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2012 Reilly Center Forum



W. Patrick McCray, Ph.D. **University of California at Santa Barbara**

Monday, December 3, 2012

3:15pm, 200 McKenna Hall

California Dreaming: The Golden State's Influence on Imaginings, Policies, and Narratives of Nanotechnology

Despite its seeming newness, nanotechnology already has many different historical narratives. From seminal speeches at the start of the Space Age to futuristic imaginings in the 1980s to industrial commercialization in the 1990s, the emergence of nanotechnology as an idea and a research program connects to California in a variety of ways. In this talk, I explore how the West Coast version of nanotechnology resonated among researchers, policy makers, the media, and the public within and beyond the Golden State. Seen more broadly, this California-infused perspective gives insights into the nature of technological ecosystems, historical analogies, and the challenges posed by competing historical narratives.

W. Patrick McCray is a professor in the Department of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He entered history through a career as a scientist and has written widely on the history of science and technology after 1945. Dr. McCray recently became interested in the history of nanotechnology and is a founding member and co-PI for the NSF-funded Center for Nanotechnology in Society at UCSB. His book Giant Telescopes: Astronomical Ambition and the Promise of Technology (Harvard University Press, 2004) explored how scientists build and use today's most modern telescopes. A subsequent project examined the activities of citizen-scientists during the Cold War (Keep Watching the Skies: The Story of Operation Moonwatch and the Dawn of the Space Age, 2008). His new book – The Visioneers: How an Elite Group of Scientists Pursued Space Colonies, Nanotechnologies, and a Limitless Future (forthcoming December 9, 2012) – is about people who used their expertise as scientists, engineers, and popularizers to promote visions of a more expansive technological future.

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