

**The Hughes Science Pipeline Project presents
Distinguished Women in Science: A Lecture Series**

Invasion USA

by May Berenbaum

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Ever since the 1950s, the U.S. has been repeatedly invaded on the movie screen by unspeakable aliens from all reaches of the universe. While some were extraterrestrial beings from faraway galaxies (like the cosmic spiders from a collapsing black hole that colonized Wisconsin in "The Giant Spider Invasion"), others, like the Deadly Mantis, which terrorized New York before getting trapped in the "Manhattan tunnel", were creatures from the earth's prehistory. All seemed bent on total destruction of the planet. It's just as well they were largely metaphorical because invading movie aliens rarely display the life history attributes consistent with effective colonization of new planets. Biological invasions, in contrast with cinematic ones, have long been a part of American history-- our shores have been invaded without interruption since the first European vessels docked in American waters. The reality of biological aliens--nonindigenous species that have invaded the U.S.--couldn't be more different from the movie version. Establishment of nonindigenous species constitutes one of the most profound forms of contemporary global change, effecting enormous economic and ecological costs. Understanding the processes by which invasive species arrive, colonize, and establish in the United States involves the full range of biological subdisciplines, and, beyond that, encompasses social, behavioral, and economic sciences.