

UCSD Literature Professor To Discuss Universal Design, The Disabled, And Globalization In A Faculty Research Lecture May 24 At UCSD

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In a society obsessed with health and youth, where does the disabled person "fit?" Or better still, **how** does the disabled person fit into society?

University of California, San Diego literature professor and poet Michael Davidson, a pioneer in the field of Disability Studies, will discuss the struggles faced by the disabled globally when he speaks on *Universal Design: The Work of Disability in an Age of Globalization* at 4 p.m. May 24 in the Institute of the Americas on the UCSD campus.

Davidson is a 2004 Faculty Research Lecture Award recipient selected by the UCSD Division of the Academic Senate. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Disability Studies is an emerging field in the Humanities and Social Sciences. It surveys disabled persons, both as they are represented in literature and mass media, and as they participate in a worldwide struggle for equal access, civil rights, and legal justice.

"Much of the work of Disability Studies has focused on developed countries, where healthcare, rehabilitation facilities, and access to public spaces are readily available and where awareness about the social stigma around the disabled person is more prevalent," Davidson says. "In developing countries, however, such access cannot be taken for granted."

Davidson points out that universal design, which refers to accessible architecture and building design, is only universal for countries that can afford it, and that globalization economic policies have created problems in healthcare, medicine, and hospitals as poor countries strive to keep up.

"My question," says Davidson, "is to what extent does globalization actually **create** disabilities while presuming to **solve** worldwide health problems?"

Davidson researches how writers and artists in developing countries experience the disjunction between global health policies and actual health needs and looks at plays, movies, and novels that deal with issues that pertain to AIDS, body part sales, workplace accidents and pollution, and minefield impairment.

"Davidson has become a pioneering figure in the field of Disability Studies," writes Todd Kontje, chair of the UCSD Department of Literature, in a letter nominating Davidson for the Faculty Research Lecturer Award. "Until recently, few thought to discuss writings about physical and mental disabilities, an omission that is all the more striking in that such disabilities affect significant percentages of the population without regard for racial, sexual, or economic difference."

Kontje describes Davison as a "senior professor of modern American literature and one of its most innovative, respected and productive poets" who for decades "has been at the forefront of a move to reinvent American Studies in a way that accounts for the social diversity and cultural complexity of our nation."

Davidson is the author of at least a half-dozen books of poetry, nearly three dozen research articles, and three books of criticism, including *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Mid-Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1989) and *Ghostlier Demarcations: Modern Poetry and the Material World* (University of California Press, 1997). His most recent book is *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics* (University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Davidson received a bachelor's degree from San Francisco State University and a doctorate from the State University of New York, Buffalo. He has been on the UCSD faculty since 1974.

For further information on the Davidson lecture, call (858) 534-0101.

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