

- How do we keep public spaces like the **Park Blocks and Kesey Square** active, vital places where everyone wants to be any day of the year? The city of Eugene has started a Places for People project, in partnership with Project for Public Spaces, and will be asking the community for input at upcoming events and workshops in October. Events include: “Transforming Public Spaces: Talk and Open House with Fred Kent,” 7:30 pm Thursday, Oct. 13, at the LCC Downtown Campus. At 10 am Saturday, Oct. 15, at the Atrium Lobby, 99 W. 10th Avenue there will be a “placemaking” workshop and tour that the city says will take participants to downtown public spaces and collect feedback. Registration is needed at the website below. There will be “pop-up placemaking stations” 11 am to 1 pm Thursday, Oct. 13, at Kesey Square [Broadway Plaza] and 2 to 4 pm at Bi-Mart, 1680 W. 18th Avenue; Friday, Oct. 14, 8:30 to 10:30 am at Market of Choice, 2580 Willakenzie Road and 5:30 to 8 pm at the Pueblo a Pueblo Festival at Petersen Barn, 870 Berntzen Road. And Saturday, Oct. 15, 8:30 to 11 am, at the Lane County Farmers Market, 8th Avenue and Oak Street, 7 to 8 pm in the Hult Center Lobby, 1 Eugene Center. Finally, you can participate in an online survey at eugene-or.gov/placesforpeople. The city says the public engagement effort will focus on existing public spaces downtown including the Park Blocks, the Plaza at the Hult, Kesey Square and the Library Plaza, as well as the pedestrian paths that link them.

- **Latinx Vote 2016** will feature the Latinx community addressing local representatives of this nation’s political parties, according to Phil Carrasco of Grupo Latino de Acción Directa. The event is 6:30 pm Thursday, Oct. 13, at 145 Straub Hall on the UO campus and will feature Associate Professor Julie Weiss of the Department of History, Lane GOP, Democratic Party of Lane County and the Green Party of Lane County. For more info email gladoflanecounty@gmail.com.

- Starting Oct. 11, the Lane County Circuit Court will implement a **Mental Health Court** to divert eligible participants from the traditional criminal justice system and provide them support and rehabilitation through comprehensive mental health and co-occurring disorder treatment, education and vocational programs that include resource referrals for housing, childcare, transportation and health care, according to the Lane County District Attorney’s Office. District Attorney Patty Perlow says in a press release that “Mental Health Court is intended for those people who have a severe and persistent mental illness and have come to the attention of the criminal justice system. We are elated that we finally have the resources in Lane County to make Mental Health Court available.”



REZA ASLAN TO DISCUSS TRUMPISM AND ISLAM AT THE UO

“The problem isn’t Donald Trump, the problem is Trumpism,” Reza Aslan tells *EW*.

Known for his book *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*, as well as for his long, patient interview with a Fox News reporter who could not understand how a Muslim could write a book about Jesus, Aslan comes to the University of Oregon Oct. 18 to present “An Evening with Reza Aslan: Religion, Identity and the Future of America.”

Aslan will discuss Trumpism and more at his free talk. He says of the current U.S. political situation and attacks on Muslims, “I think that human beings are inherently tribal, and we are predisposed to try to connect ourselves with people who share aspects of our identity, then identify ourselves in opposition to those who don’t,” such as followers of Islam.

Aslan, who has a doctorate in sociology of religions from University of California, Santa Barbara, says religion is one of the primary forms of identity in the world today, and “despite a century of confident predictions about how eventually we will all just abandon religion, it seems as though religious identity is an even stronger force today than it was even 100 years ago.”

Aslan attributes this to factors such as globalization, the breakdown of nationalism and the dissolution of national identity, factors that make it easier for us to retreat to our own religious certainties and to “demonize other religions.”

Being more religiously literate not only lets us pursue a more peaceful and prosperous world, but also benefits us as individuals, the Iranian-American says, and in the same way we encourage people to be multilingual, we should encourage people to be multi-literate.

Aslan is a professor of creative writing at UC Riverside, but he does not restrict himself to the “ivory tower” of academe when it comes to shaping people’s perceptions. Through his BoomGen Studios media company he provides alternative coverage of the Middle East and its communities throughout the world. He is also the executive producer of a new ABC TV drama, *Of Kings and*

Prophets, a retelling of the biblical story of King David, and in 2017 will host the CNN spiritual adventure series, *Believer*, exploring religious traditions from around the world.

Aslan says the single greatest misconception about Islam is that it is somehow unique or extraordinary in some way. All religions are inherently different from others, he says, but Islam is not “utterly foreign.” In fact, it is “deeply a part of the ‘Judeo-Christian religious tradition.’”

Islam and Judaism are “intimately tied together,” he says, with most of the same dietary traditions, many of the same ritual experiences and the same concept of god. “When it comes to Christianity, people would be surprised to know that Muslims believe Jesus is the Messiah,” Aslan says, and that “Jesus is going to return at the end of time to judge humanity.”

With the rise of Donald Trump, Aslan says what we are seeing is a crisis of identity for Americans in a world they don’t recognize anymore. “They don’t recognize the cultural, political and racial landscape. Hence the Trumpian battle cry, ‘Make American Great Again.’” The idea that we can return the U.S. to some imaginary past “is deeply embedded in this identity crisis,” he says.

According to Aslan, “Trumpism goes far deeper than just one man running for office.” Harkening back to the idea that people are tribal, he says that “when a group of people has trouble coming to grips with who we are, they identify themselves in opposition to an ‘other.’” Something, he continues, “we have always done in times of stress in the U.S.”

In the past it has been Catholics and Jews, but currently, “Islam and Muslims have become the stand-in for that which is not American,” Aslan explains.

His lecture, he says, will discuss this and what to do about it. ■

Doors open for Reza Aslan’s Oregon Humanities Center lecture at 7 pm Tuesday, Oct. 18, in 156 Straub Hall on the UO campus. It is free and open to the public, and will be followed by a book sale and signing. Seating is limited to 500, with no tickets or reservations, and will be livestreamed at ohc.uoregon.edu. For more info call 541-346-3934 or write ohc@uoregon.edu.