

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

May 1, 2019

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Top Faculty Honors

The UC Santa Barbara Academic Senate has awarded Distinguished Professor Nelson Lichtenstein the Faculty Research Lecture Award for 2019. Established in 1955, the award is the highest honor the faculty bestows on one of its members.

In announcing the award, the Faculty Research Lecture Committee recognized Lichtenstein, a professor of history and director of the campus's Center for the Study of Work, Labor and Democracy, as one of the most important 20th-century U.S. historians working in any field. Of specific note were his contributions to American labor history, global capitalism, and political economy.

"Professor Lichtenstein is anything but an Ivory Tower intellectual," said Sharon Farmer, professor and colleague in the Department of History. "He has earned international acclaim not because his intelligence is wedded to ambition, but because his intelligence and creativity are guided by a deep passion for improving and preserving democracy and economic justice."

Lichtenstein received his Ph.D. from UC Berkeley and held academic positions at American University, the Catholic University of America and the University of Virginia before joining the faculty at UC Santa Barbara in 2001.

He is the author of four major books: "The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business" (Henry Holt & Company), "State of the Union: A Century of American Labor" (Princeton University Press), "The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor" (University of Illinois

Press) and “Labor’s War at Home: The CIO in World War II” (Temple University Press).

In addition, he has edited a dozen books on topics ranging from American capitalism to the history of the New Left. Many of these volumes got their start as a conference organized by Lichtenstein's Center for the Study of Work, Labor, and Democracy.

Lichtenstein’s current book project, “A Fabulous Failure: Bill Clinton, American Capitalism, and the Origins of Our Troubled Times,” argues that neoliberal globalization and rustbelt decline, against which Donald Trump polemicized so effectively in 2016, was hardly an inevitability at the outset of the Clinton presidency. The Republicans of the Reagan-Bush 1980s, he says, were far more ambivalent about free trade and financialization than conventional wisdom holds; more important, the Clintonites came into office with an abundance of plans for reorganizing American capitalism, from the “managed trade” designed to aid Detroit and Pittsburgh to health insurance reform and an initiative to begin the reorganization of American work life. Clinton’s failure had many sources, personal and political, Lichtenstein continues, but perhaps the most important was that his team failed to appreciate the degree to which corporate and financial power had already divorced itself from the confines of a nation-state over which Clinton presided and sought to reform.

The recipient of numerous honors and awards, Lichtenstein is an elected member of the Society of American Historians. He has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller and Guggenheim foundations, the Fulbright Commission, the Oregon Center for the Humanities and the UC Office of the President.

From 2009-2014 he held a prestigious MacArthur Foundation Chair, and in 2012 he received the Sol Stetin Award in Labor History from the Sidney Hillman Foundation. In 2016, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Labor and Working Class History Association.

Lichtenstein’s Faculty Research Lecture will take place on campus, and will be free and open to the public. The date and location of the lecture have not yet been determined.

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.