

UC SANTA BARBARA

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## **International Scholars at UCSB Summer Institute Study Religious Pluralism**

Eighteen scholars from around the world will gather at UC Santa Barbara this summer to study the religious diversity of the United States and to learn firsthand how people with widely differing beliefs can coexist.

They are participating in a program titled "Study of the United States Institutes -- Religious Pluralism and Public Presence." Hosted by UCSB's Department of Religious Studies, the Study of the United States Institute (SUSI) program is part of a broader U.S. Department of State initiative that seeks to promote a better understanding of the United States abroad by improving the quality of teaching and the curricula used in academic institutions overseas. The program at UCSB is one of several taking place this summer at universities around the country.

Participants will represent universities in 17 countries, including Argentina, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Gaza, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Paraguay, Taiwan, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe.

The program, which begins on June 19 and continues through August 1, will include a lecture series by UCSB faculty on topics that include history of religion in the U.S., the demography and sociology of religion, religion and the media, and church/state issues. Field trips to local congregations, along with study tours to Los Angeles, Salt

Lake City, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C., are designed to help scholars understand the breadth of religious diversity in the U.S.

A two-day symposium at which the international scholars will discuss the dynamics of religious pluralism in their home countries will give faculty members, students, and the broader Santa Barbara community a unique opportunity to learn about religious issues in other parts of the world. The symposium, which is free and open to the public, will take place on Thursday and Friday, July 15 and 16, in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building. It will begin at 9 a.m.

"The program seeks to present the United States, its people, and its culture in a better -- though not unreal -- way than many people around the world perceive us to be," said Wade Clark Roof, the J.F. Rowny Professor of Religion and Society at UCSB and the program's academic director. "The participants are journalists, professors, and government workers who are in a position to have some public influence. This is our ninth year doing this, and we are hopeful that what we do makes a difference."

The institute is funded by the Study of the United States Branch of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). Participants are among over 40,000 individuals who take part in U.S. Department of State exchange programs each year. For more than 60 years, ECA has funded and supported programs that seek to promote mutual understanding and respect between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

More information about "Religious Pluralism & Public Presence" can be found at [www.religion.ucsb.edu/projects/summerinstitute](http://www.religion.ucsb.edu/projects/summerinstitute).

Related Links

[Pluralism & Public Presence](#)

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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.