

UC SANTA BARBARA

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From La Frontera to La Universidad

Norma Elia Cantú has worn many hats over the course of her career. She is adding another next month when she comes to UC Santa Barbara to receive the campus's 14th annual Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature.

The award will be presented during a ceremony at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 7, in Corwin Pavilion at UCSB. The event is free and open to the public.

An accomplished writer, poet and literary scholar, Cantú is best known for her coming-of-age memoir, "Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera," which chronicles her childhood experiences on the border. Born in Nuevo Laredo in Mexico, Cantú was raised in Laredo, Texas.

"Norma Cantú is a pioneer in Chicana literature and Chicana and Chicano studies," said Mario T. García, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and of history at UCSB, and the organizer of the annual Leal Award. "Her work on border culture reminds us that no border or wall can separate Mexican people on both sides of the border who are family and cultural neighbors."

Currently the Norine R. and T. Frank Murchison Distinguished Professor in Humanities at Trinity University in San Antonio, Cantú completed her master's degree at Texas A&M International University and her Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. She has taught at Texas A&M, served as a senior arts administrator with the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., and was acting director of UCSB's Chicano Studies Research Center in 1998-99.

Cantú's teaching interests include contemporary literary theory, border studies, Chicano/a and Latino/a literature and film, folklore and women's studies. In addition to fiction and poetry, she has published numerous articles on academic subjects. Her publications on border literature, the teaching of English, quinceañera celebrations and matachines, a religious dance tradition, have earned her international acclaim as a scholar and folklorist.

In addition to "Canícula," Cantú has authored, edited or co-edited several books, including "Entre Guadalupe y Malinche: Tejanas in Literature and Art" (with Inés Hernández-Ávila), "Paths to Discovery: Autobiographies from Chicanas with Careers in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering" (with Aida Hurtado, professor of Chicano and Chicano studies at UCSB) and "Chicana Traditions: Continuity and Change" (with Olga Najera-Ramirez).

Among her many honors are a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Folklore Society, the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Modern Language Association's Chicana and Chicano literature division, the Americo Paredes Prize from the American Folklore Society and the Scholar of the Year Award from the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies.

The Leal Award is named in honor of Luis Leal, a professor emeritus of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UCSB, who was internationally recognized as a leading scholar of Chicano and Latino literature. Previous recipients of the award include Francisco Jiménez, Demetria Martínez, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Graciela Limón, Pat Mora, Alejandro Morales, Helena Maria Viramontes, Oscar Hijuelos, Rudolfo Anaya, Denise Chávez, Hector Tobar, John Rechy and Reyna Grande.

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.