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Big Names at the Baldy Center: Theorists and Jurists Series Brings Top Minds to UB Law

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An ambitious initiative of the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy is putting some of the best-known and most well-respected figures in law and humanities before UB Law audiences.

The Theorists and Jurists Series, new this spring semester, includes lectures by several such leading scholars. The participants are chosen by a faculty committee, and invitations have been extended to major theorists in such far-flung fields as urban planning, philosophy and anthropology, as well as to renowned jurists including U.S. Supreme Court justices.

"UB is a world-class institution," says Professor Rebecca R. French, Baldy Center director. "At the Baldy Center, we would like to bring world-class scholars in to present their ideas to the University, Law School and social sciences communities.

"The goal is to have the great thinkers here – people who are capable of changing the way we think about the world, the way we think about ideas and the way we think about ourselves."

The spring semester lineup of the Theorists and Jurists Series includes appearances by three well-known figures:

March 17, "Normativity of Law," Jules L. Coleman, professor of jurisprudence and philosophy at Yale Law School. On March 18, Professor Coleman also discussed "The Accountability Theory of Tort Law." Educated at Brooklyn College and with a Ph.D. in philosophy from Rockefeller University and an M.S.L. from Yale Law School, Coleman teaches in the areas of philosophy of law; torts law; law, language and truth; political philosophy; and rational choice. His books include Hart's Postscript: The Practice of Principle and Oxford Handbook of Jurisprudence and the Philosophy of Law.


Taussig, who has a medical degree from the University of Sydney and a doctorate in anthropology from the London School of Economics, is best-known for his work on Marx's concept of commodity fetishism – the idea in some societies that commodities have inherent value, rather than acquiring value through labor. Taussig's fieldwork in South America, especially Colombia and Bolivia, has been widely read and discussed.

April 24, "Housing Rights and Historical Wrongs: Gentrification and Neoliberalism, From the Eternal City to the City of Angels," Michael Herzfeld, professor of anthropology at Harvard University.

Herzfeld, one of the world's premier social anthropologists, specializes in the ethnography of Europe (especially Greece and Italy) and of Thailand. His most recent project is a documentary film, Monti Moments: Men's Memories in the Heart of Rome, an intimate portrait of social change in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood in the Italian capital. He drew on his research for that film in this discussion of the effects of gentrification in Rome and Los Angeles.