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‘UCSB Reads’ Selects ‘Orange Is the New Black’ by Piper Kerman

When Piper Kerman began a 13-month sentence at a federal minimum-security women’s prison in Connecticut, the college-educated blue-eyed blonde soon realized that with a supportive family, a good lawyer and a job waiting for her on the outside, she was more fortunate than many of her prison peers.

Still, as prisoner No. 11187-424 serving time for money laundering, she endured the same humiliation, not the least of which came in the form of “squat and cough” searches, moldy showers and abuse or indifference from prison staff.

In her best-selling memoir, “Orange Is the New Black: My Year in a Women’s Prison,” Kerman chronicles her prison experience, which also included friendships with fellow inmates and relationships marked by generosity, wisdom and acceptance.

The UC Santa Barbara Library has chosen the book as this year’s selection for UCSB Reads.

An annual event now in its ninth year, UCSB Reads engages the campus and the Santa Barbara community in conversations about a key topic while reading the same book. UCSB Reads is presented by the UCSB Library, in partnership with the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor. A committee that included faculty and staff members, administrators and student representatives made this year’s selection.

On January 12, starting at 10 a.m., Chancellor Henry T. Yang and University Librarian Denise Stephens will be on hand at the UCSB Library to distribute free copies of the book to registered UCSB students. Associated Students has, in part, funded the book distribution. Copies of “Orange Is the New Black” will be on sale at the UCSB Bookstore as well.

“Orange Is the New Black” is also the selection of the Santa Barbara Public Library System’s Santa Barbara Reads program. The event runs concurrently with UCSB Reads, with events at library branches. Multiple copies of “Orange Is the New Black” will be available for loan, including e-book and audiobook versions. The Luria Library at Santa Barbara City College is also a partner in the program.

A variety of UCSB Reads events, including faculty panels, book discussions and screenings, will take place throughout winter and spring quarters, both on campus and in the community. All open to the public, these will culminate in a public talk by the author on April 15 in UCSB’s Campbell Hall.

Kerman’s book is the basis for the Netflix series, “Orange Is the New Black,” and since her release, Kerman has been called by the U.S. Senate to testify on issues related to female prisoners.

Questions about UCSB Reads can be directed to Rebecca Metzger, assistant university librarian for outreach and academic collaboration, at rmetzger@library.ucsb.edu or (805) 893-2674.

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.