

Scripps Institution of Oceanography Honors Evolutionary Biologist, Richard Dawkins, in Public Ceremony and Lecture

Dawkins to receive Nierenberg Prize for Science in the Public Interest

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In a salute to Charles Darwin in celebration of his 200th birthday, the Nierenberg family and Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego will honor British ethologist, evolutionary biologist and popular science author, Richard Dawkins on Tuesday, April 7, 2009, with the ninth Nierenberg Prize for Science in the Public Interest. The event will be held at 7 p.m. in the Mandell Weiss Theatre of the La Jolla Playhouse on the UC San Diego campus.

A brief award ceremony will be followed by a public lecture by Dawkins entitled, "The Purpose of Purpose." On the subject of purpose, Dawkins believes humans unnecessarily apply meaning to aspects of the world, such as our natural surroundings and the universe.

Dawkins is perhaps better known for his popularization of the "selfish gene" theory in which the gene is the principal unit of natural selection in evolution. Dawkins, author of many books based on his theory of evolution, including *The Selfish Gene*, was the originator of the term, "meme" which spawned the theory of memetics.

Professor Dawkins has been featured on National Geographic Television, the BBC and on U.S. college campuses discussing the importance of Darwin's theory of human evolution and natural selection. He has also been interviewed extensively about his own views of creationism and religion including his argument that science demonstrates how God does not exist.

The public is invited to attend and admission is free. Reservations are not necessary but seating and parking are limited. For more information, please contact Birch Aquarium at Scripps Visitors Services at 858-534-4109.

The **Nierenberg Prize for Science in the Public Interest** is awarded annually by Scripps Institution of Oceanography. The Nierenberg Prize is named for William A. Nierenberg (1919-2000), a renowned national science leader who served Scripps Oceanography as director from 1965 to 1986. He was a leading expert in several fields of underwater research and warfare, and was known for his work in low-energy nuclear physics. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1971 and was the recipient of numerous awards and honors for professional research and public service. Created through a gift from the Nierenberg family to honor the memory of William A. Nierenberg, the Nierenberg Prize for Science in the Public Interest, which includes a bronze medal and \$25,000, is awarded each year for outstanding contributions to science in the public interest.

Past Nierenberg Prize Recipients: 2008 - James E. Hansen 2007 - J. Craig Venter 2006 - Gordon E. Moore, Ph.D. 2005 - Sir David Attenborough, OM (Order of Merit) 2004 - Dame Jane Goodall 2003 - Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D. 2002 - Walter Cronkite 2001 - E.O. Wilson, Ph.D.

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