



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

For immediate release:
May 1, 2012

Contact: Dr. Leonard Wallock, Associate Director
Walter H. Capps Center for the Study
of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life
(805) 893-2317 / leonard.wallock@cappscenter.ucsb.edu

N E W S R E L E A S E

E.J. Dionne, Jr.

*Our Divided Political Heart:
The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*

Wednesday, June 20 / 8:00 p.m. / Free

Lobero Theatre

33 East Canon Perdido, Santa Barbara

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

- E.J. Dionne, Jr., columnist, *The Washington Post*
- *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*
- Wednesday, June 20 / 8:00 p.m. / FREE
- Lobero Theatre, 33 East Canon Perdido, Santa Barbara
- Copies of *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent* will be available for purchase and signing courtesy of The Book Den
- Information: Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB (805) 893-2317
- Digital copies of press materials available at <http://www.cappscenter.ucsb.edu/news/press-releases/>

Event Description:

Fear of decline is one of the oldest American impulses. When we feel we are in decline, we sense that we have lost our balance. We argue about what history teaches us—and usually disagree about what history actually says. We conclude that behind every crisis related to economics and the global distribution of power lurks a crisis of the soul. In *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*, E.J. Dionne Jr., argues that underlying our political impasse is a lost sense of national balance that in turn reflects a loss of historical memory. Americans disagree about who we are because we can't agree about who we've been.

Speaker Profile:

E.J. Dionne, Jr., is a columnist for *The Washington Post*, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and University Professor in the Foundations of Democracy and Culture at Georgetown University. He appears weekly on NPR and regularly on MSNBC and NBC's *Meet the Press*. His twice-weekly op-ed column is now syndicated in 140 newspapers. His writing has been published in the *Atlantic*, the *New Republic*, the *American Prospect*, the *Washington Post Magazine*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Commonweal*, *New Statesman*, and elsewhere.

E.J. Dionne, Jr., is the author, editor, or coeditor of numerous books. His classic bestseller *Why Americans Hate Politics*, which won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and was nominated for the National Book Award. He is also author of *Stand Up Fight Back: Republican Toughs, Democratic Wimps, and the Politics of Revenge* (2004), and *They Only Look Dead: Why Progressives Will Dominate The Next Political Era* (1996), *Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics after the Religious Right* (2009), (with Lew Daly), *God's Economy: Faith-Based Initiatives and the Caring State* (2009), and *Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics after the Religious Right* (2009). Dionne graduated from Harvard University and received his doctorate from Oxford.

Dionne received the American Political Science Association's annual Carey McWilliams Award in 1996 for a major journalistic contribution to the understanding of politics. In 2002, he received the Empathy Award from the Volunteers of America, and in 2004 he won the National Human Services Assembly's Award for Excellence by a Member of the Media.

Description of *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*:

A national yearning to reverse decline played just below the surface in Barack Obama's campaign in 2008. His victory was a response to a national mood conditioned by anxiety, and his campaign well calibrated to respond to the nation's longing for reassurance. But Obama alone couldn't instantly cure what ailed us, and the same fears of decline that bolstered his 2008 campaign quickly gave force to a rebellion on the right that looked back to America's Revolutionary origins in calling itself the Tea Party.

Republicans vowed to make Obama a one-term president, and the ugliness in Washington fed a worldwide sense that the United States could no longer govern itself. When the Occupy Wall Street movement rose in the fall of 2011 decline was no longer an abstract fear, many Americans sensed its effects in their own lives.

In *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*, E.J. Dionne Jr., argues that underlying our political impasse is a lost sense of national balance that in turn reflects a loss of historical memory. Americans disagree about who we are because we can't agree about who we've been. We are at odds over the meaning of our own history, over the sources of our national strength, and over what it is, philosophically and spiritually, that makes us "Americans." We are a nation of individualists who care passionately about community. We are also a nation of communitarians who care passionately about individual freedom. We believe in limited government, but also in active and innovative government. Our Founders did not devote so much time and intellectual energy to creating a strong federal government only for it to do nothing. The consensus that guided our politics through nearly all of the twentieth century is broken. In the absence of a new consensus, we will continue to fight—and to founder.

Reviews of *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*:

"[Dionne's] extensive knowledge of Washington allows him to ably illustrate our remarkable political history, and he renews our hope that cooler heads can prevail with a renewed balance of individual rights and the needs of the community." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"[A] much-needed fact-based review of the Constitution, a realistic portrait of its creators, and a balanced history of the ongoing friction in the American psyche between desires for liberty and commonwealth. Tea Partiers and Occupiers alike may be surprised and enlightened by this lucid analysis, all the more convincing for its sympathetic treatment of both sides of the argument." —*Publishers Weekly*

"E. J. Dionne is the thoughtful conservative's favorite liberal, and the liberal all the rest of us learn from. *Our Divided Political Heart* is at once a grand arc of American thought from the nation's founding, and an up-to-the-minute diagnosis of the weird and sudden turn we've taken in left-right relations. With malice toward none, Dionne nevertheless sounds the alarm about the new threat to the "long consensus" that's been key to our stability and our national greatness. A thrilling book, from one of America's most universally respected minds. You should buy it." —Rachel Maddow

Sponsor:

This event is presented by the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB.

**For more information, call
UCSB Walter H. Capps Center for the
Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life
at (805) 893-2317**

**Editor: For color images,
please call Leonard Wallock at (805) 893-2317.**