



**BOSTON  
COLLEGE**

# LINGUA SACRA: NEGOTIATING GOD-TALK IN AMERICA

This panel discussion, which includes experts on the social development of Christianity and Judaism in the United States as well as filmmakers from the PBS series *God in America*, will examine the question of how Americans understand and talk about God.

The United States is among the most religiously diverse nations on earth and yet has comparatively little history of religious violence, in large part because of a widespread view of religion as a matter of private, not public, concern. As Thomas Jefferson famously wrote in 1781, "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." Granted strong legal protections by the First Amendment, free speech and religious freedom have come to be cherished social conventions, too, even (perhaps especially) among those who see religion as more of a public matter. Indeed, talking about God is something of a national pastime, one that in recent decades has broadened to include conversations among and about multiple religious traditions. What we say about God—and how we say it, through words and deeds—reveals much about our national character, principles, and beliefs.

## PANELISTS

### **DAVID BELTON**

*Writer, series director, producer Frontline/  
American Experience series God in America*

### **SARAH COLT**

*Writer, director, producer Frontline/American  
Experience series God in America*

### **RACHEL GORDAN**

*Doctoral candidate in American religious  
history, Harvard University*

### **CYNTHIA L. LYERLY**

*Associate professor, College of Arts and Sciences,  
history department*

### **MARK S. MASSA, S.J.**

*Dean, Boston College School of Theology  
and Ministry*

## MODERATOR

### **ERIK OWENS**

*Associate director, Boisi Center for Religion and  
American Public Life and adjunct assistant professor  
of theology and international studies, Boston College*

A panel discussion sponsored by the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, and the Office of Marketing Communications.

THIS EVENT IS FREE  
AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
[WWW.BC.EDU/EVENTS](http://WWW.BC.EDU/EVENTS)

**THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2011**

**4:00 P.M.**

**BOSTON COLLEGE, CUSHING HALL 001**