

# Santa Barbara City College Annual Faculty Lectures

This is the 27th in a series of lectures wherein a distinguished Santa Barbara City College faculty member is chosen by colleagues to deliver an address on a scholarly subject of general interest.

#### The criteria for selection:

- Outstanding classroom teaching, counseling, or librarianship
- Unselfish, dedicated faculty service to Santa Barbara City College

## Previous Faculty Lecture honorees:

Dr. Robert Casier, 1979-80

Mr. Henry H. Bagish, 1980-81

Dr. Charles R. Courtney, 1981-82

Dr. Harold M. Dunn, 1982-83

Dr. John Kay, 1983-84

Mr. Raymond O'Connor, 1984-85

Dr. Barbara S. Lindemann, 1985-86

Dr. Elwood Schapansky, 1986-87

Dr. George E. Frakes, 1987-88

Dr. Elizabeth Hodes, 1988-89

Dr. Jack R. Ullom, 1989-90

Dr. Curtis B. Solberg, 1990-91

Ms. Diane Johnson Handloser, 1991-92

Dr. Robert J. Cummings, 1992-93

Mr. John C. Eggler, 1993-94

Mr. Michael Masson, 1994-95

Dr. Gary L. Carroll, 1995-96

Mr. David N. Lawyer, Jr., 1996-97

Mr. Joseph P. White, 1997-98

Dr. Manoutchehr Eskandari-Qajar, 1998-99

Dr. Jeannette Webber, 1999-2000

Dr. Peter Haslund, 2000-01

Ms. Genevieve B. Anderson, 2001-02

Mr. Carl W. Sundbeck, 2002-03

Dr. Janet Shapiro, 2003-04

Dr. Peter Georgakis, 2004-05

#### About the Lecturer

James Chesher was born on New Years Day, 1942. Aided by a midwife, Jim's mother, Melita Castillo, gave birth to Jim while fleeing the Japanese invasion of Manila. Jim's father, Lt. Robert Chesher, survived the Bataan March and three years as a POW, but was among thousands of prisoners lost at sea near the war's end. In 1947, Melita emigrated with Jim to the United States, so that he could enjoy the benefits of American citizenship.

Jim's mother remarried, had a daughter, and the family settled into the now idealized American life of the 1950's. Jim received his B.A. in English in 1964 from San Jose State, a teaching credential the following year, and began teaching at a local high school. In 1969, he left teaching to pursue graduate studies in philosophy at U.C. Santa Barbara, completing his M.A. in 1972. From 1975 until 1990, Jim was an adjunct instructor at Santa Barbara City College, and for several years at Antioch College, while working full time as a partner in Pacific Painting Company with Bob Latham, a former classmate in philosophy.

Since 1990, Jim has taught full time at SBCC, including Study Abroad programs in Florence with Ed Inks (1997) and China/VietNam with

Peter Haslund (1999). He has served as the Social Science Division Chair, on the Board of the Instructors Association, as Social Science Division Senator on the Academic Senate, and faculty advisor to the SBCC Philosophy Club.

For several years, Jim co-hosted the IDC Faculty Colloquium with Manou Eskandari. In 1997, Jim, Joe White, and Sasha Jokic founded the Center for Philosophical Education and STOA, an international, undergraduate journal in philosophy. Jim has co-authored two books with Tibor Machan and has published essays, letters, book reviews, and poetry in various books and periodicals.

Jim has three daughters: Jill, Kim and Ashley, a son, Gabriel, and five grandchildren. Jim's wife, Victoria, without whom he would never manage a social life, remember birthdays, or match shirt with tie, is his closest friend and soul-mate. This summer they will celebrate their 39th wedding anniversary.

### About the Lecture

In his novel *The Sunday Philosophy Club*, Alexander McCall Smith features Isabel, a woman of independent means who, in her leisure time, edits a journal of applied ethics, but is otherwise engaged in, and reflective about, life and times in contemporary Edinburgh. One morning, while having breakfast and reading of yet another scandal involving someone in public office, Isabel says to her companion and housekeeper, Grace:

"Shocking...I can't remember when exactly it was that it became all right to lie in public life. Can you remember?" Grace could. "President Nixon started it. He lied and lied. And then it came across the Atlantic and our people started to lie too. That's how it started. Now it's standard practice." Isabel had to agree. People had lost their moral compass, it seemed, and this was just a further example."

Whether we have in fact lost our moral compass or ever had one to begin with, is open to question, but it certainly does seem as though the world is morally adrift, if the daily reminders of corruption in politics, religion, commerce, and the apparent decline in ordinary human civility are any evidence. And so, as always, there is no better time than the present for philosophy.

This lecture will offer some philosophical background to inform and provoke intelligent thinking and discussion about the moral life and our present moral condition. It is intended to arouse the slumbering Socrates in each of us, but not, one hopes, in the manner of a rude awakening.

## **Acknowledgements**

My life has been blessed by the kindness, encouragement, and understanding of others. The list of those to whom I owe thanks is extensive and no doubt includes many whom I've never even met.

I hesitate to even begin here, for fear of overlooking anyone deserving, but better that than squander this opportunity. First, to my mother, Millie, who left her homeland to secure for me a better life, what can I say? Because of her and my sister, Wanda, my life is rooted in unconditional love.

To my closest friends, with whom I've shared both laughter and tears, I owe the sense of my own personal worth, reflected in my boundless admiration of them, the good company that I keep.

To my colleagues I owe the examples of excellence toward which I aspire as a teacher. In particular, I must acknowledge Joe White, to whom I owe the daily dose of laughter that is medicine for the soul. But more than that: in judgment, insight, character, and wisdom, he is my Socrates.

To the support staff of SBCC, especially those whose competence helped make this occasion possible by managing equipment, scheduling, graphics, publicity, and all the rest, my heartfelt thanks. The excellence of our faculty is matched by the excellence of those who support us.

To the administration, management and Board of Trustees, on whom the responsibility for this college falls, my gratitude and respect for their leadership and service to our college and community. In particular, to Peter MacDougall, John Romo, and Jack Friedlander, for their having done so well what so few could do at all, I owe the joy of a rewarding career. To my Dean, Jack Ullom, whose imminent retirement and absence will underscore how much this college owes to him, my thanks and good wishes.

Ending on the highest note that I can reach, to my wife, Victoria, gratitude beyond measure for filling my life with goodness, love, and beauty.

