

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Bill Schlotter

FOREIGN SCHOLARS COMING TO UCSB SUMMER INSTITUTE TO LEARN ABOUT RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE U.S.

American studies scholars from around the world will be at UC Santa Barbara this summer studying the religious diversity of the United States and finding out first hand how people with such differing beliefs can coexist.

The program, titled "Religion in the United States: Pluralism and Public Presence," was developed by the university's Department of Religious Studies and is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Fulbright American Studies Institute.

It is one of nine programs funded by the State Department to bring foreign scholars to the United States this summer to learn about various aspects of American life.

"Ours is something of an experiment," said Academic Coordinator Wade Clark Roof, chair of UCSB's Department of Religious Studies. "The State Department has not typically funded programs that explicitly address religion, but now in this post-September 11 world, everybody knows that religion is pretty important in politics."

Institute participants are academics from universities in 18 countries: Bosnia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, India,

Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Slovak Republic, Tunisia and Uganda.

The Institute runs from June 23 through Aug. 5 and includes field trips to Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

Key focus will be a timely look at how people of different faiths can get along and work toward common goals in a single society.

"The main topic is religious pluralism," said Roof, who noted that more than 2,000 different religions are practiced in the United States. "I think the topic encapsulates one of the big challenges of our time. How in a global world can all the religious populations get along?"

And I think that is not just on American minds but on the minds of the participants who will come here from other countries."

Other topics covered will include the history of religion in the U.S., the demography and sociology of religion, religion and politics, religion and the media, and religion and film. "I hope our participants take home with them an understanding of American society and religion that is broader than perhaps the stereotypes they might have held before they came," Roof said.

Editors: Academic Coordinator Wade Clark Roof can be reached at wcroof@religion.ucsb.edu or at (805) 893-3564.

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.