The morning session of the Literature and Culture section was led by Dr. Hortense Spillers and centered on several questions regarding the role of religion in cultural production in contemporary American society. Specifically, she asked the students to consider if religious expression in the context of American society could be considered a form of displacement for other kinds of cultural expression; and if so, what might it be a substitute for? What followed was a rather lively discussion involving most of the graduate students. One suggested that religious expression might be a substitute for political involvement. This led to a lively discussion of American values, touching on issues of individualism verses communality, and of materialism in contemporary society. Centering first on the phenomena of the mega-church in contemporary American society, discussion revolved around the issue of how participation in church groups becomes a substitute community that replaces both the weakened nuclear family and the disintegrating sense of belongingness to or identity with a particular social group resulting from the increasing impermanence and transience of the traditional local community associated with contemporary mobility.

This led into a discussion of whether the United States was undergoing another period of “Great Awakening,” and if so, how this movement might be similar to or distinguished from earlier such periods. The students agreed that aspects of the current resurgence of religious involvement shares many similarities with previous such movements in American history. There seemed also to be a consensus that it is in part at least a reaction to, and a byproduct of, materialistic culture. Issues of the emphasis on tithing, particularly in the mega-churches, and the vast sums of money involved particularly in televangelism, became a particular focus of discussion. For individuals, the students speculated, participation in these new types of faith communities, including tithing and other forms of donation, provides a sense of contributing to the betterment of humanity that is otherwise missing from their lives.

During the afternoon sessions, five papers on work in progress were presented and discussed by the graduate students. Mr. Arimatsu Michio, of Harvard University and Keio University, first presented his paper, entitled “The Word of Faith Movement and African American Religious Experience Today.” His
presentation looked at the significance of religion for African Americans in the post-Civil Rights period, then raised questions about why this particular movement, whose roots are in white, middle-class America, would find particular appeal among African Americans today.

Ms. Koizumi Izumi of Japan Women’s University then presented a paper entitled “The Transgressive Body: Posthistorical Reading in Nella Larsen’s *Passing*.” This paper explored “how Larsen’s ambiguously raced figures, with their ‘transgressive’ bodies, cross or pass ‘lines’ which are imposed, socially constructed through an economic and political system and a cultural ideology; as well as how these ‘transgressive’ bodies force reconsideration of the cultural and social logic which holds that the physical body is the site of identic intelligibility.”

Ms. Mitsumori Sachiko of Hiroshima Women’s University next presented a paper entitled “Meridian’s Revolution as a Civil Rights Worker: Regeneration of Herself and a Community,” which focused on Alice Walker’s second novel, *Meridian*. The presentation focused on the parallel movement of the character Meridian and Alice Walker in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, addressing in particular the tensions between the Christian-inspired pacifistic ideology of Martin Luther King and the more militant, Muslim ideology of Malcolm X.

The fourth presentation, by Ms. Takemura Hatsumi of Tokyo University, was entitled “Re-Imagining the Cosmos: ‘Culturalism’ in the Hawaiian Indigenous Movement.” The presentation dealt with “the indigenous Hawaiian movement as a matrix within which ‘the politics of indigenous spirituality’ becomes discernible.” Particular focus was on the movement’s self-representation in terms of spirituality, morality, and indigenousness.

The final presentation of the day, by Ms. Yamashita Yayoi of Osaka University, was entitled “Literacy and the Black Church: Nineteenth Century Black Religious Leaders in Philadelphia and their Performance of Writing.” In the presentation Yamashita tried to show the contributions made by early black religious leaders in bringing literacy to their community, which in turn changed black life and culture greatly.