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‘Armageddon, Apocalypse, Or Rapture?’

Bill Moyers describes the 2016 presidential election in colorful terms: A horror show of shoddy thinking, vaudeville (and bad vaudeville at that), lies, stupidities, deception and bad jokes.

“It’s reality TV and it isn’t even funny!” Moyers said recently. His strong opinions about the election inspired the topic of his upcoming talk in Santa Barbara, “Coming in November: Armageddon, Apocalypse, or Rapture?”

“Probably closer to all three,” joked the veteran newsman, among the most prolific and influential figures in American journalism over the last half century.

Bringing his expertise, experience and wisdom — and no doubt some wit — Moyers will give the Martin E. Marty Lecture on Religion in American Life at 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 18, at The Granada Theatre, 1214 State St. His talk is co-presented by UC Santa Barbara’s Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life.

“The Martin E. Marty Lectureship was established by a Santa Barbara family in honor of Marty, a well-known and widely respected commentator on American life at the University of Chicago,” said Clark Roof, the emeritus J.F. Rowney Professor of Religion and Society at UCSB and director of the Capps Center. “Our speaker, Bill Moyers, is truly an American treasure.”

The recipient of 37 Emmy Awards, nine Peabody Awards and the National Academy of Television's Lifetime Achievement Award, Moyers is recognized for his highly acclaimed investigative documentaries as well as his groundbreaking PBS series, including "Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth," "A World of Ideas," "Healing and the Mind," "Faith and Reason," "The Language of Life," "Fooling with Words," "Now with Bill Moyers," "Bill Moyers Journal" and "Moyers and Company."

Moyers began his public career in the early 1960's as a founding organizer and deputy director of the Peace Corps. He then served as special assistant to President Lyndon B. Johnson, and as Johnson's press secretary from 1965 to 1967. He became publisher of the influential New York newspaper Newsday (which earned two Pulitzer Prizes during his tenure) and then moved to broadcast news as chief correspondent of CBS Reports and senior analyst for CBS News. In 1986, he established his own independent production company, Public Affairs Television.

A fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Moyers is the author of the best-selling books "Listening to America," "Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth," "Genesis," "Language of Life," "Healing and the Mind," "Moyers on America" and "Moyers on Democracy," among others.

As a career journalist, Moyers is not only an engaged practitioner of the profession that has evolved multi-fold since he started out — he's also a discerning news consumer. And he doesn't always like what he sees.

"There is some world-class journalism being done in print and online, and you can find it if you work hard to clear a path through the wilderness," Moyers said. "No single person in the press signifies the way journalists used to — the Woodward and Bernsteins, the David Halberstams, the Scotty Restons (of the New York Times), but 'the press' still has power the same way a fire hose does. Facebook is certainly the arbiter of what more people read today, but it's not about journalism, it's not real news ('the news we need to keep our freedom,' as the writer Richard Reeves puts it). The best long-form journalism today is being done in books."

Despite the state of journalism and the current political environment, Moyers finds much cause for optimism. "I look to people working and marching to confront global warming," he said. "I look to people working for a living wage. I look to Doctors Without Borders and those like them who put themselves on the line for others who have no voice, no lobby, no vote. And the young people in Black Lives Matter and

those fighting for just immigration policies.

“And, by the way, I look to millennials, who may be the most optimistic among us,” Moyers continued. He cited a recent survey that reveals that 80 percent of Americans ages 18 to 26 feel positive about their personal future, and 75 percent think they will fare better than their parents. “They value personal freedom and opportunity,” he noted. “And — this may be the most important revelation of all — they don’t think well of capitalism. They get that it’s making the rich richer even as the middle class and the poor are being economically clobbered.

“The most encouraging headline I’ve seen in a long time,” Moyers added, “was in the Capitol Hill newspaper Roll Call. It read: ‘Get Money Out of Politics, Get Young People In.’ I’m for that.”

The Martin E. Marty Lectureship was established in 2005 in honor of Martin E. Marty, the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and the author of over 50 books. Among his most well known titles are “Righteous Empire,” which earned a National Book Award, a multi-volume work entitled “Modern American Religion,” “The One and the Many: America’s Search for the Common Good” and “Under God, Indivisible.”

Tickets for Moyers’ lecture, which is co-presented with the Santa Barbara Independent, are \$6 for UCSB students and \$12 for all others. They may be purchased from The Granada Theatre Box Office at (805) 899-2222 or www.granadasb.org. Questions about the talk can be directed to the Capps Center at (805) 893-2137.

About UC Santa Barbara

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