All stories have their villains. To many storytellers throughout history, other peoples and cultures were irredeemably “evil,” “chaotic,” or “lawless.” Religious discourse has been consistently rife with these assertions about the enemy, often using the evil of the “bad guy” to demonstrate the characteristics of goodness. In this way, villains reveal as much about their denouncers as they do about the demons themselves.

Representations of evil have become a topic of interest in recent years as scholars come to understand the cultural polemics that underlie them. This conference seeks to explore the ways that different cultures have represented their antagonists—in “history,” “fiction,” or other discursive forms—and the dual function these representations serve to construct identities in conflict.

This conference is organized jointly by graduate students in Religious Studies and the Hebrew Bible/Ancient Near East program, and therefore papers navigating these two disciplines are especially encouraged. Topics of interest to consider include, but are not limited to: gender, apostasy, identity formation, boundary creation and maintenance, visual representation, space, material culture, the body, and narrative approaches.

Send submissions and inquiries to buildingbad@relingrad.org by 1/5/2015.

Please include in your proposal the paper title, presenter’s name, email address, and institution. Please submit a 300-word proposal explaining the topic, main argument, and methodology of the project. Paper presentations should not exceed 20 minutes in delivery.