

THE *Current*

September 8, 2021

Jim Logan

A Fitting Award

The British Academy has awarded [Marianne Mithun](#), a UC Santa Barbara professor of linguistics, The Neil and Saras Smith Medal for her groundbreaking research into Native American and Austronesian languages, which the academy called a significant contribution to theoretical linguistics.

“I am delighted and deeply honored by this award,” Mithun said. “It is especially meaningful coming from my British colleagues, for whom I have long had great respect and appreciation. Individually and collectively they have created a vibrant discipline, based on deep knowledge and high standards of scholarship, as well as fruitful interaction.”

Mithun, the immediate past president of the Linguistic Society of America, is one of the country’s foremost scholars in indigenous languages. Her work has helped indigenous communities in North America and Austronesia preserve their languages and pass them on to younger generations.

“We are delighted to learn that our colleague Marianne Mithun has been awarded the Neil and Saras Smith Award for Linguistics,” said [Matthew Gordon](#), professor and chair of linguistics. “Marianne’s contributions to the department, the university and the field of linguistics throughout her illustrious career have been numerous and profound.

“She has greatly advanced linguistic theory and language description through her pioneering research on language structure and usage in a number of languages

spoken throughout the world, but especially in North America, where she has always displayed a deep respect for and commitment to the communities with which she has worked,” he continued. “Moreover, her cheerful demeanor and enthusiasm for research, teaching and life have been and continue to be a source of inspiration to both students and faculty. Congratulations, Marianne!”

Mary Hancock, acting dean of humanities and fine arts, called Mithun’s award a fitting tribute to decades of important work.

“We are extremely proud that Professor Mithun’s career achievements have been honored by the award from the British Academy,” Hancock said. “Professor Mithun’s extensive comparative study of the structure of indigenous languages has advanced the field while also helping preserve and revitalize these languages, many of which are endangered.”

The accolade is one of a selection of prizes and medals awarded by the [British Academy](#), is the UK’s national academy for the humanities and social sciences.

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.