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Ethics lecture to focus on moral dilemma of political reconciliation

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Colleen Murphy, associate professor of philosophy at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Colleen Murphy, associate professor of philosophy at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, will give a public lecture titled, “Reconciling With Former Oppressors,” April 2 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Davis Hall 130 at USF St. Petersburg. It is free and open to the public.

Murphy is the author of *A Moral Theory of Political Reconciliation*. Her lecture, co-sponsored by the USFSP Cole Chair in Ethics and the Honors Program, will focus on the moral questions surrounding how people who have been oppressed should deal with their former oppressors, and whether South Africa provides a model for other countries.

“When one side has wronged the other, there’s a tendency to think, we need to punish the wrongdoer, whether it’s the former white government in South Africa or the former military junta in Argentina,” said Hugh LaFollette, Ph.D., the Cole Chair in Ethics. “In the past 20 there has been a movement to talk about reconciliation rather than punishment.”

In South Africa, LaFollette points out, the goal was not revenge but “to encourage perpetrators to admit what they had done and to face their victims and for the victims to face their perpetrators.” Croats took a different approach, putting their former Serbian oppressors on trial.

“The question of how people can forward after years of oppression is timely and worthy of considered thought,” said Frank Biafora, Ph.D., dean of the USFSP College of Arts and Sciences. “It is exactly the kind of discussion the Cole Chair in Ethics was designed to address.”

The Honors Program at USF St. Petersburg offers academically gifted, highly motivated students an exceptional experience that broadens and deepens their undergraduate education. A distinguished faculty guides special seminars and lectures and provide Honors students with an array of research opportunities culminating in an original senior thesis.

For more information about the lecture or the Honors Program, please call Thomas Smith at (727) 873-4872.

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