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March 23, 2010

***Note to editors:** A high resolution photograph of Professor Hamid Dabashi is available on the College Web site at www.newpaltz.edu/news/images/dabashi.html.*

Center for Middle Eastern Dialogue to host discussion on 'Islam and a Just World Order'

Event will include musical interludes from Middle Eastern musicians

NEW PALTZ – The Center for Middle Eastern Dialogue at the State University of New York at New Paltz will welcome Columbia University Professor Hamid Dabashi who will speak on the topic of "Islam and a Just World Order" at 7 p.m. on Monday, April 19, in Lecture Center 100. Admission is free and open to the public.

Professor Dabashi's talk, which will be followed by a question and answer session moderated by Clinton Bennett, adjunct professor of Philosophy at New Paltz, will include musical interludes by Yemeni singer, percussionist and oud player Ahamed Alrodini and Israeli percussionist Isaac Gutwilik.

Dabashi is currently the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York, the oldest and most prestigious chair in his field. He has also taught and delivered lectures in many North American, European, Arab and Iranian universities.

Born on 15 June, 1951, into a working class family in the south-western city of Ahvaz in the Khuzestan province of Iran, Dabashi received his early education in his hometown and his college education in Tehran, before he moved to the United States, where he received a dual Ph.D. in Sociology of Culture and Islamic Studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1984, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University.

An internationally renowned cultural critic and award-winning author, his books and articles have been translated into numerous languages, including Japanese, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Hebrew, Danish, Arabic, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Polish, Turkish, Urdu and Catalan.

Among his best-known works are his *Authority in Islam; Theology of Discontent; Truth and Narrative; Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present, Future; Staging a Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran; Masters and Masterpieces of Iranian Cinema; Iran: A People Interrupted*; and an edited volume, *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*.

Middle Eastern musicians

Singer, percussionist and oud player, Alrodini was born in Bakat Al Hoddeidah on the Red Sea coast of Yemen. Learning music informally from the time he was a small boy, Alrodini once made himself an oud from found objects, including parts of a gas tank from an abandoned truck. He first came to the United States in 1988 on a tour with Fouad Al Kibsi and Haifa Omar, prominent Yemeni musicians. Alrodini is one of only a few Brooklyn artists who come from the South/Red Sea area and his expertise in that region's music is a rarity in New York.

Gutwilik is an Israeli percussionist, educator and instrument design-and-sales authorized representative for JCR Percussion, a company specializing in Mid-East Percussion.

James Schiffer, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at New Paltz, said the purpose of the Center is to promote constructive dialogue about the Middle East that will explore ways to establish lasting peace in the region, encourage economic collaboration, and stimulate cultural and educational exchange. The Center provides a forum for students, faculty, community members, scholars and diplomats of various points of view to exchange ideas in a respectful way that will promote greater understanding of this complex and volatile region of the world.

"We believe that the Center demonstrates the possibility and value of meaningful dialogue between people of goodwill, even between those who disagree on fundamental issues," said Schiffer. "Professor Dabashi's talk, the main event, promises to be both provocative and enlightening; it will be followed by an extended question-and-answer session. Furthermore, the collaboration between a musician from Yemen and one from Israel captures the essence of what the Center is trying to promote. "

For more information about The Center for Middle Eastern Dialogue and the event planned for April 19, contact Dr. Schiffer at (845) 257-3520 or schiffej@newpaltz.edu.

The State University of New York at New Paltz was named "Hottest Small State School" in the 2008 Kaplan/Newsweek How To Get Into College Guide, which identifies America's 25 Hottest Schools. The guide features schools that all offer top academic programs and are making their mark in the competitive world of higher education.