

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Story Corps

Did you hear the story about the sailor who slept directly below the catapults of an aircraft carrier, and how he'd occasionally be knocked out of his rack by the banging? Or the one about the Marine whose buddy started sleep-walking when they got to Iraq? Probably not. Every veteran has stories, but they mostly go untold. That's about to change.

A group of student veterans at UC Santa Barbara will present original writings about their service Thursday, May 26, at noon in the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center's McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building. The readings will come from eight veterans of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force who participate in the UCSB Veterans Writing Workshop.

Halfway into the country's second decade of war in the Middle East, it can still be difficult for civilians to relate to the experiences of veterans, who make up a tiny and largely isolated fraction of the population. They might be thanked for their service, but gratitude is a long way from understanding.

"We all know where we stand, and we have our own experiences, so we can be kind of standoffish about it," said Derek Downey, who served 10 years in the Navy. "I don't want to say we don't feel appreciated, but there is a disconnect and we don't know that our stories will translate and people will see what we have gone through. I hope so, though."

Susan Derwin, director of the [Interdisciplinary Humanities Center](#), which sponsors the weekly workshop, said the reading is an excellent opportunity for people to get a sense of what it means to put on a uniform. “The voice of each student veteran is unique, and each brings to UCSB the extraordinary knowledge, skills and wisdom they developed while serving,” she explained. “I hope that people come to this event, so that they can hear their stories and talk with them about what it is like to have deployed to

Iraq and Afghanistan, or served in other parts of the world, and now to be a UCSB student.”

The veterans’ stories are, literally, all over the map. They’re about deployments, homecomings, training, trauma, humor and more. The writing workshop gives them the opportunity to give voice to their experience on the page, surrounded by people who know what it means to serve. “I never thought much about my stories until I came here,” said Rocio Iribe, who served in the Marine Corps. “They could be really mundane but they’re still your stories, so it’s kind of nice to take possession of them, and that’s what this class has allowed me to do.

“I’m a little nervous and I’m curious to see how the public will take these stories,” Iribe continued. “I’ve talked to some of my roommates, none of them are vets, but one of them has read a couple of my stories and my first question was, ‘Do you get it?’ Not because I was calling her stupid, but I don’t know if some of it went over her head. I’m just curious to see how it’s going to go on Thursday.”

Derwin, who leads the veterans’ writing workshop, said the reading will allow the public to gain a view into military life. “I am very happy that the campus is going to have the chance to hear UCSB student veterans share some of the pieces they have written in our workshop. Each time we meet as a group I learn something new about them as individuals and about the impact their service had upon who they are today.”

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.