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Bill Schlotter

UCSB Lecture to Examine Convergence of Medicine and Religion

Medicine, with its ability to treat and cure disease and alleviate pain, is probably the most convincing practical argument favoring belief in modern science. Nonetheless, people throughout the world still seek improved health through prayer, meditation, and other religious activities.

Anne Harrington, a professor of the history of science at Harvard University, will discuss such intersections of religion and medicine in "Uneasy Alliances: The 'Faith Factor' in Medicine, the 'Health Factor' in Religion" at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 17 at UC Santa Barbara. The talk, free and open to the public, will be held in UCSB's Corwin Pavilion and is part of the Science, Religion and the Human Experience series sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation.

Though antibiotics, high-tech surgical procedures, and other advances have made the world a considerably healthier place, medical professionals in recent years have come to recognize the limitations of their science and have begun to recognize the health benefits of traditionally religious experiences such as faith, community, meditation, and prayer.

"Religion has been welcomed as a potential ally in the healing process," said Harrington, who also serves as co-director of the Harvard University Mind, Brain, and

Behavior Institute. "But what kind of an alliance is this? We live today in a strange world in which medical researchers design double-blind trials of prayer, ministers talk about the brain and the immune system from the pulpit, monks meditate in brain imaging machines, and studies of the placebo effect and positive attitude frame discussions about the 'science' of 'miracle' healings.

"The goal of this talk," Harrington said, "is to illuminate how this strange world came to be." Harrington is the author of "Medicine, Mind and the Double Brain," and "Reenchanted Science: Holism and German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler."

Discussants for the talk will be Anita Guerrini, a professor of history and environmental studies at UCSB, and Barbara Herr Harthorn, director of social science research development for UCSB's Institute for Social, Behavioral and Economic Research.

The Templeton Lectures on Science, Religion, and the Human Experience, a three-year series now in its final season at UCSB, is sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation, which seeks to encourage "a fresh appreciation of the moral and spiritual dimensions of life."

Jim Proctor, an associate professor of geography, directs the UCSB series. The Templeton Foundation also is supporting lectures on science and religion this year at Columbia and Stanford universities, UCLA, the University of Montreal, and at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

One final Templeton lecture is scheduled this year.

On Thursday, May 15 (7:30 p.m. Corwin Pavilion), Proctor will discuss "In ____ We Trust: Science Religion, and Authority."

More information on the Templeton lecture series, including speaker biographies and abstracts of each talk, can be found on the web at www.srhe.ucsb.edu.

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.