

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Bill Schlotter

This Week's UCSB Templeton Lectures Focus on Empathy, Human Experience, and Religion

Evan Thompson and Pascal Boyer have spent much of their careers pondering the intersections of science and religion.

The two philosophers will share some of what they have learned with audiences at UC Santa Barbara Thursday and Friday, Feb. 7 and 8 in the second and third lectures in the nine-lecture "Science, Religion, and the Human Experience" series, sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation.

Thompson, a professor of philosophy at York University in Toronto, will speak at 7 p.m. Thursday in Corwin Pavilion on the UCSB campus.

His talk, titled "Empathy and Human Experience," is based on his belief that it is through empathy that people comprehend each other's experience.

"It will examine empathy from the point of view of cognitive science and from the point of view of Buddhist contemplative psychology and Western phenomenology," Thompson said.

Boyer and Jose Cabezon, a professor of religious studies at UCSB, will serve as discussants for Thompson's remarks.

Boyer, a professor of anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis, will give his talk at 7 p.m. Friday in the Isla Vista Theater.

His talk, titled "Gods, Spirits, and the Mental Instincts that Create Them," is based on his book, "Religion Explained" (Basic Books, 2001), in which he lays out the psychological bases of religious belief.

"Religion has been around for a long time and is found everywhere," Boyer said.

"The best hope we have to understand why it is so persistent is in the scientific understanding of how human minds work."

Thompson and Francesca Bray, chair of UCSB's Department of Anthropology, will be discussants for Boyer's talk.

Both talks are free and open to the public.

The series is sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation, which seeks to encourage

"a fresh appreciation of the moral and spiritual dimensions of life." UCSB and Columbia were the first two universities to be selected to receive Templeton grants to stage lecture series covering science and religion.

Stanford University and Israel's Bar-Ilan University were added to the foundation's program for 2002. UCSB will also offer a Templeton-sponsored series of lectures in 2003.

In addition to giving their talks, Templeton lecturers will meet with various UCSB students and faculty during their visits. The lecture series has a website (www.srhe.ucsb.edu) that includes speaker biographies and abstracts of each talk.

Upcoming speakers in the 2002 UCSB series include:

Michael Ruse, Lucyle T. Werkmeister Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University. "Darwinism and Atheism: A Marriage Made in Heaven?" 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7. Corwin Pavilion.

Bruce Tiffney, professor of geological sciences UC Santa Barbara.

"The Origins of Science in Religion; or, Parents and Offspring Should Respect Each Other."

7 p.m. Friday, March 8. Isla Vista Theater.

Harold Oliver, professor emeritus of philosophy of religion at Boston University.

"The Complementarity of Science and Religion." 7 p.m. Thursday, April 11, Isla Vista Theater.

Thomas Carlson, associate professor of religious studies at UC Santa Barbara.

"Modernity and the Mystical: Science, Technology, and the Task of Human Self-Creation." 7 p.m. Friday, April 12. Isla Vista Theater.

Hilary Putnam, Cogan University Professor (emeritus) at Harvard University. "The Depths and Shadows of Experience." 7 p.m. Thursday, May 9.

Corwin Pavilion.

Bruno Latour, philosopher, anthropologist, author.

"The Specific Regime of Enunciation of Religious Talk."

7 p.m. Friday, May 10. Corwin Pavilion.

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.