UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

October 7, 2021
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Toward a Better Future

We live in disconcerting times. Pandemic, social unrest, political upheaval — it can seem apocalyptic, like we've finally reached the end of the line. But the truth is that we've been clutching our pearls and awaiting the end of civilization since we learned how to turn rocks into tools and weapons.

That's why it's important to remember that societies have been extraordinarily resilient, moving from crises and instability to eras of sustainable rebirth.

UC Santa Barbara's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center (IHC) will explore this resilience with "Regeneration," a public events series for 2021-22. Through speakers and presentations, the series will examine how societies and cultures in previous historical eras have moved from crisis and upheaval into periods of sustainable and equitable growth.

The series kicks off Thursday, Oct. 14, at 4 p.m. with "Environmental Justice as Regeneration," a remote lecture by David N. Pellow, who holds the Dehlsen Chair in the Department of Environmental Studies and is director of the campus's Global Environmental Justice Project. The event is free and open to the public.

"In this moment of increased anxieties and concerns about global climate change, racial violence and a worldwide pandemic," Pellow said, "environmental justice scholars and activists can offer a compelling set of questions and frameworks that present new directions for promoting critical thinking and transformative action that are so urgently needed."

IHC director Susan Derwin called Pellow the ideal person to launch the series.

“He has an extensive body of scholarship on issues of environmental and social justice, including abolition ecology, radical environmental and animal rights movements, and on how environmental privilege and environmental racism impact local ecologies,” she said. “He is also active in the environmental justice movement on the grass-roots level here on the Central Coast and beyond.”

Next in the “Regeneration” series will be a conversation with Clint Smith, a writer at The Atlantic, and Derwin on Wednesday, Nov. 3, at 4 p.m. Smith is the author of the narrative non-fiction book “How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America” (Little, Brown and Company). Their conversation will be followed by a Q&A.

Additional events are listed on the “Regeneration” web page.

With everything going on in the world, Derwin said, the time was ripe to explore the past as we contemplate the future.

“We started thinking about the upcoming year’s public events series in the midst of the global pandemic,” she said. “Our community and the nation were experiencing precarity and loss, and there were urgent calls to redress the systemic inequities informing our social institutions. We decided upon ‘Regeneration’ as a topic that would help us envision a better future and engage with the key areas of anthropogenic climate change, urban crisis, global conflict and the hunger and need for cultural preservation and renewal.”

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.