

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

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## **Icelandic Novelist and Poet Sjón to Speak at UCSB**

Icelandic author Sjón, whose novels and poems have been translated into 25 languages, will read from his work and discuss Icelandic literature's place within the wider global context during a visit to UC Santa Barbara on Monday, May 6.

His talk will begin at 3:30 p.m. in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building. Sjón also will participate in a dialogue with audience members, moderated by UCSB Classics Professor Helen Morales. Morales, who also holds the Argyropoulos Chair in Hellenic Studies, will lead a discussion on Sjón's use of myth in his work -- Greek, Roman, Nordic, and other. The event is free and open to the public.

"One of the intriguing things about this author is how he plays with myth and history," said Viola Miglio, associate professor of linguistics at UCSB and organizer of Sjón's talk. "The Greek myth of the golden fleece plays a big role in his novel 'The Whispering Muse,' which will come out in the U.S. next week, and I thought it would be interesting to have Helen Morales be the discussant because she is one of our Hellenistic experts. She has graduate students who have studied all the sources that Sjón lists as his own sources for the novel."

Sjón's visit to campus also marks the renewal of the exchange agreement between UCSB and the University of Iceland. Established a decade ago, the agreement allows students and faculty members from one university to take courses and conduct

research at the other. Historically, studies have been limited to the sciences and social sciences, but this year the agreement is expanding to include the humanities.

Sjón is the recipient of myriad literary awards, including the Nordic Council Literary Prize -- the equivalent of the Man Booker Prize for his novel "Skugga-Baldur" ("The Blue Fox"). The English edition was also nominated for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize.

Also a lyricist, Sjón has worked with Icelandic recording artist Björk, including writing songs for her musical project "Biophilia." In addition, he received an Oscar nomination for his lyrics for the Lars von Trier film "Dancer in the Dark."

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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.