

In early December 2008, I travelled to Paris at the invitation of the French Institute on Foreign Affairs (IFRI), a private think-tank that advises the French Foreign Minister; to speak about the Obama victory and its implications. Joining me from the U.S. were Francis Fukuyama, Steve Clemons, Stanley Greenberg and Ian Shapiro. Europeans are insatiable when it comes to Obama. Our discussions were lively and difficult to bring to an end.

As it happens, much of the work of the Boisi Center in the fall of 2008 was devoted to the election that produced the Obama victory. One of our most lively panels was devoted to the role played by Catholics and featured a discussion between Amy Sullivan of TIME and Michael Sean Winters of the Catholic magazine America. The audience was substantial, and the questions asked by students were most impressive.

also sponsored a panel discussion to analyze election results and look ahead to the future. This fall we reprised the BC faculty lineup that had worked so well in previous occasions, with me joining political science colleagues Kay Schlozman and Marc Landy. The three of us have just the right mixture of intellectual interests, methodological skills and political viewpoints to produce both mutual respect and sometimes profound disagreement.

Although we did not play a role in organizing the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities' November 22 symposium ("One Nation Under God? The Role of Religion in American Public Life"), we were very much part of the affair. I chaired a session featuring Mark Lilla, Peggy Steinfels, Jon Meacham and Peter Paris. Among other things, this event brought Amy Sullivan back to campus. She is one of the best writers in the country on religion, and it was terrific to have her here twice.

We were truly fortunate to have a first-rate speaker for our annual "Prophetic Voices" lecture, namely Abdullahi An-Na'im of Emory University, a native of Sudan and an internationally acclaimed scholar of law and religion. His lecture "American Secularism for American Muslims" sparked fascinating questions from the audience, which stayed with rapt attention for the whole event. My political science colleague Ali Banuazizi set the tone for the lecture with a wonderful introduction.

Our lunch colloquia this semester were nearly exclusively devoted to themes related to "Ways of Knowing and the Catholic

Mariani. We will continue this theme during the Spring semester.

I am also pleased to report that my new book, The Future of Liberalism, will be published by Alfred A. Knopf (and will be available on Amazon.com) in early February. I look forward to the comment and criticism it will hopefully provoke, not least during the Boisi Center's April 29 "author meets critics" panel discussion of the book.

Finally, I want to thank our terrific research assistants, Suzanne Hevelone, Corinne Madigan and Daniel Bruen. Joined by web designer Isabelle Martinez, this team of students

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enter Report

As the United States faces a massive economic crisis, politicians on both ends of the political spectrum routinely invoke Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who led the nation through the Great

Depression.
Patrick Maney,
then Dean of the
College of Arts
and Sciences
and professor
of history at
Boston College,
spoke about
FDR's legacy at
a colloquium on
September 17.

Roosevelt
dominated
popular culture
during his own

days to an unparalleled degree. Children were named after him, songs were sung about him and movies portrayed him. Through his Fireside Chats on the radio and his administration's effort to respond to all of his personal mail, Americans identified with him personally and felt that he knew them personally. He did have detractors, but they were largely silent in the face of his overwhelming popularity. Still, many Republicans

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Biographers face a daunting task when they seek to capture the essence of someone else's life within the pages of a book.

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