

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Critical Issues in America Series to Examine Speculative Futures

Focusing on the topic "Speculative Futures," the 2011-12 Critical Issues in America series at UC Santa Barbara will bring together humanities scholars, media practitioners, technical experts, artists, analysts, and policymakers from around the country to take an interdisciplinary approach to questions of risk, uncertainty, and the spectrum of possible futures.

The series, which begins this month and concludes in May, will feature lectures, panel discussions, and five separate symposiums. The events are free, and the public is invited to attend any or all of them. The first event, a symposium titled "Perspectives on Risk," will take place on Friday, October 14. The speakers are Wolf Kittler, professor of Germanic, Slavic, and Semitic Studies at UCSB, and Colin Milburn, professor of English at UC Davis. The symposium begins at 2 p.m. in the Wallis Annenberg Conference Room, 4312 Social Sciences and Media Studies Building at UCSB.

"What does it mean to be 'living with risk,' to be in a constant state of crisis? How do we move beyond the prevalent culture of fear, which drags us into all kinds of creepy politics -- from xenophobic stereotyping to preemptive strikes? What can we learn from uncertainties -- even when they seem to escape the most sophisticated tools of analysis and prediction? These are the kinds of concerns that drive this year's Critical Issues series," said Bhaskar Sarkar, associate professor of film and media studies at UCSB and one of the principal investigators of the series.

The other UCSB investigators include Bishnupriya Ghosh, professor of English; Rita Raley, associate professor of English; and Greg Siegel, assistant professor of film and media studies.

The series will address four key areas: the role that risk calculations play in confronting growing uncertainties; the security measures that forecast "futures" in the face of radical uncertainty; whether such measures are adequate, threatening, and/or necessary; and the speculative practices that might be put into play to imagine futures differently.

Other fall quarter events include:

- A screening of director Michael Madsen's film "Into Eternity" on Monday, October 17. The film, which explores the impossibility of storing nuclear waste for 10,000 years -- the amount of time scientists estimate is necessary to render it safe -- is particularly relevant following the crisis at the nuclear power plants in Fukushima, Japan. It will screen at 7:30 p.m. in UCSB's Campbell Hall, and a question-and-answer period with Madsen will follow.
- A discussion with Madsen at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, October 18, during which he will address his work, as well as other media projects that engage questions of nuclear energy and security. His talk will take place in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building at UCSB.
- Siddhartha Mukherjee, the award-winning physician, researcher, and science writer will discuss "Where We Are on the War on Cancer" at 3 p.m. on Saturday, October 22, in Campbell Hall.

Winter and spring quarter events include symposiums on security and catastrophe, cybersecurity, speculative frames, and speculative media.

More information about the series, including a complete list of events with dates, times, locations, and participants, is available at www.criticalissues.ucsb.edu.

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; ethnic studies; and marriage

and alternatives.

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[Critical Issues in America Series](#)

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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.