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\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*

**25th Anniversary Season, Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival “Film Lives!" Spring 2018**

The Interdepartmental Program in Film Studies is pleased to announce the gala 25th anniversary season of the annual Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival, “Film Lives!” Opening its spring season on February 28, 2018, with weekly screenings through April 25, this milestone season shines a spotlight on documentary filmmaking, primarily by women directors, foregrounding narratives of individual and collective lives in critical times. The festival will host seven filmmakers present for post-screening discussions, including two Five College alumni. Screenings are accompanied by critical introductions by scholars and filmmakers. Screenings are held on the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus in the Isenberg School of Management Flavin Family Auditorium (137 SOM) at 7:30pm on Wednesday evenings unless otherwise noted; free and open to the public.

For opening night on February 28, the Festival welcomes back acclaimed Brooklyn-based filmmakers Pamela Yates (UMA '72) and Paco de Onis for the Pioneer Valley premiere of ***500 Years***, an exposé of Guatemala's official history of brutality, entrenched racism and genocide through the indigenous Mayan population's uprising that threatens to topple a corrupt government, in this final installment of the filmmakers' award-winning Resistance Saga Trilogy.

On March 7, Erin McGlothlin (Washington U.) presents "**In Search of Suchomel in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*: Constructing the Holocaust Perpetrator between the Outtakes and the Finished Film**," with new insights from extensive research in the archives of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The lecture is followed by a screening of Adam Benzine's Academy Award-nominated documentary, ***Claude Lanzmann: Spectres of the Shoah*** (2015), as the Lanzmann recalls the life-threatening challenges of tracking down Nazi officials and survivors in the making of his masterpiece, *Shoah*. Co-sponsored by the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide & Memory Studies.

***GI Jews: Jewish Americans in World War II*** (2017), a groundbreaking feature documentary for public television, foregrounds the 550,000 American Jews who saw action on all fronts during WW in interviews with veterans who bring their unique war experiences to life. Director Lisa Ades will be present for Q&A for this Pioneer Valley premiere on March 21, co-sponsored by the Pioneer Valley Jewish Film Festival, with a second screening sponsored by Pioneer Valley Jewish Film Festival at 7:00pm Monday, March 26, Springfield Jewish Community Center, Goldstein Auditorium, 1160 Dickinson Street.

On March 28, the 10th edition of the **UMass Catalan Film Festival** presents ***Institutions of Fear/Els Internats de la Por*** (2016, Catalonia), a provocative documentary broadcast on Catalan television and directed by Montse Armengou & Ricard Belis that explores the history of children incarcerated and abused across Spain in cases that remain to be addressed. For complete listings: https://www.facebook.com/CFFUMass/

On April 4, the Festival honors the memory of renowned literary and cultural critic Svetlana Boym (1959-2015) who left the USSR for the US at age 21 to become the Carl Hugo Reisinger Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature at Harvard University. Boston-based director Judith Wechsler will be present for discussion of ***Svetlana Boym: Exile and Imagination***(2017), her moving documentary tribute to Boym's legacy.

On April 11, the festival presents the New England premiere of ***Angel Wagenstein: Art is a Weapon***(2017), a documentary essay on the Bulgarian screenwriter, novelist, and lifelong revolutionary who at 95 remains a passionate witness to history and an active participant in the debate on Bulgaria’s rocky post-communist future. The following evening, Thursday April 12, a screening of ***Stars/Sterne*** takes place at Amherst Cinema, 20 Amity Street, Amherst, MA. This gripping 1959 drama, directed by Konrad Wolf, is based on the personal story of screenwriter Angel Wagenstein during the Holocaust in the Balkans, sheds light on the Sephardic experience of WWII. Director Andrea Simon will be present for discussion for both evenings. Co-sponsored by the UMass DEFA Film Library; German Studies, Mount Holyoke; and the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide and Memory Studies.

Award-winning director Ted Braun returns to UMass on April 18 with his acclaimed ***Betting on Zero*** (2016, Premiere, 2016 Tribeca Film Festival, special jury mention, World Doc Competition), an exploration of the battle waged by controversial hedge fund titan Bill Ackman and Latina activist Julie Contreras to expose Herbalife as a massive international pyramid scheme. Ted Braun (Joseph Campbell Endowed Chair in Cinematic Ethics, USC School of Cinematic Arts) will be present for Q&A and will conduct a master class in screenwriting the following day.

The Festival closes on April 25 with Agnès Varda's ***Faces Places/Visages Villages***(2017, Golden Eye, Cannes Film Festival). Kindred spirits, French New Wave pioneer Varda and 33-year-old French photographer JR co-direct this enchanting documentary/road movie traveling through French villages photographing locals and making murals out of their portraits displayed on houses, barns, storefronts and trains. Varda was awarded an Honorary Oscar in 2017 for lifetime achievement.

All events are free and open to the public. The 25th Anniversary edition of the Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival is made possible by the generous support of many departments, programs, colleges, and individuals at UMass Amherst, the Five Colleges, and beyond. **Major Sponsors:** UMass Amherst: College of Humanities & Fine Arts; College of Social & Behavioral Sciences; and the UMass Arts Council Arts in a Series Grant.

**With additional support from**: Five College Film Council; Pioneer Valley Jewish Film Festival; Catalan Film Festival, Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, and the DEFA Film Library. Presented by the Interdepartmental Program in Film Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst; Catherine Portuges, 25th Anniversary Curator <portuges@complit.umass.edu>; Shawn Shimpach, Festival Director <shimpach@umass.edu>. For full listings and up-to-date changes please consult our festival website at: <http://www.umass.edu/film/mmff.html>