

University Forum

A Free Lecture Series

Fall 2008

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University Forum is a public lecture series sponsored and funded by the UNLV College of Liberal Arts. All events are free, and no reservation is necessary. Simply attend at the time and place indicated. The Forum wishes to thank Nevada Public Radio for assistance with publicity. Visit the University Forum website at <http://liberalarts.unlv.edu/forum.htm>

Forging Constitutional Conservatism

Wednesday September 17, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium

Prof. Ken I. Kersch, Department of Political Science, Boston College

One of the lynchpins of the Reagan Revolution in American politics was the firm faith that judges were duty bound to interpret the Constitution according to its original meaning. In fact, conservatives had been debating constitutional questions ever since their cataclysmic defeat in the 1930s at the hands of the Roosevelt Court. Tonight Professor Kersch will survey some of the debates conservatives engaged in and the diverse - and sometimes antagonistic - positions they took on law, the role of courts, and the Constitution, before they settled into agreement that the best path forward was to hew unwaveringly to originalism. Conservative thinking about interpreting the Constitution has been more varied and interesting than many imagine. A Constitution Day Lecture co-Sponsored by the UNLV Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the William S. Boyd School of Law, and the College of Liberal Arts.

Evaluating American Presidents: Some Thoughts Prior to the Election

Thursday September 25, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium

Prof. Steven Parker, Department of Political Science, UNLV

Tonight's speaker regularly teaches a course called "The American Presidency," and takes the occasion of the electoral season to share his expertise on presidential success and failure. However, his lecture focuses not on the upcoming election but on what the past tells us about the nature of effective leadership. Prof. Parker offers an historic overview in which he compares reputedly great chief executives like Washington, Roosevelt, and Lincoln to figures who wore the mantle of greatness more lightly, like Polk, Wilson, and Jackson, and to others who wear it not at all. What makes for a great president? It is hoped that answers to the question will provide some criteria by which members of the audience can use the record of the past to inform their votes in November.

Images of the Wildlands: Views of Southern Nevada

Thursday October 2, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium

Sharon K. Schafer, Nevada Artist and Photographer

Come and explore southern Nevada's wildlands through the eyes, lens, and brush of Boulder City artist Sharon K. Schafer. This museum show, the culmination of a full year of field and studio work, showcases photographs, sketches, and paintings representing nine stunningly beautiful and biologically diverse regions of southern Nevada. Through her photographs, paintings, and field sketches Sharon K. Schafer invites visitors to explore the stunning natural beauty of southern Nevada's natural life and landscapes. Join her as she provides viewers with a different perspective on the Public Lands of southern Nevada, not as a desert wasteland, but rather as a place of unparalleled natural eco-diversity.

Forebodings of the Holocaust: A Childhood in Vienna between the Wars

Monday October 6, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium

Walter H. Sokel, Commonwealth Professor Emeritus, University of Virginia

The intersection of history and memory is highlighted in Prof. Walter Sokel's account of the events leading to his escape from Nazi-controlled Austria. In the years before WWII Prof. Sokel was a young student at the University of Vienna. He lived through the Nazi *Anschluss* of 1938, when Hitler forcibly annexed Austria to Germany. Earlier this year, the University of Vienna invited Prof. Sokel to lecture on his experiences as an Austrian citizen and Jewish student. Tonight he reprises his lecture at UNLV. Through a blend of autobiography and cultural analysis, he examines the rise of National Socialism and anti-semitism among Austrian students and professors. Co-sponsored by Nevada Humanities, the Governor's Council Related to Holocaust Education, Ner Tamid Temple, the UNLV Student Government Association, and the UNLV History Department.

Reason, Relativism, and the Human Normative Predicament

Thursday October 16, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium

Prof. Kenneth Taylor, Chair of Philosophy, Stanford University

Many people would say that if we would just heed the voice of reason, all moral, ethical, and political disputes would eventually end in what Nietzsche calls "the hallowed place of peace." Our speaker argues tonight that, sadly enough, there is no such place. We should regard our predicament not as a counsel of despair, however, but rather as an urgent call to arms. The work of overcoming the human normative condition, and of building life-affirming moral and political orders is invigorating, even heroic labor that calls upon the best in us all. Co-sponsored by the UNLV Department of Philosophy.

Are Hobbits Real? Further Adventures with *Homo Floresiensis*

Thursday October 23, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium

Dean Falk, Hale G. Smith Professor of Anthropology, Florida State University

Scientists were shocked at the 2004 announcement that a diminutive human species (*Homo floresiensis*) lived 18,000 years ago on the Indonesian island of Flores. The most complete specimen, nicknamed Hobbit, stood only 3 ½ feet tall

and had a small brain. The archaeological evidence suggests that hobbits made stone tools, hunted miniature elephant-like creatures, used fire, and cooked their food. Because of their small brains, some researchers think that these so-called hobbits represent diseased humans (*Homo sapiens*) rather than an unknown species. The speaker will discuss the controversy that continues to surround *Homo floresiensis* and describe where her own research team stands on the question. Co-sponsored by the Department of Anthropology and Ethnic Studies, and the Anthropology Society, UNLV.

Translation as Transformation: Translating Lorca's *Poet in New York*
Wednesday, October 29, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium
Prof. Mark Statman, Eugene Lang College, The New School, and Prof. Pablo Medina, UNLV English Department, with Prof. Douglas Unger, Chair of English, UNLV

During 1929-30 the Spanish poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca composed a surreal masterpiece of lyricism, his *Poet in New York*. In the unsettling wake of 9/11 Pablo Medina and Mark Statman thought the poem deserved a new translation, and last year they published a version that John Ashbery has called definitive. This evening they engage with English department chair Douglas Unger in a discussion about what it means to translate a classic. The question the panel poses was asked by Borges in regard to *Don Quixote*: Can the literary work transcend history to become more relevant in today's world than when first written? And how does translation effect and enhance this transformation? Co-sponsored by the UNLV Department of English.

The Medicinal Use of Plants

Thursday November 6, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium

Dr. Angela O'Callaghan, Director, Master Gardener Program, UNCE

Using plants for medicinal purposes is probably as old as humanity itself. While they serve most often for nutriment, plants have also been necessary as herbal remedies. Long before there were pharmacies, humans were collecting the plants growing around them. Prepared as tinctures, teas, and as poultices, plants were essential to maintain health and to help people recover from injury and illness. An enormous variety of plants utilized in this fashion, and some appear to have had a number of different medicinal properties. Frequently, the very flavors and aromas that make plants desirable to our taste can also be important for health. Accompanying Dr. O'Callaghan's multimedia presentation is a museum exhibition on the medicinal use of plants and a live plant exhibit in the neighboring Xeric Garden on the Native American use of native plants.

'We Are All the Same - Aren't We?': Colorblindness in Desegregated Schools

Wednesday November 12, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium

Prof. Anita Tijerina Revilla, Women's Studies Department, UNLV

With the fiftieth anniversary of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling that outlawed *de jure* segregation, *Brown v. Board of Education*, educators and others contemplated the lasting value of public policies that flowed from the landmark decision. Drawing upon her research for *Both Sides Now: The Story of School Desegregation's Graduates* (2008), our speaker this evening opens a perspective onto the lives of the Class of 1980, high-school graduates from various ethnic backgrounds, as they recall what desegregation has meant to them personally and professionally. How has the colorblind ideology of American schooling benefited the fabric of the nation? Our presentation this evening provides eloquent answers.

The Oil Route: A Documentary Film by Bernardo Bertolucci

**Wednesday November 19, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium
Prof. Giuseppe Natale, Department of Foreign Languages, UNLV**

Originally filmed in the mid-sixties, Bertolucci's sole documentary *The Oil Route (La Via del Petrolio)* was broadcast on Italian television and never screened in theaters. The three-part narrative highlights the origins of oil production in Iran (*Le Origini*), then tracks the European route of the black gold via tanker to the port of Genoa (*Il Viaggio*) before crossing Europe (*Attraverso l'Europa*). Along the way the film-maker leaves objectivity behind for the sake of the creative imagination. Born in the early era of oil exploitation, the documentary is of great relevance to present-day debates on sharing energy resources and establishing dialogue between distant cultures. Co-sponsored by the Italian Cultural Institute of Los Angeles.

Our Expanding Universe and its Future

**Thursday November 20th, 2008 - 7:30 p.m. - Barrick Museum Auditorium
Prof. Kentaro Nagamine, UNLV Department of Physics and Astronomy**

Our view of the universe has gone through an important paradigm shift during the last decade. The expansion of the universe was first discovered in 1929 by Edwin Hubble. Recent astronomical data suggest that expansion is accelerating due to an unknown and mysterious dark energy, as it is called, an energy or field that makes up almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the density of the cosmos. The new theoretical model predicts that all the galaxies around us will disappear into the horizon in approximately 100 billion years, expanding beyond the ability of light to register their presence, and that we will be left alone in a truly dark universe.