

UC SANTA BARBARA

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RABBI TO RECEIVE PH.D. IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES AT UCSB

Rabbi Harry Manhoff of San Leandro will receive a doctoral degree in religious studies during the commencement ceremony for graduate students at UC Santa Barbara, Sunday, June 17 at 4 p.m. on the Faculty Club green.

Manhoff began studying at UCSB after he "happened" into a class taught by Walter Capps, religious studies professor who went on to serve in Congress before he died in 1997.

"We became close friends," he said.

Manhoff, whose dissertation topic is "Semitic Idiom in the Synoptic Gospels and Related Jewish Literature," became interested in Christian origins while co-teaching an extension class with a Christian minister at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

"I thought that he would teach the Jesus part and I would teach the 'Jewish-teachings-of-his-time' part," said Manhoff.

"We soon realized that we had completely different definitions for the same words.

Thus began my fascination with the New Testament."

Manhoff worked on his Ph.D. for eight years while a full-time rabbi, first serving a congregation in San Luis Obispo, and then one in San Leandro, where he currently

lives.

Among his many interests is the promotion of Jewish-Palestinian dialogue in the Bay Area.

"I believe that people from different cultures, different backgrounds, and different beliefs can get together and listen and learn from one another," Manhoff said.

The chair of the rabbi's dissertation committee, Birger Pearson, professor emeritus of religious studies, said that Manhoff "will be the last student to be hooded by me at a UCSB commencement."

Pearson retired in 1994.

"I count him as one of my best students, and a good friend, one from whom I have learned much," Pearson said.

Manhoff said that he was fortunate to study at UCSB: "The department is great -- one of the finest in the country -- with fabulous and caring faculty ."

It is the only Department of Religious Studies in the UC system that offers advanced degrees.

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.