George Lipsitz, UCSB  
**Sacred Spaces on the Gulf Coast: Students at the Center and Project Row Houses**

The community projects Students at the Center in New Orleans and Project Row Houses in Houston do not appear on the surface to be religious endeavors. They are not affiliated with any houses of worship, do not conduct religious services, and bring together a broad range of believers and non-believers. Yet the projects manifest African and Afro-Caribbean understandings of spaces as sacred crossroads, they build on the Black Christian concept of the Beloved Community, they advance what Martin Luther King described as “the bitter but beautiful struggle,” and they enact the social relations that Archbishop Oscar Romero described as “accompaniment.” Although these projects can be analyzed solely through the secular language of social movement theory, an understanding of their religious origins and intentions provides a more precise account of their aims and achievements.

Christina Schwenkel, UC Riverside  
**Urban Topographies of Religious Ruins in Socialist Vietnam**

In October 1968, at the apex of the war in Vietnam, US bombers descended on Vinh City, destroying the eighteenth century Diệć Pagoda that was once the cultural center of the provincial capital. Only the front gate remained standing. Today, as one of the last material ruins of war in the city, the pagoda’s remains were recently designated a site of historical and architectural heritage by the state. For urban residents, this symbolic space has become the focus of renewed religious practices through the spontaneous, makeshift reconstruction of the pagoda and its altars. In this paper, I trace the social life of Diệć pagoda, from its role in the revolution and its abandonment in postwar years to its current reanimation by local devotees. While contemporary practices at Diệć Pagoda speak to the diversification of urban religious forms across Vietnam in a late socialist market economy, they also reveal an ambiguity, or fuzziness, between secular state bureaucracy and discouraged superstitious beliefs as urban religiosity inadvertently works to reify, rather than undermine, state authority.

Halifu Osumare, UC Davis  
**Sacred Dance/Drumming: Reciprocation and Contention within African Belief Systems in the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area**

African peoples have always worshipped through the medium of the body. Expressive dance movements have been a central part of the worship system of the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Bakongo of Central Africa, the Santeria religion in Cuba, and the Pentecostal Christians in the United States. Historically, from the Old World to the New World, African peoples utilized their propensity to embody spirit and the divine principle, whether their colonizers and slave owners
comprehended this cultural trait or not. The author explores the reciprocal relationship between African and Caribbean dance classes and the practice of African-based religions in the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area. In addition, the conflicts implicit in African belief systems that underwent a forced migration resulting from the Atlantic slave trade, and ultimately arriving in U.S. urban centers, are investigated through interviews of African and African American dancers and African religious practitioners in the early 90s. In the process, the continuing power of dance and music within these sacred traditions across time and space is revealed.

Allen F. Roberts, UCLA

**Visual Citizenship and the Refabulation of Urban Senegal**

“Visual citizenship” is to belong by the eye. National flags, portraits of saints, and historical monuments help define communities the world around. Such rallying images can long endure or be lost in the vagaries of faith, fortune, or fad. Visual citizenship is inexorably adaptive, assisting people to cope with changing circumstances. Visual, narrative, and performative contributions to citizenship converge in social processes fruitfully understood as **refabulation**. Dakar has been undergoing radical refabulation since the late 1980s, as myths and allusions to African heroes and illustrious events replace icons of (neo)colonial oppression. Such processes often are but need not be homegrown, for special and foreign interests may elbow their ways into prominence, altering landscapes as they seek to transform mindscapes to their own financial and/or political advantage. Three case studies from recent research in Dakar will suggest how avidly debated refabulation and related aspects of visual citizenship are in contemporary Senegal.

Simon Sadler, UCD

**Neoliberal Spiritualism and the Re-enchantment of Time and Place**

Time and space have become relativized—this much has been an increasingly commonplace understanding of capitalism, globalization and its technologies from the railways to the internet. Yet time and place are becoming fetishized, my paper argues, as a neoliberal spiritualism. I compare two recent instances, one a relative failure, the other a relative success. The first is the Millennium Dome, erected in 2000 at Greenwich, the official center of world time, to mark the beginning of a new millennium. The second is the conferencing scene around the TED and Long Now initiatives with their roots in the Bay Area of Northern California. If, a couple of decades ago, advanced capitalist culture was Yuppie—ironic, urbane, individualist, ephemeral, materialistic, postmodern—then by contrast a millennial capitalism instills belief in the great arcs of history, destiny, and crowds, determinedly congregating its converts through sermonizing performances in tent revivals at the nodal sites of globalization.
A Saint of Edges and In-Betweens: 
Haptic Visualities in Devotional Diasporas of Shirdi Sai Baba

Visual images are integral to transnational networks of a dynamic contemporary religious movement based upon the life and teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba, a South Asian saint. Baba lived in the western Indian state of Maharashtra from the mid-1800s to 1918 and has an avid following in the Indian Ocean world and parts of Africa. He defied religious nationalism, refused to self-identify as either Hindu or Muslim, and accepted devotions of all castes and faiths, offering an alternative to communal ideologies. This paper explores how images ranging from physical to digital media actively shape religiosity and impact this fast-growing movement’s expansion in thriving cities of India, Mauritius, Germany, and Ghana. In addition to documenting the history, production, and dispersal of images, I will focus upon the efficacy of the images through locally-defined understandings of indexicality and “haptic visualities” that ensure the presence of the Saint through new media, despite diasporic dislocations and the stresses of contemporary urban life the world around.

Jesus Hernandez, UC Davis

Where We Pray

Sacramento provides a typical example of American urban growth, demonstrating such processes as the segregation and sprawl that shaped the social and physical landscapes of cities throughout the United States. For this reason, Sacramento provides an opportunity to understand ‘Where We Pray’ as part of a larger historical process that takes form socially, as well as spatially. Accordingly, this case study explores the connection between where we pray and residential segregation by examining the conditions leading to a massive racial sorting of Sacramento residents that appropriately returns our attention to the presence of racially-fragmented and isolated residential space. The proactive promotion of social closure, therefore, calls our attention to the formation of a geopolitical collective process that ties together social boundaries, legal rulemaking, and economic policy into everyday practices of defining racially-identifiable space. This multi-scaled historical process of organizing space in the U.S. remains essential to understanding the racial dimensions that determine ‘Where We Pray.’

Bascom Guffin, UCD

Ganesh Travels, Ganesh Anchors

Ganesh travels the roads of Cyberabad, where Hyderabad's power brokers pursue a patchwork dream of infotech dominance amongst the fields and villages of the city's edge. Ganesh travels the roads of Cyberabad not astride his own rat steed; no. His tiny form perches.
atop the dashboards of software engineers’ cars, in hopes he might remove the potholes and
speed breakers and other drivers from their way. His much larger presence emerges once a
year from the workshops of master sculptors, to reign over processions streaming through
the city to the cranes that will lower him thousands of times over into lakes and
reservoirs. Ganesh travels, but he also provides an anchor. During the time of
processions, he is a symbol of neighborhoods under his multiply-crafted countenances.
Because he is so well-travelled, Ganesh has followers from every part of India. And so
when India's liberalizing economic order brings people from just about every state in the
country to live together in the gated community called Aliens Space Station, Ganesh is
there to gather them together. This is a story of how that happens.

Roxanne Varzi, UCI
Movie-ing Messiahs, Cinema, Spirituality and Space in Tehran

In 1995, movie screens across Tehran depicted Pari, a young chadored Tehran University student
in the throes of a spiritual crisis. When the film showed at Lincoln Center in NYC some years
later, JD Salinger recognized his beloved heroine, Franny and sued the director for plagiarism.
Pari is not just an example of plagiarism but one moment in a long history of
spiritual/philosophical and religious borrowing or cultural translation and traveling sensibilities
between Eastern and Western religious practices that began for Iran as long ago as the crossing
of Marco Polo when Iran was a major stop along the Silk Road. What is of interest is not only
the history of this unwritten relationship between Iran and the West but the political and social
power these forms of spiritual cross-pollination of Eastern and Western texts have engendered
and continue to wield today. This paper examines these forms of spiritual cross-pollination in
urban Iran including the reinvention of Sufism, the emergence of ‘Sufi cool’ and New Age books
in Teheran, and the media and mobilities that engender them.