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Contact: Terry Jones

805-756-2523; tjones@calpoly.edu

Natural History Museum Archaeologist to Discuss America's Missions April 13 at Cal Poly

SAN LUIS OBISPO — David Hurst Thomas, curator of anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, will present "Reharvesting Ramona's Garden: Romance and Reality in America's Mythical Mission Past" at 6:30 p.m. Monday, April 13, in the Performing Arts Center Pavilion at Cal Poly.

The history of the Franciscan and Jesuit missions of America's Spanish borderlands is steeped in nostalgia and romance. Thomas will discuss how the perceived romanticism has shaped views of the archaeological record. Mainstream national narratives perpetuating an idealized vision have dominated the conversation surrounding the Spanish Missions in America.

Contributing to such an idealized perception of the Spanish missions are the Mission Revival architectural styles adopted by many public institutions, cities and private residences. Also reconstructed archaeological sites often resemble Hollywood stage sets, adding to the romanticized visions of the missions' histories.

Thomas will delve into the most recent archaeological evidence from across the Spanish borderlands to offer a more historically appropriate perspective on the missions' heritage.

A curator of anthropology for the American Museum of Natural History since 1972, Thomas has also taught at several universities, including Columbia University, New York University, and UC Davis. Thomas earned four degrees from UC Davis, including a doctorate in 1971.

As a specialist in Native American archaeology, he has discovered several important sites, such as the Gate Cliff Shelter in Nevada and the 16th to 17th century Franciscan mission Santa Catalina de Guale.

Thomas is author of more than 100 scientific articles and 30 books. Currently he serves as the general editor and contributor to the three-volume "Columbian Consequences" series for the Smithsonian Institution Press.

The event, free and open to the public, is sponsored by the Cal Poly Social Sciences Department and the College of Liberal Arts' Lottery Speakers Fund.

Links

- Cal Poly Social Sciences Department: cla.calpoly.edu/socs.html
- Cal Poly College of Liberal Arts: cla.calpoly.edu

About the Cal Poly Social Sciences Department

At Cal Poly, the Social Sciences Department focuses on practical training and critical thinking skills. The department offers degrees in anthropology-geography and sociology, with the opportunity to concentrate in a specific focus area. Students are

encouraged to apply classroom knowledge to real-world experiences through internships, study abroad opportunities, service learning, and senior projects.

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Phone: 805-756-1111