

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

February 17, 2009

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Political Analyst Jeff Greenfield to Speak at UCSB Conference on Media Coverage of the 2008 Presidential Election

The effects of traditional and digital media in portraying race and humor in media coverage of the 2008 presidential election will be the focus of UC Santa Barbara's Rupe Conference to take place on March 5. The keynote speaker is Jeff Greenfield, senior political analyst for CBS News.

The conference, titled "Media and the Presidential Election: Race, Humor, and Coverage," begins at 2 p.m. in the University Center's Corwin Pavilion. It is free and open to the public. Among the topics to be discussed are how race and ethnicity were covered or portrayed in this historic campaign with both a woman and an African American candidate; whether political satire and comedy in outlets such as The Daily Show and YouTube served a useful function; and whether media coverage of the campaign and election significantly affected the outcome.

"The 2008 campaign and election raised many significant issues about the role of media, with crucial implications for attitudes, citizenship, and democracy," said Ronald E. Rice, The Arthur N. Rupe Professor in the Social Effects of Mass Communication in the Department of Communication at UCSB. "This conference discusses three of them in an accessible and even humorous way from leading

researchers and political analysts."

The conference consists of two afternoon debates and a keynote address in the evening delivered by Greenfield. The first debate has UCSB's Christopher McAuley and Dana Mastro of the University of Arizona facing off on the veracity of the following statement: "The Media Played a New Role in Dealing With Race in the Presidential Campaign."

McAuley, an associate professor of black studies, is currently teaching a seminar on the political uses of race in American society. Mastro, an associate professor of communication, is conducting research on the role of the media in processes of ethnic stereotype formation and political involvement.

The second debate will follow at 3:30 p.m. with W. Lance Bennett of the University of Washington and Roderick Hart of The University of Texas at Austin arguing opposite sides of the following proposition: "Media Humor Was Good for the Presidential Campaign."

Bennett is a professor of political science and the Ruddick C. Lawrence Professor of Communication at the University of Washington, where he also founded and directs the Center for Communication and Civic Engagement. The general focus of Bennett's work is how communication processes affect citizen engagement with politics. Hart, an expert in politics and the mass media, is the Shivers Chair in Communication and Professor of Government, and Director of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation.

In his keynote address at 8 p.m., Greenfield, who is formerly a senior political analyst for CNN, will discuss how the election was covered in the mainstream media, the emergence of new media such as The Daily Show and YouTube, and how actual events such as campaign organization and economic issues drove the outcome. His talk is titled "Media Coverage and the Election: Did It Make Any Difference?"

"For all the attention paid to The Daily Show, YouTube, talk radio, factors ranging from the complex delegate allocation rules of the Democratic Party, the economic news of the fall, and the televised debates likely were far more significant matters when it came to who won and who lost. Or so I will argue," Greenfield said.

Conference participants include UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang; John M. Wiemann, UCSB Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement and professor of

communication; Melvin Oliver, the Sara Miller McCune Dean of Social Sciences and professor of sociology at UCSB; Michael Stohl, chair and professor of communication; Linda L. Putnam, professor of communication; Anna Everett, professor of film and media studies; and John T. Woolley, chair and professor of political science.

The conference is co-sponsored by The Arthur N. Rupe Professor, the Department of Communication, and the Carsey-Wolf Center for Film, Television, and New Media. It is one of three events celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Department of Communication at UCSB. Other events include an open house and reception in April and the annual Bradac Memorial Lecture, reception, and conference in October.

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