

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB Students Participate in Live Videoconference With Iraqi University Students

Students at UC Santa Barbara will have the rare opportunity on Sunday, May 9, to participate in a groundbreaking peace mission that will bring them in direct conversation with their peers at the Islamic University in Baghdad via a live videoconference.

Presented by UCSB's Center for Middle East Studies, the event will take place at 11 p.m. in the campus's MultiCultural Center Theater. It will include a screening of filmmaker Mark Manning's stunning documentary, "The Road to Fallujah," at 9 p.m., followed by a discussion hosted by Manning. The event is free and open to the public, although the videoconference dialogue is intended for student participants only.

The videoconference event also marks the launch of "A Dialogue for Peace: The Iraq Peace and Reconciliation College Tour," a major project of Manning's Santa Barbara-based non-profit organization, Global Access Media. A 2010 Clinton Global Initiative University project, "A Dialogue for Peace" is designed to create ongoing communication between university students in the United States and Iraq. The general topic of conversation will be "Building Relationships for a Peaceful Future."

The late hour of the UCSB event is due to the 10-hour time difference between Baghdad and Santa Barbara. Also, because of the recent escalation in violence, the Iraqi students must leave their university campus by midday in order to pass through the numerous checkpoints and reach their homes before the evening curfew begins -- a journey that at any point can become life threatening.

"The Center for Middle East Studies is thrilled to present this event, which will allow UCSB students to enter into a direct dialogue with their counterparts in Iraq," said Dwight Reynolds, professor of religious studies and director of the Center for Middle East Studies. "I think it is extremely important for American students to learn what real people in Iraq think, and I think it is equally important for Iraqi students to see that there are concerned Americans who truly want to understand the Iraqi situation and understand what Iraqis have to say."

The tour will expand nationally in the fall, and each stop will include a screening of "The Road to Fallujah," followed by a live videoconference with Iraqi students that will be broadcast to an international audience via the Global Media Access Web site.

In addition, the Global Media Access Web site will provide a forum in which Iraqi and American students can continue their dialogue, build their relationships, invite others to join this emerging intercultural community, and create their own opportunities to work together for peace.

"Global Access Media is honored to be facilitating this event and working with Professor Reynolds at UCSB and Dr. Ahmed at Islamic University, Baghdad," said Manning. "We feel this is a unique opportunity for the students and community of Santa Barbara to launch this international dialogue for peace with the Iraqi people."

Manning's film, "The Road to Fallujah," brings to light the consequences of war, humanizes the issues, and gives a voice to the people directly involved on both sides. In January 2005, following the battle in Fallujah, Manning became the only westerner to live among the people of Fallujah and document their stories.

The public can view the webcast and join a community forum, beginning at 11 p.m.

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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.