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Middle East Conference at UCSB Examines

The Arab news provider Al Jazeera and its impact on new media in the Arab world will be the focus of a two-day conference sponsored by the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

The conference, titled "Al Jazeera and the New Arab Media, will take place May 4 and 5. It is free and the public is invited to attend any or all events.

"Al Jazeera is the first uncensored satellite news channel originating from the Arab world," said Garay Menicucci, assistant director of the Center for Middle East Studies. "It was launched in 1997 and once it started it unleashed a plethora of new kinds of satellite and Web-based media that have broadened the parameters of freedom of expression in the Arab world."

Highlighting the two-day event will be a keynote address on May 5 by Dave Marash, Washington, D.C. news anchor of Al Jazeera International. Speaking at 8 p.m. in Campbell Hall, he will discuss the launch of Al Jazeera's English news channel. An Emmy award-winning news correspondent who has covered international and domestic topics, Marash joined Al Jazeera following several years as a reporter for ABC News.

The conference begins at 7 p.m. on May 4 with screenings of the films "Glassy Eyes" and "The Arab American Road Movie" in Campbell Hall. A discussion with directors

Hossein Dehbashi and Joan Mandell will follow.

Panel discussions on May 5 include "Al Jazeera in Practice" at 10 a.m., a screening of the final installment of the four-part public television series "News War" at 1:30 p.m., and "The Politics of the New Arab Media" at 4 p.m.

Conference speakers include Adel Iskandar, visiting researcher at Georgetown University and the author of "Al-Jazeera: How the Free Arab News Network Scooped the World and Changed the Middle East" (Westview Press, 2002); and Salim Tamari, visiting professor of history at UC Berkeley, professor of sociology at Birzeit University in Palestine, and director of the Institute of Jerusalem Studies in Jerusalem.

For more information, including a complete schedule of conference speakers, visit <http://www.cmes.ucsb.edu>.

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