

The Fletcher Lecturer 2001

Wlad Godzich

Prof Wlad Godzich, recently named Dean of Humanities at University of California Santa Cruz, comes from the University of Geneva in Switzerland, where he was professor of English and comparative literature, chair of the Emergent Literatures program, and a professor in the university's Graduate Institute of European Studies.

The author of several critically acclaimed books on literature and language, Godzich has held visiting professorships at universities around the world, from Brazil to South Africa to Canada to Spain. His experience in academic administration goes back to 1961 and includes the positions of director of the Columbia University-Barnard College program in Paris; and, at the University of Minnesota, director of the Office of Research Development, director of the comparative literature program, director of the Center for Humanistic Studies, and coordinator of UM's international program in Dakar, Senegal. He also served as director of the Department of English while at the University of Geneva. He has organized more than a dozen international conferences during his career.

Godzich is a member of the editorial boards of several journals and has authored a number of books, including *The Culture of Literacy* (Harvard University Press, 1994) and a new book, "Leituras de Walter Benjamin," which is forthcoming. He is editor of the book series *Theory and History of Literature*, published by the University of Minnesota Press and the Manchester University Press.

In discussing his appointment as Dean of Humanities, Godzich said, "Everywhere around the world very serious questions are being raised about the future of the humanities and the nature of the humanities. I think this is something that practicing humanists must address directly at the administrative level as well as the intellectual level. Those of us in the field must dedicate ourselves to renewal and renovation of humanities. I think it is fitting that a new attempt at reinventing humanities be attempted at UCSC, which has been considered a pioneering school since its inception."

With the rush of technological advancement in such areas as genetic engineering, communications, and medicine, society is facing a quagmire of ethical and philosophical concerns. Godzich explains that the humanities will play a vital role in not only addressing, but identifying, these issues.

"We need to impress on all of contemporary society that the notion of the human must be in the forefront of our concerns," Godzich said. "But this notion of the human is not one we can continue to derive from traditional sources of humanism--we are entering an age where human beings will be manufacturing human beings and we need to think very hard about who we are and who we want ourselves to be. The role of the humanities in this new age is to provide answers and, also, find the questions to address the future of humanity, our identity, our ethics, the use of new technologies, and the role of culture and diversity in new societies."

