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UCSB Critical Issues Conference Explores Marriage and Alternatives

Marriage: Race, Sexuality, Citizenship, the Critical Issues in America series at UC Santa Barbara, continues with a conference on Monday, March 7, featuring social science and legal scholars from across the country.

Titled "Queer Perspectives on Marriage: Intimacy Beyond Marriage," the conference begins at 4 p.m. in the MultiCultural Center Theater at UCSB. It is free and open to the public.

"This is a provocative event," said Eileen Boris, the Hull Professor and Chair of Feminist Studies at UCSB and co-organizer of this year's Critical Issues in America series. "It's a critique of same-sex marriage by activists and scholars who are self-identified as queer and really want to detach from marriage all the rights that are associated with it."

Said Leila Rupp, professor of feminist studies and series co-organizer: "These are scholars who think that arguing for marriage is the wrong strategy, that we should be rethinking what marriage means, and the whole involvement of the state in personal relationships."

Conference participants will include Lisa Duggan of New York University; and Macarena Gómez-Barris and Judith Halberstam of the University of Southern California; and Dean Spade of Seattle University School of Law. They will discuss the

need to move away from a "politics of respectability," and toward broader queer social and economic justice movements.

The series, which began in October and is funded by the College of Letters and Science, examines the concept of marriage from a variety of perspectives. Fall quarter emphasis was marriage and race, and winter quarter events focus on marriage and sexuality. During spring quarter, the series will address issues of marriage and citizenship.

"The impetus behind this series is what's currently going on in the world," said Boris. "We had the election of a biracial man as president of the United States, a country where, 50 years ago, interracial marriage was illegal. We also see the California Marriage Protection Act, which seeks to amend the state constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage, and the debate about 'anchor babies' and the anti-immigration move to change the 14th amendment." The 14th amendment grants citizenship to any child born in the United States, regardless of the citizenship of his or her parents.

Rupp noted that the series brings these issues together in a way that has not been done previously. "People will think about same-sex marriage, but not along with immigration, or questions of citizenship rights. It brings historical issues together with what's happening now."

Added Boris: "We have students at UCSB whose mothers or other family members have been deported. So these are real issues. They're critical issues in the United States, and they connect to the rest of the world."

Spring quarter events include a panel discussion on "Marriage, Status, and Citizenship" at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, April 6, in the McCune Conference, Room 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building. Participants will include Felicity Schaeffer-Gabriel, professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at UC Santa Cruz; Patricia Cline-Cohen, professor of history at UCSB; Priya Kandaswamy, professor of women's studies at Mills College; and Juliette Williams, professor of women's studies at UCLA.

The series will conclude on May 18 with a lecture by Linda Kerber, professor of history at the University of Iowa. She will speak on "Marriage and Citizenship."

More information about the series, including a detailed schedule of events, is available at www.femst.ucsb.edu.

An endowed program in the College of Letters & Science at UCSB since 1995, and co-sponsored by other campus departments, the Critical Issues in America series examines relevant social topics from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Previous series have focused on environmental issues; policy reform; media ownership; women, employment and globalization; violence in America; and ethnic studies.

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