

Linguist George Lakoff Speaks About Moral Politics October 17 At UCSD

George Lakoff, one of the giants of modern linguistics and brain sciences, will speak on "Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think" at 7 p.m. Oct. 17th in the Price Center Ballroom at the University of California, San Diego. It is sponsored by the Helen Edison Lecture Series and is free and open to the public.

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Lakoff is an authority on neural networks, how the mind works, and most especially how the body politic responds to words that cue frames of moral meaning. In recent years, his application of cognitive science and linguistics to politics has brought him national attention.

Lakoff has taught at the University of California, Berkeley since 1972 and is a senior fellow at the Rockridge Institute. He is also the author of several books including "Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservative Think," in which he theorizes on moral world views from opposite ends of the political spectrum. In the book, Lakoff discusses framing, a term he describes as "using language to evoke ideas."

"Every word is defined relative to a conceptual framework," says Lakoff. "If you have something like 'revolt,' that implies a population that is being ruled unfairly, or assumes it is being ruled unfairly, and that they are throwing off their rulers, which would be considered a good thing. That's a frame."

With colleagues at the University of California, Lakoff founded the Rockridge Institute, a political think tank dedicated to reframing political thought and political debate in this country. The Rockridge Institute is one of the few progressive think tanks in existence in the U.S.

"I got tired of cursing the newspaper every morning," says Lakoff. "I got tired of seeing what was going wrong and not being able to do anything about it."

Lakoff is a devout progressive with cold comfort for liberals. Conservatives, he says, have won the fight over political language. It's a central argument of Lakoff's book, "Moral Politics," that for the last 30 years, left-wing foundations have been doing what comes naturally, "helping people who need help," while right-wing foundations have put a network of thinkers and writers to work honing symbolic phrases like "tort reform" and "tax relief."

"Conservatives understand what unites them, and they understand how to talk about it," says Lakoff. "They are constantly updating their research on how best to express their ideas."

Lakoff has appeared on television and radio programs, such as *Now* and *All Things Considered*. He recently briefed over 100 members of Congress on strategic framing of political issues. Labor unions, environmental groups, reproductive rights groups, peace groups, religious organizations, social equity groups, human rights groups and many other progressive organizations are clamoring for access to Lakoff and his work.

The Helen Edison Lecture Series is the result of a major gift from the late Helen Edison, a San Diego philanthropist who supported numerous local educational, cultural and arts efforts. For further information on the Lakoff lecture, call (858) 822-0510, visit the web site at www.helenedison.ucsd.edu or e-mail emunk@ucsd.edu.

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