

"Beyond Babel": Western humanities scholars meet Oct. 14-16

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"Beyond Babel: Common Language, Common Differences, Common Ground" will be the theme of the 18th annual Western Humanities Alliance Conference held October 14-16 at the University of California, San Diego.

The conference will begin with a keynote address by Douglas R. Hofstadter, College Professor of Cognitive Science and Computer Science at Indiana University. Hofstadter's first book, "Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid," won the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction. His conference address, "Human Cognition as a Blur of Analogy and Blending," will take place October 14 at 4 p.m. in the Price Center Ballroom. Like all conference sessions, the Hofstadter address is free and open to the public.

Plenary session speakers and topics will include:

^ Aihwa Ong of the University of California, Berkeley, "Hybridization of Cultures/Cultures of Hybridization."

^ Paul Rabinow of the University of California, Berkeley, "Biopolitics Today."

^ Charles Bernstein of the State University of New York, Buffalo, "The Art of Immemorability."

^ Mark Turner of the University of Maryland, "Literary Mind: The Role of Conceptual Integration in Literary and Artistic Creativity."

In conjunction with the conference, an art exhibition, "Spaced Out: Southern California Vernacular," will be held at UCSD October 15 November 15 with site-specific art works throughout the campus, performances and presentations.

Conference organizer Marcel Hnaff, a UCSD Professor of Philosophy and Anthropology in the Department of Literature, said the conference will gather scholars from a wide range of disciplines to find a common ground amid the contemporary mixing of cultures and traditions.

"In recent years, the humanities and the social sciences have experienced a kind of ghettoization," said Hnaff. "Even though each discipline has tried to go beyond its margins and its own language, too often, the result has been incomprehension. This conference will aim to get 'beyond Babel' to communicate and connect again within our rich diversity, to understand how this diversity produces by hybridization and blending new forms of culture, of art, and of knowledge."

"Beyond Babel" is sponsored by the UCSD Center for the Humanities and the Western Humanities Alliance. In addition to Hnaff, the conference planning committee includes: David Antin, Visual Arts, UCSD; Gilles Fauconnier, Cognitive Science, UCSD; Andrew Feenberg, Philosophy, San Diego State University; and Douglas White, Anthropology, University of California, Irvine.

For more information about the conference, contact Christa Beran by fax at (858)534-8686 or by e-mail at babel@ucsd-words.ucsd.edu.

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