

# THE *Current*

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## **ANTHROPOLOGIST MARY HANCOCK WINS PLOUS AWARD**

Students call her enthusiastic and empowering. Her colleagues call her a dedicated researcher. For these reasons and more, Mary Hancock, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has been named the winner of the university's 1999 Harold J. Plous Memorial Award.

The award is named for the energetic Plous, an esteemed assistant professor of economics at UCSB from 1950 until his death in 1957. It is given annually to an assistant professor or instructor from the humanities, social sciences or natural sciences who has demonstrated outstanding performance or promise of performance as measured by creative action or contribution to the intellectual life of the college community.

Hancock was an assistant professor when chosen for the award. She was recently promoted to associate professor.

She joined the UCSB faculty in 1993 and has focused her research on gender, nationalism and religious practice in south India.

Her most recent book is *Womanhood in the Making: Domestic Ritual and Public Culture in Urban South India* (1999).

In *Womanhood in the Making*, Hancock describes the ways in which middle-class Brahman women in Madras City have reinvented ritual to meet their personal and

emotional needs, at various times subverting and resisting the effects of class, caste and patriarchy in their lives and at other times, reinforcing those effects.

In announcing Hancock's selection, Plous Selection Committee Chair Patricia Cohen called Hancock's work "worthy" of the tenure she recently received.

In addition to teaching in the Department of Anthropology, Hancock has taken teaching assignments in the Women's Studies Program and in the Women, Culture and Development Minor within Global and International Studies.

Students in her classes have praised her effort on their behalf. Last fall, 76 percent rated her either excellent or good. Sample comments include, "A mold needs to be made of this instructor," and, "Her enthusiasm ... is both refreshing and contagious."

Hancock is in India on sabbatical and could not be reached for comment.

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## **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.