

Friends:

Even with an abbreviated semester due to the Coronavirus, the Boisi Center has had an exciting semester. We started off with a standing-room-only crowd on January 22 gathered

to watch Martin Doblmeier's newest award-winning documentary about Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day, *Revolution of the Heart*. I think it is safe to say that the crowd in the seats, sitting on the windowsills, and crowded on the steps of the amphitheater where we showed the film, were electrified. After the fifty-five minute film, I interviewed the producer/director, and the conversation continued with comments by Professor

Susannah Heschel of Dartmouth College, Professor Mark Silk of Trinity College Hartford's Greenberg Center, and Professor James Bernauer, S.J. of B.C.'s Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. While all three agreed that it was a new version of a much older prejudice, each of the three commentators offered a slightly different reading of the sources for the seemingly virulent (and much more violent) reappearance of what has been termed a "Christian heresy": debates over the state of Israel's political policies; popular culture in the U.S. which has seemingly "given permission" for people to say and do things that would have been considered "off limits" just a few years ago; the increased militance of the NRA, etc. It was a bracing evening of smart conversation.

Just a week later, the Center hosted a conversation titled *February 24, 2020* "Anti-Semitism?" Co-sponsored with the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning and Boston College's Hillel student group, whose president, Andrew Ritter, welcomed the capacity crowd and introduced the participants, the evening began with observations offered by Pro-

sored with the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning and Boston College's Hillel student group, whose president, Andrew Ritter, welcomed the capacity crowd and introduced the participants, the evening began with observations offered by Pro-



On February 24, Boston College Deans Susan Gennaro, Vincent Rougeau, and Stanton Wortham gave their take on the recent lawsuit against Harvard and its

evolution and innovation in legal education

A discussion of the changing landscape of law schools.

On February 19, the Boisi Center had the honor of hosting Vincent Rougeau, dean of Boston College Law School, for a

In her recent book, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, Arlie Russell Hochschild wrote, “A deep story is a feels-as-if story—it’s the story feelings tell, in the language of symbols. It removes judgment. It removes fact. It tells us how things feel. . . . And I don’t believe we understand anyone’s politics, right or left, without it. For we all have a deep story.” The tenth annual Graduate Symposium on Religion and Politics took the concept of “deep story” as its starting point as the graduate student participants began an exploration of the significant and decisive roles that narratives—familial, religious, social, historical, and political—play in our lived experience and our interpretation of the world around us.

In the first meeting, the graduate students gathered to frame the issue. The participants grappled more deeply with Hochschild’s “deep story” idea while considering other current examples of the blending of particularly religious narratives within political narratives articulated by politicians for the advancement of certain policies. But one of Hochschild’s central insights—that deep stories are not necessarily factual—was foregrounded as we looked, for example, at the voting habits of Catholics who, from a religious perspective, might be

presumed to share a common operative deep story—a fact uncorroborated in its effects at the polling booth.

The second meeting took up some of the psychological dimensions of narrative and further explored narrative’s relationship to truth. Drawing on a 2018 study in *Science*, the group considered the ease with which false news spreads compared to true news. Additional readings problematized any indictment that could be made about that by noting the centrality of narrative to self-identity, self-understanding, and conceptualizing reality around us. As such, narratives were essential to human persons as persons, even if they were ultimately detrimental due to factual deficiencies.

The conversation then turned to civil religion and the “American dream.” Drawing on Christopher Chapp’s *Religious Rhetoric and American Politics: The*

the boisi center for
religion and american

**The Boisi Center for Religion
and American Public Life**

Boston College

24 Quincy Road

Chestnut Hill, MA 02467 USA