

Virginia Tech to present Jewish Film Festival Nov. 6-8

Blacksburg, Va., October 13, 2005 -- The first Jewish Film Festival at Virginia Tech will be held on campus Nov. 6-8. The festival will feature guest speakers or special programs at all screenings to engage the audience in dialogue about the Jewish experience and elements of each film.

The festival kicks off with a “Bagels and Grits Brunch” at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 6 in the Commonwealth Ballroom of Squires Student Center. The brunch will be followed at 1 p.m. by the film, “Shalom Y’all.” This popular documentary views the southern Jewish experience through the eyes of a native son and the cultural cousins he encounters on a 4200-mile journey from Texas to Tennessee. At the center of the story is filmmaker Brian Bain, a third-generation southern Jew from New Orleans, who will be on hand to answer questions.

An evening of short films will be shared with a falafel and hummus tasting at 7 p.m., Monday, Nov. 7 in Colonial Hall of Squires Student Center. Films include: “West Bank Story,” a little singing, a little dancing, a lot of hummus; “Gossip”, a film about an elderly Jewish mother who starts a spiteful rumor about a bride at her wedding; “Backseat Bingo,” an animated documentary about senior citizens and romance; and “The Nuclear Physicist Gives His Son a Haircut,” an amusing and disturbing animation in which a nuclear physicist discusses his cheating girlfriend, hormones, and Viagra as he cuts his son’s hair.

The festival’s finale features two films starting at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 8 in Colonial Hall of Squires Student Center.

First is a short film, “SKYLAB,” about a 12 year old, Benj, who is convinced that the sky is falling – and it is. Not even NASA can confirm exactly when or where the largest vehicle ever hurled into space will land.

This will be followed by the documentary, “Columbia: The Tragic Loss,” an examination of the 2004 Columbia Space Shuttle disaster and a poignant tribute to Colonel Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut ever to venture into outer space. This portrait is told through family interviews, and a wealth of archival materials, including never-before-seen footage from the mission, and Ramon’s own diary, miraculously retrieved from the crash debris. A NASA representative from the Langley Space Flight Center and four Virginia Tech engineering faculty (Wayne Scales, Rakesh Kapania, Hanspeter Schaub and Christopher Hall) will lead a panel discussion following the film with NASA approved ice cream and ‘space snacks.’

The festival is co-sponsorship by both university organizations (Hillel at Virginia Tech, Virginia Tech Union, The Office of Multicultural Affairs, The Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Malcolm and Diane Rosenberg Program of Judaic Studies, Engineering Department) and the community (John E. Marek Holocaust Education Fund of the New River Valley Foundation and the Blacksburg Jewish Community Center). The festival is also a part of Jewish Cinema South, a project of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, a non-profit organization dedicated to sustaining, preserving, and sharing Jewish culture throughout 12 Southern states.

Tickets go on sale Oct. 17 at the UUSA Ticket Office located in Squires Student Center (540-231-5615) and will be available at the door. General admission is \$4 for adults, per screening. Free tickets are available to Virginia Tech students with valid ID. Series Pass is \$10 (includes all three screenings). Patron Pass is \$36 (includes all screenings/events and festival support. Bagels and Grits Brunch: \$4 per person.

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