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UC Santa Barbara's Critical Issues in America series will examine the broad societal implications of aging and extension of longevity

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According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 49 million older adults in the United States in 2016. By 2060, that number will double, a remarkable demographic shift with deep and lasting implications for American society.

What we should do to prepare for this shift, and how aging adults can continue to thrive as they get older, are two of the central concerns of UC Santa Barbara's 2023-2024 [Critical Issues in America series](#), which will examine issues around aging and the possible impacts on multiple generations.

By bringing experts to campus to discuss aging from biomedical, psychological and sociocultural perspectives, the series aims to showcase frontiers of aging research. The first guest speaker, Cynthia Kenyon, will present the talk "Controlling the Rate of Aging" on April 6, at 11 a.m., in Corwin Pavilion. Her lecture is free and

open to the community.

Kenyon is vice president of aging research at Calico Life Sciences, Google's research and drug development company whose mission is to gain a deep, actionable understanding of aging, allowing for healthy youthfulness and high quality of life as we age.

Kenyon's 1993 discovery that a single-gene mutation could double the lifespan of healthy, fertile *C. elegans* roundworms sparked an intensive study of the molecular biology of aging. Her discoveries showed that the aging process is not random and haphazard, as previously thought, but instead is subject to active regulation by the machinery of genes.

"These seminal discoveries by Doctor Kenyon, who is among the world's most prominent scientists in aging research, have revolutionized aging research and have even led to clinical trials in humans for drugs that may slow aspects of aging," said Joel Rothman, distinguished professor of molecular and cell biology and director of the newly launched [Center for Aging and Longevity Studies](#). "Such drugs hold the promise of forestalling a large number of age-driven diseases simultaneously. We are very fortunate to be able to bring her to UCSB."

As the inaugural speaker, Kenyon will kick off a series of presentations throughout the year by experts on aging, who will discuss everything from the promise of biomedical research into aging and longevity, to intergenerational connection, to the economics of aging. The series is co-sponsored by the Center for Aging and Longevity Studies.

"Both this series and the new Center for Aging and Longevity Studies are dedicated to understanding and altering the relationship between time and the human experience," said Nicole Alea Albada, associate teaching professor of psychological & brain sciences and co-organizer of the Critical Issues series. "The program will spark new ideas and research directions that strive to promote healthier lives as people age and that empower our society to face these demographic challenges."

The Critical Issues in America series, which has been running continuously since 1995, provides funds for educational and public programming centered around an important topic of contemporary concern or significance. It is administered each year by the [College of Letters & Science](#).

For a full list of upcoming events, visit <https://longevity.ucsb.edu/events>.

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