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N E W S R E L E A S E

George Packer

An American Dilemma: Obama, Afghanistan, and Vietnam

Tuesday, May 19 / 8:00 p.m. / Free
Victoria Hall,
33 West Victoria Street

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

- George Packer, staff writer, *The New Yorker* and bestselling author of *The Assassins Gate: America in Iraq* and *Interesting Times: Writing from a Turbulent Decade*
- "An American Dilemma: Obama, Afghanistan, and Vietnam"
- Tuesday, May 18, 8 p.m.
- Victoria Hall, 33 West Victoria Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
- FREE
- Information: Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB (805) 893-2317

Description:

President Obama's policy on Afghanistan, and the war itself, show how difficult it is for the U.S. to send troops into combat without trying to change another country's politics as well. This project is not simply a case of American naïveté; it shows an understanding of the deeper causes of conflict. But this American way of war makes success unlikely.

Courtesy of Borders, copies of George Packer's new collection of essays, *Interesting Times: Writings from a Turbulent Decade* and his prize-winning book, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*, will be available for purchase and signing at this event.

Reviews of *Interesting Times: Writings from a Turbulent Decade* (2009)

“George Packer is a modern-day George Orwell. Like the author of *Homage to Catalonia*, the places he writes about are never stages for personal or ideological heroism. They are always real and full of frustrating facts that expose both liberal and conservative absolutism as reckless attempts to deny reality. *Interesting Times* should be read not just as an antidote to contemporary media poison, but as a testament to the values of moral seriousness in a troubled age.” —Jed Lipinski, *The Village Voice*

“This volume coheres better than most in the genre. That’s because Packer has a far more coherent worldview than most reporters . . . *Interesting Times* seems an inapt title, ironic and detached in ways that Packer is simply not. But his is the good kind of attachment, self-aware and self-reflective. He writes, ‘One can only be honest about having a point of view while remaining open to aspects of reality—the human faces and voices—that might demolish it.’ In his best work, reality is haunting, indeed.” —Franklin Foer, *The New York Times Book Review*

Reviews of *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (2005)

“In reading [Packer] we see the staggering gap between abstract ideas and concrete reality.” —Fareed Zakaria, *The New York Times Book Review*

“Masterful . . . Packer’s sketch of the prewar debates is subtle, sharp and poignant . . . His reporting from Iraq was always good, but the book is even better, putting the reader at the side of Walter Benjamin’s angel of history, watching helplessly as the wreckage unfolds at his feet.” —Gideon Rose, *The Washington Post Book World*

“The most complete, sweeping, and powerful account of the Iraq War . . . [Packer] has depicted in stark colors the disillusionment of an entire nation.” —Keith Gessen, *New York*

“A deftly constructed and eloquently told account of the war’s origins and aftermath . . . Packer makes it deeply human and maddeningly vivid.” —Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

“Authoritative and tough-minded.” —Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

“A book that is not only relevant but discerning and provocative . . . [Packer] offers the vivid detail

and balanced analysis that have made him one of the leading chroniclers of the Iraq war.” —
Yonatan Lupu, *San Francisco Chronicle*

Profile of Author:

George Packer is a staff writer for *The New Yorker* and the author of *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*, which received several prizes and was named one of the ten best books of 2005 by *The New York Times Book Review*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post Book World*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The San Francisco Chronicle Book Review*, *The Los Angeles Times Book Review*, *USA Today*, *Time*, and *New York* magazine.

He is also the author of two novels, *The Half Man* and *Central Square*, and two works of nonfiction, *The Village of Waiting* and *Blood of the Liberals*, which won the 2001 Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. He is the editor of *The Fight Is for Democracy: Winning the War of Ideas in America and the World*, and of a two-volume edition of George Orwell's essays. His play *Betrayed*, based on a *New Yorker* article, won the 2008 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Off-Broadway Play.

Sponsors:

This free, public 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
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**Editor: For color images,
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