FAU Libraries to Commemorate 500th Anniversary of the ‘95 Theses’ with Exhibition of Rare Books, Lecture

BOCA RATON, Fla. (October 13, 2017) — Florida Atlantic University Libraries will mark the 500th anniversary of the publication of the “95 Theses” with “The Protestant Reformation: Impacts & Legacies,” an exhibition of rare books and documents from the Marvin & Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection, on weekdays from Monday, Oct. 16 through Friday, Dec. 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Wimberly Library, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton campus.

In collaboration with Special Collections librarians, Victoria Thur and Teresa Van Dyke, Ben Lowe, Ph.D., professor and chair of FAU’s Department of History, curated the exhibition with the assistance of graduate students Luke Beswick and Vanessa Ramsey. Lowe will present the lecture “Why the Reformation Still Matters,” on Tuesday, Oct. 31 at 3:30 p.m. at the Wimberly Library.

“The Reformation came out of a particular historical moment, and while in many ways it looked back in time, it also set in motion forces that advanced many of our most treasured values, including many related to personal freedom and rights,” said Lowe. “It is relevant today also because we still live in a world where religion plays a determinant role in what happens, and yet all too often, those who invoke it to justify particular actions are ignorant of their religion’s history.”

Martin Luther, a professor of moral theology at the University of Wittenberg, Germany, published his “95 Theses” or “Disputation on the Power of Indulgences” on Oct. 31, 1517, sparking a revolution that splintered western Christendom and gave birth to the Protestant Reformation. The act of Luther’s defiance against the Roman Catholic Church questioned some of the basic tenets of the Catholic Church. Luther and other reformers, including John Calvin and Philipp Melanchthon, believed, among other things, that the Bible should be the source of spiritual authority, rather than the pope.
“The Reformation influenced more than just religious history,” said Lowe. “Its questioning nature left an indelible impact on politics, economics, science, and culture.”

The Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection houses more than 13,000 items, including rare editions of books, manuscripts and pamphlets. Marvin Weiner devoted his life to collecting the uniquely valuable items documenting the philosophical evolution and historical events that led to the birth of American democracy. Weiner, who passed away in June 2010, donated the collection to FAU in 2006.

“Marvin Weiner’s legacy lives on at FAU in this extraordinary collection that was his passion and that has become a priceless resource for the FAU community,” said Carol Hixson, dean of University Libraries at FAU. “We are grateful and honored to be entrusted with the care of this remarkable collection.”

Special Collections and the Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts are creating a letterpress broadside rendition of the “95 Theses” that will be sold during the exhibition.

The exhibition and the lecture are free and open to the public. For more information, call 561-297-2843 or email lysca@fau.edu.

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Photo Caption
Martin Luther painting by Lucas Cranach der Ältere (1529)

About Florida Atlantic University:
Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University, with an annual economic impact of $6.3 billion, serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students at sites throughout its six-county service region in southeast Florida. FAU’s world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering and Computer Science, the Graduate College, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. FAU is ranked as a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The University is placing special focus on the rapid development of critical areas that form the basis of its strategic plan: Healthy aging, biotech, coastal and marine issues, neuroscience, regenerative medicine, informatics, lifespan and the environment. These areas provide opportunities for faculty and students to build upon FAU’s existing strengths in research and scholarship. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.