In his recently published collection of poetry, *American Psalm, World Psalm*, Nicholas Samaras takes inspiration from the great lyrical inheritance of the Biblical Psalms to create his own contemporary series of 150 numbered, titled psalms (ψαλμοί) or "songs." Likewise gathered into five separate books, these meditative prayer-poems build a deeply theological and philosophical world, serving alternately as confessions, benedictions, invocations, and incantations. But for Samaras these "songs" are also social commentaries and calls to action, "illuminating what may be constant in human struggle—social, political, artistic." Building on the literary structures and devices of the inherited psalms, and inspired by the experimental and improvisational spirit of American jazz, the poems undertake not only a personal exploration of faith and belief (including poems about his father Kallistos Samaras, a bishop in the Greek Orthodox Church), but also a larger spiritual and social interrogation of American and world culture in our contemporary moment.

**Nicholas Samaras** was born in Foxton, Cambridgeshire, England, living there and on the island of the Apocalypse, Patmos, Greece. He has since lived in Greece, England, Wales, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Jerusalem, and thirteen states in America. His individual poems have been featured in *The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Paris Review, Poetry, The New Republic, Kenyon Review,* and many other publications. Fellowship Awards include the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Lilly Endowment Foundation. His first book of poetry, *Hands of the Saddlemaker*, received the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award. *American Psalm, World Psalm* (Ashland Poetry Press, 2014) is his second collection. Samaras currently lives in West Nyack, New York with his family, where he is completing a new book of poetry and a memoir.

**Tuesday, April 21, 2015**
4:30 p.m.
Scheide Caldwell House Room 103

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