In 1826 Josiah Holbrook, an educational reformer, established the first American Lyceum in Millbury, Massachusetts, named after the Lyceum of Aristotle in ancient Greece. Holbrook invited local people to organize a society to prepare papers on “useful” subjects such as science, history and literature, and lecture to friends and neighbors on a weekly basis during the winter months. Subscription fees were extremely modest, and membership was open to the entire community. Holbrook believed that mutual instruction for continuing education was requisite for both individual improvement and general social progress.

The Lyceum movement spread rapidly throughout New England to the North Central states and into the Middle West. Widely viewed as instructive entertainment, the Lyceum enjoyed great popularity in the decades before the Civil War. After 1845 the Lyceum came to be dominated by professional lectures like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Wendell Phillips who travelled the winter circuit via the nation’s new rail network. Nevertheless, the basic goals of the Lyceum remained intact: to impact scientific and humanistic knowledge deemed vital to the moral and intellectual improvement of the individual and the community.

Framingham had a Lyceum in 1834. Therefore, it is in the highest tradition of antebellum Lyceum that Framingham State University once again establishes the Lyceum Lecture Series.

“The Lyceum”

“I was making my way from the Academy straight to the Lyceum.”

“Έκανα μου μακριά από την Ακαδημία ευθεία προς το Λύκειο.”

PLATO, LYSIS, 203A
How Much Good Am I Doing? Bittersweet Charity and America’s Poor”

Americans donate their money and volunteer their time to ensure that the hungry are fed and the homeless are housed. Yet, little charity addresses the inequalities at the root of so much hardship in our society. Why is this so and how might one choose to give differently?

Second Lyceum Lecture, Scholarship in Teaching
Robert Alter
Associate Professor, Communication Arts Department
Thursday, April 7, 2010, 6:30 pm

Round the World Ticket- A Photographer’s Journey
Bob Alter teaches photography in the Communication Arts Department. He took a sabbatical semester and traveled around the world photographing skyscrapers from Tokyo and Shanghai to Dubai and Berlin. In the Lyceum Lecture he will be presenting photographs from these places and share his personal observations on life and travel in a global urban culture.