



Tom Patterson Emerald

New York Times Assistant Managing Editor Nicholas D. Kristof signs copies of his book, "Thunder from the East: Portrait of a Rising Asia," co-written with Sheryl WuDunn.

# Speaker addresses journalistic ethics

**Nicholas Kristof of The New York Times speaks at the annual Ruhl Lecture**

By Hank Hager  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Ethical issues facing today's journalists, especially those living abroad, are changing and sometimes can become blurred, said Nicholas Kristof, associate managing editor for The New York Times.

More than 200 people packed the Alumni Lounge at Gerlinger Hall to hear the former Pulitzer Prize winner speak at the 2001 Ruhl Lecture, an annual public speech sponsored by the School of Journalism and Communication. Kristof's speech, "Spies, Wars and Massacres: The Ethical Dilemmas of a Foreign Correspondent," focused on his life as a journalist in China and some of the many ethical issues he has faced.

"One of my messages is that what we traditionally think about journalism ethics is not what we think of when we go abroad," he said.

Kristof, who was the Beijing bureau chief for The New York Times from 1988 to 1993, said the paramount effort for journalists is to tell the truth. But in a foreign country, he said, the rules can sometimes be different.

"One of the essential modern principles of journalism is that if someone says something negative about someone, you want to get it on record," he said.

After an instance when a South Korean source was arrested, Kristof said he became less likely to use specific sources for his story.

Kristof said it became a moral dilemma for him whether to use sources who could be incarcerated

for what they told him.

Kristof has also faced situations concerning ethical means in his home country.

During the 2000 presidential elections in the United States, Kristof wrote a biographical series about then-presidential hopeful George W. Bush. During a conversation with Carl Rove, Bush's political strategist, he accidentally taped a discussion between Rove and Bush.

Kristof said he did not use the information from the discussion because he thought it would be a breach of ethics. But, he said, he might have if there had been substantial information on the tape.

"If they had talked about bugging Watergate, or doing dirty tricks to Al Gore, I may have felt differently," he said.

Tim Gleason, dean of the School of Journalism and Communication, said Kristof was a wise choice to speak at the University because of his life as a journalist.

Kristof's "experience makes him suited to discuss the ethical views of a foreign correspondent," he said.

Kristof, who currently oversees the Sunday edition of The New York Times, won the Pulitzer Prize award in 1990, along with his wife, Sheryl WuDunn, for their coverage of the Tiananmen Square democracy movement in China. They are the only married couple to jointly win the award.

University President Dave Frohnmayer said he hopes those in attendance left with an understanding that judgments about ethical matters are not easy.

"The search for one universal principle to answer every question is very elusive, especially when the stakes are very high," he said.

Professor Alley, a professor in the Robert D. Clark Honors College, is a recipient of the University of Oregon Faculty Achievement Award for Distinguished Teaching. Dr. Alley is a noted scholar of George Eliot and an author of several novels and short stories. In the years since the award and promotion to full professor, Dr. Alley has continued to earn strong reviews from his students.

There are distinct patterns in their narrative comments, including praise for his rigor, insight, and dedication. His students commend his tutorials, in which he meets with each student in his 100-level sequence to help provide individual instruction in composition.

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