

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

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Bill Schlotter

UCSB to Host National Conference on Wal-Mart as Model for 21st Century Global Capitalism

Just as General Motors and Microsoft set the standard for innovative enterprise in the 20th century, many scholars feel Wal-Mart has become the model for global capitalism in the 21st century.

A national conference to discuss Wal-Mart's place in modern business and society will be held at the University of California, Santa Barbara Monday April 12.

"Wal-Mart: Template for 21st Century Capitalism?" will feature more than a dozen scholars, activists, union officials and others from around the country speaking about the many sides of the world's largest and most controversial corporation. Representatives of Wal-Mart have been invited, as well.

The conference is free and open to the public and will be held in the Corwin Pavilion at UCSB.

It is organized by UCSB's newly formed Center for Work, Labor and Democracy.

Though the conference is free, lunch is \$12.

Those wishing to attend the conference lunch must reserve a place by contacting conference organizer Nelson Lichtenstein at and by sending a check for \$12 made

out to the UC Regents to: Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, University of California, Santa Barbara, 6046 HSSB, Santa Barbara, Calif.

93106-9700.

Founded in 1962 in Bentonville, Ark. by brothers Sam and Bud Walton, Wal-Mart has grown to be the largest profit-making organization in the world, with sales of about a quarter of a trillion dollars each year. Defined by its low-price, low-wage, globally sourced business model, the company had 4,688 stores and 1.4 million employees in 44 countries at the end of 2003. Like General Motors and Microsoft, Wal-Mart is initiating changes in the economic landscape that are being felt throughout society.

The conference, which begins at 8:30 a.m., will feature four sessions to look at those changes.

The full schedule follows and can also be found on the conference Web site at www.ihc.ucsb.edu/walmart.

8:30 a.m. Introduction

- Welcoming remarks, Dick Hebdige, director of UCSB's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center.
- "From General Motors to Wal-Mart: Templates for an Era," Nelson Lichtenstein, conference organizer, expert in the history of labor, and UCSB professor of history.

8:50 a.m. Culture, Technology and Historical Contingency

- "From Wanamaker's to Wal-Mart: The Changing Culture of Consumption," Susan Strasser, University of Delaware, noted historian of consumer culture.
- "It Came from Bentonville: The New South Origins of Wal-Mart's Managerial Culture," Bethany Morton, advanced graduate student at Yale University,
- "Growth through Knowledge: Wal-Mart, High Technology, and the Ever Less Visible Hand of Management," James Hoopes, Babson College.

11 a.m. A Global Corporation

- "Global Market-makers: The Role of Retail in Restructuring the World Economy," Gary Hamilton, University of Washington, a sociologist and leading expert on global

value chains.

- "Wal-Mart, Free Trade and American Mass Marketing in Latin America," Julio Moreno, University of San Francisco, author of "Yankee Don't Go Home," a study of American business in Mid-20th century Latin America.
- "Wal-Mart in Mexico: Transformations in the Retail Sector," Chris Tilly, University of Massachusetts.

2:15 p.m. How Wal-Mart Reshapes the Nation

- "When Wal-Mart Comes to Town," David Karjanen, University of California, San Diego, expert on fiscal, employment, environmental and governmental impacts on communities where Wal-Mart relocates.
- "Organizational Structure, Anti-Unionism, Sex Discrimination and Labor Law Violations," Ellen Rosen, Brandeis University, currently writing a book on gender stratification in retail trade which will include Wal-Mart as its prime case study.
- "The Effects of Wal-Mart's Pay and Promotional Practices on its Female Employees," Brad Seligman, attorney for Impact Fund of San Francisco.
- "What Would It Take to Unionize Wal-Mart?" Joey Hipolito, United Food and Commercial Workers.

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