In the twentieth century, Hollywood films have been central to American popular culture, reflecting and refracting social forces while encapsulating the ambitions, anxieties, and nightmares of American life. The most enduring ideal of America and especially of Hollywood remains the "American Dream," the promise of opportunity and material success that shaped the growth and destiny of this nation of immigrants. More than any other immigrant group, Jews contributed to the making of Hollywood and to the filmic construction of the American Dream through their activities as studio heads, writers, directors, producers, and performers. "Stars of David" examines both the involvement and the portrayal of Jews in American cinema in order to shed new light on the power of the American Dream and the meaning of American ethnic and cultural pluralism.

The Jewish involvement in American cinema manifests the uneasy confrontation between ethnic identity and assimilation. Hollywood recorded this ambivalent struggle, portraying Jews who strove to maintain a sense of their own ethnic identity while simultaneously demanding to be recognized as full-fledged citizens. These images have contributed to the perpetuation of the American Dream as well as America's understanding of itself as a multicultural and multi-ethnic society. The story of Jews in the American film industry and the representation of Jews in American films is important not only for what it reveals about one of the country's most prominent minorities but also for what it discloses about the American Dream and ultimately about the very core of American society itself.
CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

LESTER D. FRIEDMAN is professor and chair of Media and Society at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. He has also taught at Syracuse University, Northwestern University, The Art Institute of Chicago and American University. Professor Friedman’s areas of research and scholarship include American cinema from the post-World War II era to the present, American-Jewish images in the media, medical culture and British media. His publications include Second Star to the Right; Peter Pan in the Popular Imagination (2008); Citizen Spielberg (2006); Fires Were Started (2006); American Cinema of the 1970s (2006); Cultural Histories: Medicine and Media (2004); American Jewish Filmmakers (2003); and Bonnie and Clyde (2000). He is also co-editor of the Screen Decades (Rutgers University Press) series, a multi-volume history of American cinema from 1895 until the present.

THOMAS DOHERTY is professor of American Studies at Brandeis University. A cultural historian with a special interest in Hollywood cinema, he teaches courses in media culture and things American. His undergraduate degree is from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash. After a two-year stint in the Peace Corps in South Korea, he entered graduate school at the University of Iowa, where he received his doctorate in American studies in 1984. His reviews and commentary have appeared in the Boston Globe, Los Angeles Times; and the Washington Post. He writes frequently on media culture for the Chronicle of Higher Education. In 2005, he received recognition as an Academy Film Scholar from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Doherty is the author of Teenagers and Teenchips: the Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s (1988); Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II (1993); Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934 (1999); Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture (2003); and most recently, Hollywood’s Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration (2007). Doherty serves on the editorial board of Cinema Journal and edits the film review section for the Journal of American History.

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DAVID STERRITT is chair of the National Society of Film Critics and Professor Emeritus of Theater and Film at Long Island University, and until his recent move to California he was Adjunct Professor of Film at Columbia University, a member of the Language, Literature, and Culture Faculty at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and co-chair of the University Seminar on Cinema and Interdisciplinary Interpretation, a Columbia University faculty seminar. He serves on the editorial board for Quarterly Review of Film and Video, is a contributing writer for MovieMaker, writes often for Cineaste; PopMatters.com; and Film International, and served for many years on the Festival Island selection committee. His essays have appeared in Cahiers du cinéma, The New York Times; The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism; The Chronicle of Higher Education; Film-Philosophy.com; the Hitchcock Annual; and many other publications. His books include The B List: The National Society of Film Critics on Low-Budget Beauties; Genre-Bending Mavericks, and Cult Classics We Love, ed. with John Anderson (October 2008); Guiltless Pleasures: A David Sterritt Film Reader (2010); Mad to Be Saved: The Beats, the ’50s, and Film (1998); Screening the Beats (2004); The Films of Alfred Hitchcock (1993); and The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible (1999), as well as edited collections on Jean-Luc Godard, Robert Altman, and Terry Gilliam. He has also published thousands of articles on film, theater, music and other subjects in feature and news pages of The Christian Science Monitor, an international daily newspaper and www.csmonitor.com.

MURRAY POMERANCE is professor in the Department of Sociology at Ryerson University. Educated at The University of Michigan and State University of New York at Buffalo, he spent his youth entertaining thoughts of entering medicine and the rabbinate before succumbing to the mysteries of academic life. For more than 30 years he has taught courses on modern Jewish life, literature and film, imagination and American film. He is the author of The Horse Who Drank the Sky; Film Experience Beyond Narrative and Theory (2008); Johnny Depp Starts Here (2005); Savage Time (2005); An Eye for Hitchcock (2004); and Magia d’Amore (1998). He is editor or co-editor of numerous volumes including A Family Affair: Cinema Calls Home (2008); City That Never Sleeps: New York and the Filmic Imagination (2007); Cinema and Modernity (2006); From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson’s LORD OF THE RINGS (2006). American Cinema of the 1950s: Themes and Variations (2005); and Enfant Terrible! Jerry Lewis in American Film (2002). With Lester D. Friedman and Adrienne L. McLean respectively, Pomerance co-edits two Rutgers University Press series: Screen Decades and Star Decades and Techniques of the Moving Image, in addition to the Horizons of Cinema series (State University of New York Press). His writing has appeared in Quarterly Review of Film and Video; Film International; Film Quarterly; The Paris Review; The Kenyon Review; and New Directions.

VIVIAN SOBCHAK was the first woman elected president of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, and is on the Board of Directors of the American Film Institute. Her essays have appeared in journals such as Quarterly Review of Film and Video; Film Comment; Camera Obscura; Film Quarterly; and Representations. Her books include Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film (1997); The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience (1991); and Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture (2004). She has edited two anthologies: Meta-Morphing: Visual Transformation and the Culture of Quick-Change (1999) and The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event (1996). Her research interests are eclectic: American film genres, film theory and philosophy, history and the aesthetics of perception, historiography and cultural studies.