

NOVEMBER 18, 2015 7:00PM – 8:30 PM HALL OF SCIENCE 103

Dear CLA Faculty and University Community:

On behalf of my CSULB colleagues in Communication Studies and Journalism & Mass Communication, invited, distinguished colleague [Dr. Maureen C. Minielli \(CUNY\)](#), and community members, especially those interested in the historical Nixon/Brezhnev Summits of 1972, I extend an invitation to join us in this [CLA Scholarly Intersections Presentation!](#)

Title of Presentation: “THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION IN SPRING 1972: USING ARCHIVAL RESEARCH TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AMERICAN HISTORY, POLITICS AND JOURNALISM”

Date and Location: [November 18, 2015, 7:00p-8:30p Hall of Science Room 103](#)

Intellectual focus & interest of presentation: The **Moscow Summit of 1972** was a historic meeting between [President Richard M. Nixon](#) of the [United States](#) and [General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev](#) of the [Communist Party of the Soviet Union](#). It was held May 22–30, 1972, and was preceded by Nixon’s historic China trip on February 21-28, 1972. The summit featured the signing of the [Anti-Ballistic Missile \(ABM\) Treaty](#), the first [Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty](#) (SALT I), and the [U.S.–Soviet Incidents at Sea agreement](#), among others. The meeting formalized what is now known as [détente](#), or the lessening of tensions between the two [Cold War](#) antagonists. This presentation focuses on Nixon White House before, during, and after the Summit on archival Nixon Administration research, and contrasts that information with mediated accounts of the Summit, particularly from *The New York Times*. The presentation is drawn from Dr. Minielli’s July 2015 keynote presentation at the International Research Conference “Communication as a Discipline and a Field: Sharing Experiences to Construct a Dialogue,” hosted by the National Federal University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, RU.

Why not join the dialogue?: The program topic allows interested persons across disciplines and professional pursuits to **reflect and discuss on the differences between the 1972 Nixon twin visits to China and the U.S.S.R.** as well as compare the historical meetings with current U.S.—China—Russia relations. In addition, the presentation illustrates the importance of historical research of primary documents. These documents illuminate the thoughts and actions of key Summit participants as well as fill in and enhance existing informational gaps that result from scholarly knowledge based on post-event primary (e.g. autobiographical) and secondary (e.g. historical or journalistic) accounts. Also, the program provides deeper insights into what subjects were of importance to the leaders, the strategies were employed or rejected by the Nixon Administration, and why certain decisions were made. Finally, this program affords listeners the opportunity to compare practices of the past (e.g. journalistic) with contemporary practices.

Sponsoring Faculty: Dr. Lynda McCroskey ([Communication Studies](#)) and Dr. Chris Karadjov and Dr. Danny Paskin ([Journalism & Mass Communications](#)), and the College of Liberal Arts.

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THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION IN SPRING 1972: USING ARCHIVAL RESEARCH TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AMERICAN HISTORY, POLITICS AND JOURNALISM

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PROJECT SUMMARY

This lecture will discuss Richard M. Nixon's historic spring 1972 trips to China and the Soviet Union based on archival research, and compare that information with the reporting of the 1972 Moscow Summit by *The New York Times*. The lecture's goal is to discuss and compare historical and contemporary tripartite relations between the three countries, to compare the journalistic practices of 1972 to today, and to reinforce the need for archival research as part of any scholarly or investigatory activity.

This lecture should be of interest to individuals from the fields of rhetorical communication theory and criticism, journalism and mass communication, history and political science, public policy and international relations, linguistics, and the sciences like sociology and psychology, among others.

The lecture will identify various strategies employed by the Nixon Administration for Summit discussions, provide a "behind-the-scenes" look at the negotiations for the media to accompany the president on both trips, and reveal White House attitudes and sentiments about working with their Chinese and Soviet counterparts. In addition, the lecture illuminates the path of *The New York Times* Summit coverage that illustrates a continual journalistic reference of a potential meeting derailment due to the American mining of Haiphong Harbor and supply line bombings, despite American and Soviet confirmation that the Summit would occur as scheduled.

The lecture's topics allows intersecting individuals across disciplines and professions to reflect and discuss on the differences between the 1972 Nixon visits to China and the U.S.S.R. as well as compare the historical meetings with current tripartite relations. In addition, the presentation illustrates the importance of archival research. These documents reveal the thoughts and actions of key Summit participants as well as fill in and enhance existing informational gaps that result from knowledge generated by post-event primary (e.g. autobiographical) and secondary (e.g. historical or journalistic) accounts. Finally, this lecture affords listeners the opportunity to compare past journalistic practices with contemporary approaches.

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As most are aware, post-resignation in 1974, Nixon (and later his estate) was embroiled in a lengthy and contentious legal dispute over ownership of his presidential documents (Worsham, 2007). After several decades, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the president did not have a legal right to his presidential papers, and they were subsequently turned over to federal archivists. In 2007, Nixon's museum in Yorba Linda was transformed into his official presidential library and museum. With the 2012 relocation of Nixon's papers from the National Archives in College Park, Maryland to the library, and 2013 public access, western Americans now have two opportunities to engage in primary presidential archival research (the other being the Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley).

Although many documents are not accessible to researchers, primarily due to national security concerns, thousands of documents have been made available to researchers, either in the library or on the Internet in digital form. Some have been partially "sanitized" to protect sensitive information yet reveal other information deemed suitable for public consumption. Nixon's historic trips to China and the Soviet Union are far enough removed from contemporary events to allow for lengthy and significant investigation and contemplation by a variety of individuals which can better inform examination and subsequent drawn conclusion. In addition, document availability allows scholars to examine and compare those papers with the mediated coverage of past historical events to determine the *extent* the media's knowledge and the *accuracy* of their reporting. Also, the documents now can complement (or contradict) the multitude of autobiographical accounts by Nixon administration members in addition to numerous secondary books, articles, and papers written by interested parties and observes, many are available for scholarly review and analysis. Finally, the contentious, multi-decade legal wrangling of public papers invites discussion of the balance between "freedom of information" and "sanitizing documents in the name of national security."

References

Worsham, J. (2007, Fall). Nixon's library now a part of NARA; California facility will hold all documents and tapes from a half-century career in politics. National Archives. Retrieved from <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2007/fall/nixon-lib.html>

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