



# American Center Newsletter



American Center

Colombo

January 2010

The American Center  
Office of Public Diplomacy  
US Embassy  
44 Galle Road  
Colombo 3  
Sri Lanka

Telephone: 2498100

Telefax: 2498101

Email: [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov)

Web: [srilanka.usembassy.gov](http://srilanka.usembassy.gov)

## Upcoming Events . . . . .

### Monthly Art Exhibition "Past & Present"



**Sudarshana Bandara** will display his paintings at the American Center from January 13 to February 5, 2010.

### January 20:

In Commemoration of Religious Freedom Day, the American Center presents a Public Lecture "Religion, Church and the State" by Fr. Dr. Mervin Fernando at 4p.m. at the American Center Auditorium.

## American Center in Action



### The American Center Celebrates International Human Rights Day with a Public Lecture

December 12, 2009: In honor of International Human Rights Day, Dr. Kumar Rupesinghe, the Chairman of Foundation for Co-existence (an NGO that works for reconciliation in Sri Lanka) gave a lecture on the topic "Post War Challenges for Sri Lanka".

The monthly public lecture was linked

to the American Corners in Kandy and Oluvil.

Rupesinghe said that "the war ended through war" not negotiation and that victors almost never address the root causes of their conflicts. He then analyzed those root causes, focusing in particular on what he called "the politics of the humiliation of the other." He concluded with a list of specific recommendations, including a national reconciliation commission and a nationwide effort to improve English skills.

*Continued on page 4*



### The American Center hosts DVC titled "Victims of Violence: Its Trauma and Recovery"

December 16, 2009: In conjunction with human rights day and in line with Secretary Clinton's particular emphasis on the rights of women and children - the American Center Colombo

organized a digital video conference with Dr. Judith Herman, Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, on the topic of domestic violence.

The Center organized this program to educate various civil, police and government organizations that provide services to battered women and children. During the past few decades, there has been an increase in violence against women and children in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Nearly thirty people took part in the event including academics, government and non-governmental officials. According to them the event was very useful and informative, and they requested similar events in future.

The slides accompanying that lecture can be viewed at:

[http://srilanka.usembassy.gov/pdfs/sri\\_lanka.pdf](http://srilanka.usembassy.gov/pdfs/sri_lanka.pdf)

## U.S. Government Strengthens Multi-Ethnic Communities in Ampara District.



Representatives from multi-ethnic communities in Ampara District learn new project management skills and build understanding among ethnic groups.

December 15, 2009: The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided training to Sinhalese, Muslim and Tamil residents in Ampara District so they can collaborate on projects that will benefit multi-ethnic communities.

USAID, the development agency of the U.S. Government, provided project-management training to representatives of a multi-ethnic association made up of members from local organizations such as farmers' societies, women's cooperatives, and rural development groups. Chosen from 12 multi-ethnic communities, these 85 representatives learned how to develop, implement and monitor a successful

project during the one-day training.

This training is part of a three-year, Rs 68.5 million (\$600,000) project funded by USAID and implemented by Mercy Corps. The goal of the project is to strengthen interaction and improve dialogue between Sinhalese, Muslim and Tamil members in rural communities of Ampara and Batticaloa Districts. Participants also attended other training sessions, dialogues, and workshops designed to build better relationships between ethnic groups.

Representatives will return to their villages to lead reconciliation projects, which will be designed to bring together all ethnic groups in the community. Communities identify projects that will improve the quality of life for local residents, such as building a community center, developing a reliable water supply, or teaching Sinhalese and Tamil language classes. USAID will provide support in the form of advanced training, mentoring, and small grants to implement the projects.

## U.S. Government Links Farmers to New Markets and a Brighter Future



Farmers in Kebithigollawa, northern Anuradhapura District, are earning more money from their fruits and vegetables, thanks to a USAID project that linked farmers with new markets.

January 06, 2010: The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has developed new markets for farmers in Kebithigollawa, Anuradhapura District to sell their produce, raising incomes for farmers and creating new long-term partnerships with Sri Lankan food companies.

USAID, the development agency of the U.S. Government, rehabilitated the Ulpatha Fruit and Vegetable Collection

Center, creating a central collection location for Kebithigollawa area farmers. USAID also linked local farmers with John Keells Supermarkets and Plenty Foods, providing technical training to prepare

200 farmers to sell directly to the companies. These new relationships have given farmers a stable market for their products at higher prices and have increased their incomes.

The Center is the first of its kind in the area, benefiting not only the participating farmers, but also the 3000 members of the Kebithigollawa Integrated Rural Development Organization (KIRDO) through increased revenues and training. "I see a major change in the thinking pattern of the farmers in the villages since USAID intervened to provide training and to encourage them to improve their income. I am grateful to USAID for helping the farmers of Kebithigollawa, in making their lives better," said U.P. Rajakaruna Basnayake, the head of KIRDO.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided development and humanitarian assistance in developing countries worldwide for nearly 50 years. Since 1956, USAID/Sri Lanka has invested nearly \$2 billion to benefit all the people of Sri Lanka.

### Americans Celebrate Achievements of Martin Luther King Jr.

Civil rights giant fought for principles with universal applicability



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses a crowd in New York City on April 15, 1967. (© AP Images)

Americans on each third Monday of January honor the life and achievements of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968), the 1964 Nobel Peace laureate and the individual most associated with the triumphs of the African-American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. As a political organizer, supremely skilled orator and advocate of nonviolent protest, King was pivotal in persuading his fellow Americans to end the

legal segregation that prevailed throughout the South and parts of other regions, and in sparking support for the civil rights legislation that established the legal framework for racial equality in the United States.

The occasion is a federal holiday. In 2010, it falls on January 18.

King was among those champions of justice whose influence transcended national boundaries. A student of the philosophy and principles of nonviolence enunciated by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), King in 1959 traveled to India, where he studied further the legacy of the man his widow, Coretta Scott King, later would call his "political mentor." Nelson Mandela, accepting the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, similarly credited King as his predecessor in the effort to resolve justly the issues of racism and human dignity.

Son of the prominent Atlanta pastor Martin Luther King Sr., King at the age of 26 completed a doctorate in theology at Boston University. In 1954, while completing his dissertation, King accepted the pastorate at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. It was in Montgomery the following year that Rosa Parks, an African-American seamstress, was jailed for refusing to give up her seat on a segregated municipal bus to a white passenger. The incident sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, in which the city's African-Americans refused to patronize its segregated bus system. King led the organization directing the boycott and became the movement's

public face, appealing to white Americans' spirit of brotherhood. When the federal courts, following the reasoning of the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, declared the bus segregation law unconstitutional, King emerged as a national figure.

In 1957, King was among the founders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). This was an alliance of black ministers and churches organized to pursue nonviolent direct action against segregation. SCLC leaders hoped to change public opinion and to complement the legal challenges to segregation pursued by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). King was a dynamic force within the SCLC, emerging as its leading fund-raiser and as a skillful political tactician who successfully forged alliances with sympathetic Northern whites. In 1959, King traveled to India, where he met with followers of Gandhi and further refined his thought on nonviolent social protest.

During the early 1960s, King and the SCLC initiated a number of peaceful protests against segregated institutions. In May 1963, Birmingham, Alabama, Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor unleashed police dogs and high-pressure fire hoses against peaceful demonstrators, many of them schoolchildren. The images horrified the nation. King was arrested during these demonstrations and from his jail cell produced *Letter From Birmingham City Jail*, in which he argued that one who breaks an unjust law to arouse the consciousness of his community "is in reality expressing the highest respect for law," provided he acts "openly, lovingly and with a willingness to accept the penalty." That August, African-American leaders organized the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Here, before an estimated quarter million civil rights supporters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, King offered one of the most powerful orations in American history.

Generations of schoolchildren have learned by heart lines from the *I Have a Dream* speech, in which King prayed for the day when people would "not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

*Continued on page 5*

Monthly Essay Competition



Learn about America



**Essay Competition for School Children on the theme of Learn About America**

The American Center has organized an essay competition for school children which is published in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer.

The monthly essay topic is for children in three age categories 12-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-18 years.

Each age group is given a monthly topic related to the United States of America and is asked to write an essay with a minimum word count. The students can conduct research for their essay at the American Center Library in Colombo, at American Corners in Kandy and Oluvil, or from sources on [America.gov](http://America.gov), a very good internet resource with information on the United States, its culture, history, literature, politics, tourist attractions and much more.

The first three winners in each age group will be

given a selection of American books, a lifetime membership to the American Center Library, and a certificate signed by the U.S. Ambassador. A prize giving ceremony will be held at the American Center Colombo every two months.

**Essay topics for January are as follows :**

**12-14 years :** On December 10, U. S. President Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize for 2009. Explain why he was awarded the prize. Which other U.S. citizens have received this award? How are President Obama’s achievements similar to theirs? How are they different? (500 words)

**15-16 years:** On December 10, U. S. President Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize for 2009. There was much controversy surrounding this award. Do you think President Obama deserved it? Why or why not? (750 words)

**17-18 years:** On December 10, U. S. President Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize for 2009. On that occasion, the President delivered an important speech addressing his critics. What were the main points of the President’s speech? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why? (1000 words)

Please see the Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer for more details.

**International Human Rights Day . . . From page 1**

During the Q&A session many questions were raised by participants from the American Corners. The Muslim minority issues were of particular interest to the participants from Oluvil (East) where there is a predominantly Muslim population. The queries from

Kandy focused on the 13th amendment to the Constitution.

Dr. Rupasinghe gave specific and detailed responses to the queries raised.

What do you think democracy is? In 140 characters or less, tweet your personal definition of democracy. Use the hash tag, "#democracyis" and share your thoughts with the Democracy Video Challenge community! "

For more details visit: [http://www.facebook.com/democrachallenge?v=app\\_11007063052](http://www.facebook.com/democrachallenge?v=app_11007063052)

## Free Group Advising for the Month of January 2010

### At the US-SL Fulbright Commission Colombo:

Date & time	Program	For whom	Comments
January 4 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> 2:45 p.m.	Orientation for undergraduate studies	Prospective students for Bachelor's Degrees	Covers background information, entrance requirements, how to select universities and application process.
January 28 <sup>th</sup> 3:00 p.m.	Orientation for graduate studies	Prospective students for graduate studies	Prospective students for Masters or PhD Degrees
January 7 <sup>th</sup> 3:00 p.m.	F1 Visa Seminar	Prospective students applying for F, J & M Visas	Guest Speaker: Consular Officer, U.S. Embassy, Colombo.

**At the American Corner, Kandy (D.S. Senanayake Public Library): January 13<sup>th</sup>, 8:30a.m. - 2p.m.**

**At the Mahinda College Old Boys' Association building in Galle: January 29<sup>th</sup>, 8:30a.m. - 2p.m.**

**Admission free!** Please note that prior registration is necessary to attend the above.

Please contact by visit, phone, fax or e-mail:  
United States - Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission, 22, Flower Terrace, Colombo 7

Phone: 094-112-564176, 4718744  
Fax: 094-112-564153  
E-mail: [advising@isplanka.lk](mailto:advising@isplanka.lk)

### Americans Celebrate . . . . . *From page 3*

The images from Birmingham and Washington helped crystallize support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964. In 1965, the violent Selma, Alabama, police response to a voting rights march sparked a similar surge in support for King, the civil rights movement and for legislation guaranteeing the right of political participation. Consequently, the Voting Rights Act became law on August 6, 1965.

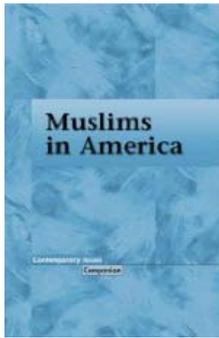
With the passage of these civil rights laws, King continued to employ his strategy of nonviolent social protest even as some younger leaders at times argued for more radical means. King also broadened his agenda to encompass efforts to focus attention on African-American poverty. King was in

Memphis, Tennessee, in support of striking black garbage workers when, on April 4, 1968, an assassin's bullet cut him down at the age of 39.

Americans honor the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. with a national holiday celebrated on the third Monday of each January, and soon by a national monument, to be constructed in direct sight of the Lincoln Memorial, where King inspired Americans with his dreams of racial justice and equality. Countless individuals and organizations, including The King Center, in Atlanta, carry on his work.

Source: [www.america.gov](http://www.america.gov)

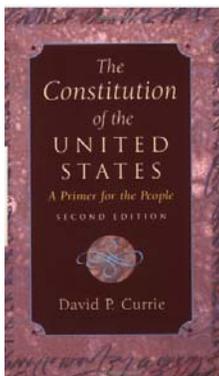
**New Additions: List of newly arrived books at the American Center Library**



**Muslims in America**

Allen Verbrugge (Editor)

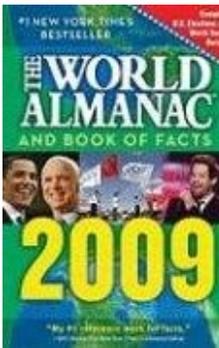
With a wide selection of viewpoints, political and personal, historical and contemporary, this excellent collection in the Contemporary Issues Companion series goes behind the stereotypes to show the rich diversity among Muslims in the U.S. Beginning with the post-9/11 backlash, the text also considers where the various immigrants came from and why.



**The Constitution of the United States: A Primer for the People**

David P. Currie (Author)

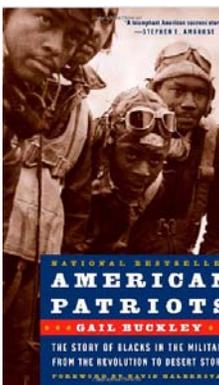
A masterly introduction to the United States Constitution, this slim book leads the reader through a concise overview of the document's individual articles and amendments. With clear and accessible language, Currie then examines each of the three branches of the federal government and explains the relation between the federal and state governments.



**The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2009**

C. Alan Joyce (Editor)

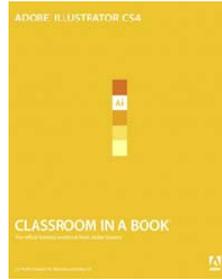
The source for essential and authoritative facts for entertainment, reference and learning. The book contains thousands of facts and statistics that aren't publicly available, which are sourced and double-checked by the staff of World Almanac experts.



**American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm**

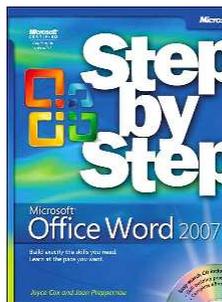
Gail Lumet Buckley (Author)  
David Halberstam (Foreword)

This work complements Bernard Nalty's academically oriented history of blacks in America's wars, Strength for the Fight (1986), and Gerald Astor's narrative account, The Right to Fight (1998). Basing her account heavily on interviews and similar primary material, Buckley focuses on the particular experiences of black soldiers.



**Adobe Illustrator CS4 Classroom in a Book**

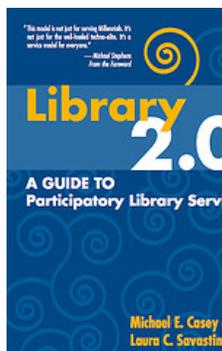
The fastest, easiest, most comprehensive way to learn Adobe Illustrator CS4. Adobe Illustrator CS4 Classroom in a Book contains 15 lessons. The book covers the basics of learning Illustrator and provides countless tips and techniques to help you become more productive with the program. You can follow the book from start to finish or choose only those lessons that interest you.



**Microsoft Office Word 2007 Step by Step**

Joyce Cox (Author)

The smart way to learn Office Word 2007--one step at a time! Work at your own pace through the easy numbered steps, practice files on CD, helpful hints, and troubleshooting help to master the fundamentals of working with the latest version of Word, including how to navigate the new user interface.



**Library 2.0: A Guide to Participatory Library Service**

Michael E. Casey and Laura C. Savastinuk (Authors)

Two of the first and most original thinkers on Library 2.0 introduce the essential concepts and offer ways to improve service to better meet the changing needs of 21st century library users. Describing a service model of constant and purposeful change, evaluation and updating of library services, and user participation, the book both outlines the theoretical underpinnings of Library 2.0 and provides practical advice on how to get there.

## January 2010

### **January 9 - Wall.E** (2008, 98 minutes)

After hundreds of lonely years doing what he was built for, WALL-E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth-Class) discovers a new purpose in life (besides collecting knickknacks) when he meets a sleek search robot named EVE (Extra-terrestrial Vegetation Evaluator). EVE comes to realize that WALL-E has inadvertently stumbled upon the key to the planet's future and races back to space to report her findings to the humans who have been eagerly waiting aboard the luxury spaceship Axiom for news that it is safe to return home. Meanwhile, WALL-E chases EVE across the galaxy and sets into motion one of the most incredible comedy adventures ever brought to the big screen.

### **January 16 - Bolt** (2008, 96 minutes)

For super-dog BOLT (voice of JOHN TRAVOLTA), every day is filled with adventure, danger and intrigue at least until the cameras stop rolling. When the star of a hit TV show is accidentally shipped from his Hollywood soundstage to New York City, he begins his biggest adventure yet a cross country journey through the real world to get back to his owner and co-star, Penny (voice of MILEY CYRUS). Armed only with the delusions that all his amazing feats and powers are real and the help of two unlikely traveling companions a jaded, abandoned housecat named Mittens (voice of SUSIE ESSMAN) and a TV-obsessed hamster named Rhino (voice of MARK WALTON) Bolt discovers he doesn't need superpowers to be a hero.

### **January 23 - The Iron Giant** (1999, 86 minutes)

The Iron Giant is a 1999 animated science fiction film produced by Warner Bros. Animation, based on the 1968 novel The Iron Man by Ted Hughes. Brad Bird directed the film, which stars a voice cast of Eli Marienthal as Hogarth Hughes, as well as Jennifer Aniston, Harry Connick, Jr., Vin Diesel, Christopher McDonald and John Mahoney. This is a story of a lonely boy raised by his widowed mother, discovering a giant iron man which fell from space. Hogarth, with the help of a beatnik named Dean, has to stop a military force and a federal agent from finding and destroying the Giant. The Iron Giant takes place during the height of the Cold War (1957).

### **January 30 - Kung Fu Panda** (2008, 92 minutes)

Enthusiastic, big and a little clumsy, Po is the biggest fan of Kung Fu around which doesn't exactly come in handy while working every day in his family's noodle shop. Unexpectedly chosen to fulfill an ancient prophecy, Po's dreams become reality when he joins the world of Kung Fu and studies alongside his idols, the legendary Furious Five Tigress, Crane, Mantis, Viper and Monkey under the leadership of their guru, Master Shifu. But before they know it the vengeful and treacherous snow leopard Tai Lung is headed their way, and it's up to Po to defend everyone from the oncoming threat. Can he turn his dreams of becoming a Kung Fu master into reality? Po puts his heart and his girth into the task and the unlikely hero ultimately finds that his greatest weaknesses turn out to be his greatest strengths.

*Reviews drawn from MSN movies, All Movie Guide and Amazon*

**Movies start promptly at 3:30pm every Saturday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov) or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions.**



# Film Screenings at the American Center

American Center Newsletter  
January 2010

## January 2010 - Romantic Comedies

### January 5 - Notting Hill (1999, 124 minutes)

Pure fairy tale, and with a huge debt to Roman Holiday, Notting Hill ponders what would happen if a beautiful, world-famous person were to suddenly drop into your life unannounced and promptly fall in love with you. That's the crux of the situation for William Thacker (Hugh Grant), who owns a travel bookshop in London's fashionable Notting Hill district. Hopelessly ordinary (well, as ordinary as you can be when you're Hugh Grant), William is going about his life when renowned movie star Anna Scott (Julia Roberts) walks into his bookstore and into his heart. After another contrived meet-cute involving spilled orange juice, William and Anna share a spontaneous kiss (big suspension of disbelief required here), and soon both are smitten. The question is, of course, can William and Anna reconcile his decidedly commonplace bookseller existence and her lifestyle as a jet-setting, paparazzi-stalked celebrity? (Take a wild guess at the answer.) Smartly scripted by Richard Curtis (Four Weddings and a Funeral) and directed by Roger Michell (Persuasion), Notting Hill is hardly realistic, but as wish fulfillment and a romantic comedy, it's irresistible.



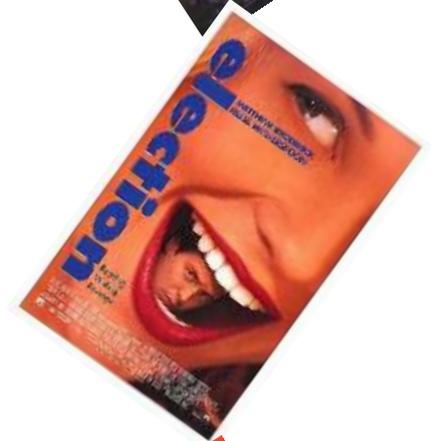
### January 12 - When Harry Met Sally (1989, 96 minutes)

Featuring dazzling performances from Meg Ryan, Billy Crystal, Carrie Fisher and Bruno Kirby, exceptional music from Harry Connick Jr., and an Oscar nominated screenplay by Nora Ephron, When Harry Met Sally is an "explosively funny" commentary on friendship, courtships - and other hardships - of the modern age. Will sex ruin a perfect relationship between a man and a woman? that's what Harry (Crystal) and Sally (Ryan) debate during their travels from Chicago to New York. And eleven years and later, they're still no closer to finding the answer. Will these two best friends ever accept that they're meant for each other...or will they continue to deny the attraction that's existed since the first moment When Harry Met Sally?



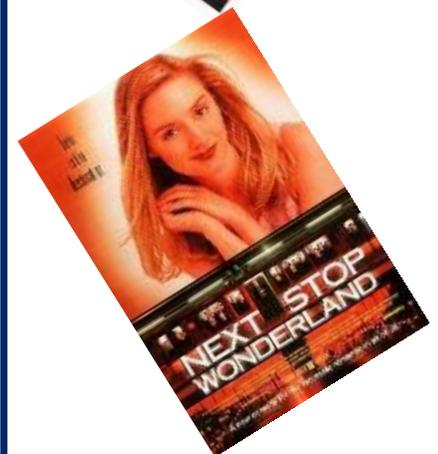
### January 19 - Election (1999, 130 minutes)

Matthew Broderick makes up for years of wet-noodle performances with his low-key but unsparing characterization of Jim McAllister, a high school teacher at George Washington Carver High School in Omaha, Nebraska. Driven by a strange mixture of loathing and lust for pathologically overachieving student Tracy Flick (Reese Witherspoon), McAllister encourages a dim but popular athlete, Paul (Chris Klein from American Pie), to run against her in the election for student-council president. Director co-writer Alexander Payne (Citizen Ruth) turns this deceptively simple premise into a complex and scathing comedy of ambition, corruption, and desire, all at its most naked and petty.



### January 26 - Next Stop Wonderland (1998, 96 minutes)

A lovely, lilting soundtrack of samba and bossa nova melodies gently guides this charming movie about Erin (Hope Davis), a young nurse adrift in her life. When her boyfriend, a hyperactive political activist played by the amazing Philip Seymour Hoffman (Boogie Nights, Happiness), leaves her, Erin struggles to find serenity on her own. Meanwhile, her mother schemes to find her a new boyfriend by placing a personal ad for Erin without her knowledge. Next Stop Wonderland juxtaposes this with the story of Alan (Alan Gelfant), a plumber struggling to get a degree as a marine biologist. The movie weaves all sorts of hints about fate and destiny, so it's no surprise at the end when Erin and Alan meet--but the fun is in getting there. In addition to the well-drawn characters and sharp, clever writing (the sequence of personal-ad dates that Erin goes on is both funny and painful), the movie is full of visual grace notes.



*Reviews drawn from MSN movies, All Movie Guide and Amazon*

**Movies start promptly at 6:00pm every Tuesday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov) or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions.**