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UCSB Lecture to Examine Science, Business, and American Empire

Gregg Mitman, the William Coleman Professor of the History of Science, and professor of medical history and of science and technology studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will give The Lawrence Badash Distinguished Lecture on Monday, February 22.

His talk, titled "Latex and Blood: Science, Markets, and American Empire," will begin at 4 p.m. in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building. It is free and open to the public. A reception co-hosted by the UCSB History Associates and the Department of History will follow the lecture, which is sponsored by the campus's Center for Science in Society.

During the 20th century, the United States developed a unique kind of empire, one bound together less by military conquest and direct political administration than by the expansion of markets, corporate influence, and cultural exchange. The political and economic ties between the United States and the Republic of Liberia, cemented in the 1920's when Firestone Tire and Rubber Company successfully established a major rubber plantation in the country, exemplify this new imperial relationship.

However, the transformation of Liberia into America's rubber empire depended on new forms of scientific and medical expertise. Focusing on the Harvard African Expedition to Liberia in 1926, the motion picture record it gathered, and the place of rubber as a precious commodity in the global economy, Mitman will investigate the

relationships between science, business, and the state in the economic transformation of nature and a nation.

Mitman, who also serves as the interim director of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the author of several books, including "Reel Nature: America's Romance With Wildlife on Film," and "Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Our Landscape."

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