

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

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## A Meeting of Minds

A Venn diagram of the environment and politics these days would look like a single circle. Not only do they overlap, they're bound by the complex demands of society and culture. That makes solving environmental problems an endeavor that requires a collaborative approach in multiple disciplines.

How scholars and social scientists are tackling environmental issues will be front and center at the [4th Annual UC Santa Barbara Environmental Politics Conference](#), taking place Friday, May 27, at 12:30 p.m. in 1424 Bren Hall, will address. Sponsored by the campus's [Center for Social Solutions to Environmental Problems \(CSSEP\)](#) and the Anton Vonk Chair in Environmental Politics, this year's conference will focus on the work being done at UCSB in political science, global studies, anthropology and black studies.

"UCSB is known for its interdisciplinary culture of collaboration," said Sarah Anderson, director of the CSSEP. "That starts with knowledge of what others on campus are working on. The conference is an opportunity to cement a community of scholars by bringing together people who generally study environmental politics from different perspectives. Many of us are on the same campus, but we might not otherwise get a chance to know each other's work. We also need cross-fertilization of ideas from other disciplines and campuses."

The speaker from outside UCSB will be Neil Stenhouse, an assistant professor in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research focuses on science communication and the politics of scientific issues,

especially energy development and climate change. According to Anderson, he's "interested in applying what we know about mobilization for voting and other forms of political participation to engage people in scientific issues. Such engagement is key if we are to solve the world's most complicated environmental problems, where science plays a huge role."

Collaboration is the highlight of UCSB's approach to environmental politics. Issues such as climate change touch every corner of our lives, and what we do about it needs to embrace society as a whole. That takes an interdisciplinary approach, Anderson noted. "The solutions to environmental problems necessarily encompass not just the environmental science that helps define the problem and potential solution, but also so many aspects of society," she said. "Solutions need to involve an understanding of policy and politics, but also societal considerations like race, how the issue is communicated and how social structures affect environmental attitudes.

"From climate change to inequality, the most pressing environmental and societal issues we face today are not ones that can be solved with a crisper message, more information, or simply a new piece of technology," Anderson continued. "For instance, the developed world already has the technology to be feasibly carbon neutral by 2050. What we lack is the political will to make it happen. In many cases, our toughest environmental and societal problems today are political problems that need political solutions. This conference highlights research aimed directly at those practical solutions."

The conference is free and open to the public. There will be a reception on the Bren deck beginning at 4:45 p.m.

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## **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.