
Gilbert Meilaender  
Martha Nussbaum  
Peter Ochs  
Richard Rorty  
Nancy L. Rosenblum

Abdulaziz Sachedina  
Michael Sandel  
Elaine Scarry  
Nancy Scheper-Hughes  
Richard Schickel  
John Searle  
Adam B. Seligman  
Charles Taylor  
Sherry Turkle  
Bryan S. Turner  
Claudio Veliz  
Michael Walzer  
Merold Westphal  
Nicholas Wolterstorff  
Adam Zagajewski

## INSight

The goal of *INSight*, the Institute's newsletter, is not only to inform colleagues, friends, and supporters about the research, public events, and publications of the Institute, but also to make a substantive contribution to the Institute's mission, with short articles, book reviews, book excerpts, interviews, and research notes. *INSight* is published twice a year and is sent to approximately 4,500 subscribers. Issues are available at the Institute's website: [www.virginia.edu/iasc](http://www.virginia.edu/iasc).

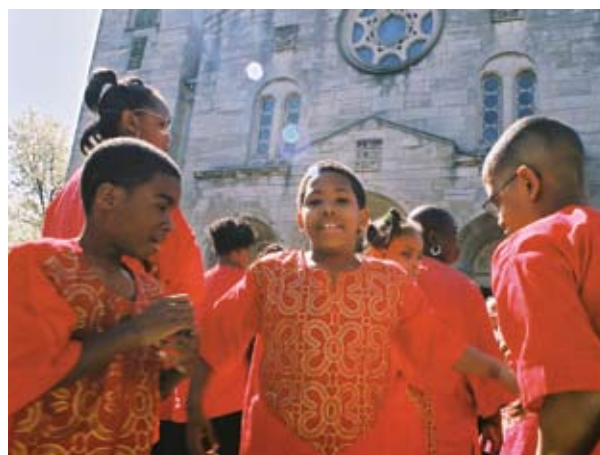


## Film Projects

Paul Wagner, an Emmy- and Academy Award-winning producer, directs the Institute's film projects, which focus on issues of relevance to contemporary culture. *Faith in the Hood* is a one-hour documentary that spotlights contemporary religious practice in inner city America, while superimposing broader themes from the history and traditions of African American religion. The second film project, *The Great Democratic Revolution*, is a three-part series that looks at the state of democracy in the modern world, using Alexis de Tocqueville's trenchant insights from *Democracy in America*, considered one of the best books ever written about democracy. This film series aims to present its subject in an accessible, exciting way to the American public so as to engage them in a reappraisal of Tocqueville's profound questions for our own times and to mobilize citizens to address the issues raised by the series in political, civic, educational, community, and religious organizations.

*A cultural revolution does not occur as a discernible event, or as a plurality of events, nor does it occur swiftly within a few years, as does a political revolution; only afterwards, when the revolution itself has been incorporated into the new system of controls, do such mythic condensations of cultural change occur.*

—Philip Rieff, University of Pennsylvania



*Images from Faith in the Hood.*

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