

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UC Santa Barbara Extension Revives Degree-Credit Courses at Ventura Center

For the first time in almost three years, UC Santa Barbara Extension will offer degree-credit classes this summer at the UCSB Ventura Center. The new initiative will see nine courses -- taught by UCSB faculty and UC-approved instructors -- offered at the longtime satellite location designed to serve communities in the Ventura/Oxnard, Camarillo, and Thousand Oaks/Simi Valley areas. Until the launch of this endeavor, called UCSB Special Sessions, degree-transferrable courses had not been available since 2009.

"We recognize that people value having UCSB in their backyard," said Michael Brown, dean of UCSB Extension. "The Ventura Center continues to offer important knowledge and skill building programs to the community in areas like Paralegal Studies, Project Management, and Accounting. We are now making these world-class quality degree credit courses available to people once again."

The session is well-suited to current college students who may be home working for the summer but seeking credit that will transfer back to their home institutions, as well as busy professionals or parents who want to progress toward a degree on a more convenient schedule -- and closer to home. Classes will be small in size, maxing out at 32 students, and will be held in the evenings.

"We're trying to appeal to all those who want to get ahead, to advance themselves, with courses offered on a more convenient basis," Brown said. "We are also trying to reach people already in degree programs at other universities, who may be interested in accelerating their speed to a degree. These courses will allow them to do that."

UCSB Special Sessions marks the first time degree-transferrable courses have been offered in the area since the 2009 shuttering of the long-running Off Campus Studies Program, which allowed students to earn UCSB degrees at the Ventura Center. That program was discontinued for financial reasons.

Paul Spickard, a history professor at UCSB, will teach his class American Immigration (HIST XSB 164IB) at the Ventura Center this summer. The goal of the course, he said, is to "take a real clear-eyed look at what really has been our history of immigration" by dispelling immigration myths and examining the immigrant experience.

A vocal champion of the center and a staunch advocate for its degree-credit extension courses, returning instructor Spickard said, "I think the Ventura Center is one of the best things we do as a university. It makes education possible for people who have to work full-time, or stay-at-home moms or dads who can take evening classes, and take them at a slower pace, but still make their way toward a degree. I've always enjoyed teaching there and I'm excited about teaching there again."

Among the other offerings on the Special Sessions docket this summer is a communications class called Relationships and New Media (COMM XSB 160SC). Taught by UCSB graduate student Stephanie Robbins, a UC-approved instructor, the course examines the growing influence of social networks, smartphones, et al. on interpersonal relationships.

"The course focuses on the intersection of new media and relational communication, from co-workers to romantic partnerships to parents and children," Robbins said. "I hope to take a practical approach. Research shows we can even have better relationships through new media than we do in person. Part of a student's job in this class is to learn to be a critical consumer of that type of media."

The other courses available are International Finance (ECON XSB 181); Politics and Public Policy in the United States (HIST XSB 172A); Native American History to 1838 (HIST XSB 179A); Introduction to Psychology (PSY XSB 1); Introduction to Social Psychology (PSY XSB 102); Introduction to Psychopathology (PSY XSB 103); and Developmental Psychology (PSY XSB 105).

In addition to the new initiative, the Ventura Center will continue to offer its regular, robust array of personal and professional development courses that are central to UCSB Extensions' long-standing mission of making quality education more accessible.

"The Ventura Center is a great resource and I'm proud that the university is making it available to the community," Brown said. "Not everyone can come up to UCSB -- not everyone can enroll in UCSB -- but we can still make world-class offerings available to a broader public. The university is glad to do it and I'm proud to be associated with the kind of activity that can help people achieve their personal and professional dreams."

Open since 1974, the Ventura Center has six classrooms located at 3585 Maple Street, near the Pacific View Mall. Classes begin June 25.

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