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Critical Issues in America Series Examines Torture and the Future

Focusing on the topic "Torture and the Future," the 2007 Critical Issues in America series at the University of California, Santa Barbara, will bring together humanities scholars from around the country to discuss issues relating to the use of torture by the United States.

The series, which begins this month and concludes in May, will feature lectures by guest speakers, panel discussions, and a conference. The events are free and the public is invited to attend any or all of them.

The first event, on Jan. 18, is a lecture by Mark Danner titled "Into the Light of Day: Torture, Human Rights, and the War on Terror." He will speak at 8 p.m. in Campbell Hall. The author of "Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror" (The New York Review of Books, 2004), Danner is a professor of journalism at UC Berkeley, staff writer for The New Yorker, and frequent contributor to the New York Review of Books.

"The perspectives of social science alone cannot adequately comprehend what is at stake," said Elisabeth Weber, chair of the Department of Germanic, Slavic, and Semitic Studies at UCSB and an organizer of the series. "The humanities might offer more productive methods towards an ethics and politics of response and resistance. We are inviting scholars whose work on torture and human rights effectively crosses the disciplinary gap between humanities and social science, as well as writers and

artists whose work is committed to an ethics and politics of response and resistance."

The series will focus on four key areas: the effects of torture conducted by democratic countries on the concept and practice of democracy; the consequences of state-sanctioned torture on the principles and practices of scholarship and education; mass media's role in influencing general consciousness regarding the use of torture; and the relationship between torture used by the United States in prisons abroad and human rights violations on American soil.

Other events include:

·A lecture by Alfred McCoy, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, on Thursday, Feb. 1 at 4 p.m. in Campbell Hall. The author of "A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation from the Cold War to the War on Terror," (Metropolitan Books, 2006), he will speak on

"A Short History of Psychological Torture: Its Discovery, Propagation, Perfection & Legalization."

·A panel discussion on Thursday, Feb. 22 at 4 p.m. titled "Torture and the Arts," featuring John Nava, the painter who created "Neo-Icons," a series of portraits of young people wearing T-shirts that sport political messages; Stephen Eisenman, professor of art history at Northwestern University; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, professor of history of art and architecture at UCSB; and Avery Gordon, professor of sociology at UCSB. Location to be announced.

·Lectures in April by Scott Horton, attorney and president of the International League for Human Rights, and Gitanjali Gutierrez, an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights. Gutierrez represents Mohammed al-Qahtani, a Saudi detainee held at the United States prison camp at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base since January, 2002. Date and location to be announced.

The conference, set for Friday, May 18 in the UCSB MultiCultural Center, will feature the following participants:

·Colin Joan Dayan, professor of English at Vanderbilt University and author of the forthcoming "Punishments Cruel and Unusual" (Princeton University Press); Barbara Harlow, professor of English at the University of Texas, whose research centers on

cultural politics and political cultures;

- Darius Rejali, professor of political science at Reed College and author of "Approaches to Violence: A Citizen's Toolkit" (Princeton University Press, 2006) and "Torture and Democracy" (Princeton University Press, 2005);
- George Hunsinger, of Princeton Theological Seminary, organizer of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, and author of "Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth" (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000);
- Kim Scheppele, The Laurence S. Rockefeller Professor of Public Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

An endowed program in the College of Letters & Science at UCSB since 1995, and co-sponsored by other campus departments, the Critical Issues in America series examines relevant social topics from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Previous series have focused on environmental issues and policy reform; media ownership; women, employment and globalization; violence in America; and ethnic studies.

Related Links [Torture and the Future](#)

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