

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Gail Gallessich

Princeton Professor to Discuss 'The Pseudoscience Wars' in Memorial Lecture

Historian Michael D. Gordin, professor at Princeton University, will deliver the next Lawrence Badash Memorial Lecture on October 29, at 7 p.m., at UC Santa Barbara. Gordin will discuss the borders between science and pseudoscience in a lecture based on his new book, "The Pseudoscience Wars: Immanuel Velikovsky and the Birth of the Modern Fringe."

Velikovsky's 1950 book, "Worlds in Collision," became a controversial best-seller decried by the scientific community as "fringe pseudoscience." It described an unconventional theory about a comet that was ejected from Jupiter, pulled the Earth into a new rotational axis, and became the planet Venus, sometime during the 15th century B.C. Astronomers and other scientists reacted vehemently to Velikovsky's ideas, setting the stage for a long-running controversy about the boundaries of legitimate scientific inquiry.

Gordin's lecture is free and open to the public. It will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at UCSB's Loma Pelona Conference Center. Seating is limited.

In a recent issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, Gordin said: "I have come to think of pseudoscience as science's shadow. A shadow is cast by something; it has no substance of its own... The brighter the light of science -- that is, the greater its

cultural prestige and authority -- the sharper the shadow and the more the fringe flourishes."

Gordin's larger interests span the history of science, Russian history, and nuclear issues.

The Badash Lecture Series was started in 2009 with a small gift from Lawrence Badash, emeritus professor in the history of science at UCSB. He was a longtime public intellectual interested in the history of the physical sciences, arms control, environmental issues, and the place of science in civil society. After his passing in 2010, his life partner, Nancy Hofbauer, and his two children, Bruce and Lisa, made a generous donation to continue the series.

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.