



WALTER H. CAPPS CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF
ETHICS, RELIGION, AND PUBLIC LIFE

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N E W S R E L E A S E

“An Evening with Karen Armstrong”

Tuesday, September 22 / 8:00 p.m. / Free
The Marjorie Luke Theatre,
721 E. Cota Street, Santa Barbara

S U M M A R Y F A C T S

- **Karen Armstrong, one of the most provocative, original thinkers on the role of religion in the modern world, will discuss her forthcoming book, *The Case for God* (Knopf, September, 2009)**
- **“An Evening with Karen Armstrong”**
- **Tuesday, September 22 / 8:00 p.m.**
- **The Majorie Luke Theatre, 721 E. Cota Street, Santa Barbara**
- **FREE**
- **Courtesy of Borders, copies of her books will be available for purchase and signing at this event.**
- **Information: Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB (805) 893-2317**

Description:

Karen Armstrong, one of the most provocative, original thinkers on the role of religion in the modern world, will discuss her forthcoming book, *The Case for God* (Knopf, September 2009), at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 22 at The Marjorie Luke Theatre, 721 E Cota Street, Santa Barbara.

Speaker Profile:

Armstrong is a former Roman Catholic nun who left a British convent to pursue a degree in modern literature at Oxford. In 1982 she wrote a book about her seven years in the convent, *Through the Narrow Gate* (1982), that challenged Catholics worldwide; *The Spiral Staircase* (2004) discusses her subsequent spiritual awakening after leaving the convent, when she began to develop her iconoclastic take on the great monotheistic religions.

She has written more than 20 books that explore the ideas that Islam, Judaism and Christianity have in common and their effect on world events, including the magisterial *A History of God* (1993), *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths* (1996) *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (2000), *Islam: A Short History* (2002), and *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* (2006).

In the post-9/11 world, she has become a powerful voice for ecumenical understanding. She has addressed members of the United States Congress and the Senate on three occasions, has lectured to policy makers at the US State Department, has participated in the World Economic Forum in New York, Jordan and Davos, and has addressed the Council for Foreign Relations in Washington and New York. She has also advised members of the Dutch parliament about Islam and the integration of Muslim communities in Europe.

In 2005, she was appointed by Kofi Anan to take part in the United Nations initiative “The Alliance of Civilizations.” This was sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey to counter the so-called “clash of civilizations” theory; its object was to give practical guidelines to member states about how to stem the rising tide of extremism. She was one of the members of the High Level Group, a panel of twenty people from every region of the world, who did not represent their countries but had been chosen for their expertise in this matter. Karen Armstrong is now a UN Ambassador for the Alliance.

She is increasingly invited to speak in Muslim countries. In 2007 she was awarded a medal for Arts and Sciences by the Egyptian government for her services to Islam under the auspices of the prestigious Al-Azhar madrassah, the first foreigner to have been awarded this decoration. In the summer of 2007, she was invited by the Malaysian government to speak in Kuala Lumpur (even though her books are banned there!) and gave the Muis Lecture in Singapore. She also spoke at the Young Presidents’ Organization in Istanbul and later that year she gave the keynote address at an international conference on Islamophobia there. In January 2008, she visited Pakistan, where gave lectures on Islam in Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi to packed audiences.

Karen Armstrong was awarded the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Medal (2008) and the Leopold Lucas Memorial Prize, Tübingen University (2009). She is a Trustee of the British Museum and a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Literature. In February 2008, she was awarded the

TED prize and is currently working with TED on a major international project to create, launch and propagate a Charter for Compassion, created on line by the general public, crafted by leading thinkers in Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism, which will be signed in the fall of 2009 by a thousand religious and secular leaders.

Sponsors:

This free, public event is presented by the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB and cosponsored by the Virgil Cordano, OFM, Chair in Catholic Studies in the Department of Religious Studies, UCSB. Courtesy of Borders, copies of her books will be available for purchase and signing. This event is supported in part by The Marjorie Luke Theatre's Dreier Family Rent Subsidy Fund.

**For more information, call
UCSB Walter H. Capps Center for the
Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life
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