

UC SANTA BARBARA

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International Scholars Study Religious Pluralism at UCSB Summer Institute

Seventeen scholars from around the world have gathered 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.

The scholars 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 Institutes (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.

During a two-day international conference on Wednesday and Thursday, July 17 and 18, the scholars will discuss the dynamics of religious pluralism in their home countries. The conference will begin at 9 a.m. in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building at UCSB. It is free and open to the public.

Participants in the summer program represent universities in 17 countries, including Australia, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Cameroon, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, India,

Indonesia, Jordan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

The program began on June 23 and continues through August 5. It features a lecture series by UCSB faculty on topics such as the history of religion in the U.S., the demography and sociology of religion, religion and the media, and issues of church and state. 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.

"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. Rowley Professor of Religion and Society at UCSB and the program's co-academic director. "The participants are journalists, professors, and government workers who are in a position to have some public influence. This is our tenth year doing this, and we are hopeful that what we do makes a difference."

"It's unfortunate, but religious intolerance and tensions between religious groups have increased around the world," said Kathleen Moore, a UCSB professor of religious studies and the program's co-academic director. "Because of migration and globalization trends, religions are less confined to one particular region than before. This program has widened the discussion about the importance of dialogue."

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 <http://www.religion.ucsb.edu/projects/summerinstitute>.

Related Links

[Study of the United States Institutes](#)

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.