

## PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS

1958-1959

John C. Livingston, Professor of Government  
"Democracy and the Manipulation of Consent"

1959-1960

Robert Else, Professor of Art  
"Art and An American Ideal"

1960-1961

John Linnell, Professor of Philosophy  
"Facts and Values"

1961-1962

Norman Rudy, Professor of Business Administration  
"The Student and the Reform of the Colleges"

1962-1963

Thomas Billings, Professor of Education  
"The Nerve of Failure"

1963-1964

Gerard Larson, Professor of Theatre Arts  
"The Comic Condition"

1964-1965

George Tokmakoff, Professor of History  
"The Soviet Dilemma in the Sixties"

1965-1966

Victor Comerchero, Professor of English  
"The Underground Man"

1966-1967

Robert Good, Professor of Psychology  
"Drop-outs, Push-outs, and Cop-outs-Students and Schools"

1967-1968

No award made

1968-1969

Marc Tool, Professor of Economics  
"A View of Relevance"

1969-1970

Rollo Darby, Professor of Biological Sciences  
"Is Concern for our Environment to be our Final Fad?"

1970-1971

Martin Rogers, Professor of Psychology  
"The Evolution of Community"

1985-1986

Albert Cook, Professor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering  
"Attacking Disability Byte by Byte"

1986-1987

Angus Wright, Professor of Environmental Studies  
"Poisoned Development: Pesticides and Social Change in Mexico and Central America"

1987-1988

Leland L. Nichols, Professor of Communication Studies  
"Democracy and the Manipulation of Consent- Three Decades Later"

1988-1989

Robert L. Curry, Jr., Professor of Economics  
"Prospects for Africa's Development"

1989-1990

Robert Metcalf, Professor of Biological Sciences  
"Cooking with the Sun: A CSU Sacramento Contribution to the Global Environment"

1990-1991

Perry D. Weddle, Professor of Philosophy  
"A Case for Historical Thinking"

1991-1992

Betty Ch'maj, Professor of Humanities  
"We Who Believe in Freedom ... Multicultural America and the PC Debate"

1992-1993

David Covin, Professor of Government and Ethnic Studies  
"The African Race: The Politics of an Idea in the United States"

1993-1994

John F. Brackmann, Jr., Professor of Psychology Emeritus  
"Never Mind"

1994-1995

John W. Connor, Professor of Anthropology  
"The Cultural, Ecological Antecedents of Chinese and Japanese Modernization Endeavors in the Nineteenth Century"

1995-1996

William A Dorman, Professor of Journalism  
"Mass Media and the American Conversation: Money, Culture and the Marketplace of Ideas"

1996-1997

Juanita C. Barrena, Professor of Biological Sciences  
"The Promise of the CSU-Dead or Alive?"

1997-1998

Erwin Kelly, Professor of Economics Emeritus  
"Taking Stock: Fifty Down, Fifty to Go-CSU Sacramento, the First Hundred Years"

1998-1999

Otis L. Scott, Professor of Ethnic Studies and Government  
"Duboisian Insight: Problematics of the Color Line Then and Now"

1999-2000

Scott Farrand, Professor of Mathematics  
"Opportunities and Responsibilities for The Professoriate in K-12 Education"

2000-2001

Joseph E. Morrow, Professor of Psychology and Behavior Analysis  
"Applied Behavior Analysis and the Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder"

2001-2002

John F. Henry, Professor of Economics  
"Property and the Limits to Democracy"

2002-2003

Dan R. Decious, Professor of Chemistry  
"Making Use of the CSU Sacramento `Web` - A Small Town Retention Model"

2003-2004

Valerie Wheeler, Professor of Anthropology  
"The Art of Farming: Ethnography Enlightened By Photography"

2004-2005

Craig Kelley, Professor of Marketing  
"Structuring Business Education to Meet the Needs of Business Practitioners"

# Professor Alexandre Kimenyi

Professor of Linguistics, African Studies and Ethnic Studies



## The John C. Livingston Annual Faculty Lecture 2005—2006

### “The Cliché Paradox”

Tuesday, October 4, 2005

University Union Ballroom

3:00 P.M.

Reception to follow



California State University, Sacramento

## “THE CLICHÉ PARADOX”

by Alexandre Kimenyi, Professor of Linguistics, African Studies and Ethnic Studies

Clichés have both the yin and yang features. They can be food but also toxin for the mind. Since they already contain preconceived ideas, they can affect people’s way of thinking, leading them to cliché thinking instead of critical thinking thus treating myths as realities and stereotypes for prototypes. Despite this, however, clichés play a very important role in facilitating communication, in preserving collective memory and are very crucial in the cognitive process.

The study of clichés clearly shows not only the overabundance of “prepackaged ideas” but also that the lexicon and not the syntactic structure occupies a more central position in the mental landscape. Over the last four decades, syntax has received more attention in theoretical linguistics than other branches of linguistics such as phonology, morphology and semantics because it was thought to offer more insight into the mental cognitive structure. In reality, the lexicon seems to be more prominent as evidenced by the use of pidgins in which people are able to communicate and understand each other even if sentence structures are rudimentary or ungrammatical. The existence of clichés thus argues very strongly for the lexicalist hypothesis over the transformationalist hypothesis. Since syntactic rules are very minimal, clearly the heavy burden in cognition is on the lexicon. There are many complex structures which don’t belong to syntax but are already part and parcel of the lexicon. Clichés are thus the semantic structures’ building blocks differing in shape, size and solidity which explains why some are more popular, have a longer longevity or die out fast. A systemic and systematic analysis of the formal and functional properties of clichés finds that they are used because they require less effort to be remembered, this due to the use of mnemonic devices such as redundancy, rhymes, rhythm and metaphors.

The lecture is organized as follows: The first part shows that clichés have distinctive formal and semantic features which were previously unknown to linguists. Part two discusses the origin of clichés and shows that their sources are very diverse. Part three shows that the majority of clichés are metaphors and illustrates their crucial role in cognition. Part four explains why mainstream linguistics has neglected the study of metaphors and why it should give them the attention that they rightly deserve. Part five gives some examples which show the toxicity of clichés to the mind. The last part shows how clichés as metaphors are responsible for collective memory and identity, give insight into how the mind functions, make complex concepts understandable and relieve space for memory storage and retrieval.

## BIOGRAPHY

Alexandre Kimenyi is a Professor of Linguistics, Ethnic Studies and African Languages. He joined the University in 1976 after receiving his Ph.D. in linguistics from UCLA.

His research interests are diverse. They include all areas of theoretical and descriptive linguistics, genocide and ethnic studies, the genesis and dynamism of signs and structures in all semiotic systems, folklore and popular culture. His concurrent research projects are: an English-Kinyarwanda dictionary, Oral Literature in Rwanda, Rwandan Folk Music, Comparative Bantu and Anatomy of Metaphors.

He has authored four books on linguistics which have contributed a lot to linguistic theory, one book on praise-poems of national heroes and great warriors of the ancient kingdom of Rwanda, a book of his own poetry and has also co-edited one book with Otis Scott, Acting Dean, College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies on genocide.

His linguistic articles have been published in international journals such as *La linguistique*, *Linguistics*, *Anthropological Linguistics*, *Studies in African Linguistics*, *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics*, *Education, Science and Culture*. Others have appeared in conference

proceedings. He has also contributed to World’s Languages Linguistic Encyclopedias. His numerous essays on general topics have also appeared in many popular magazines. Professor Kimenyi is past Editor of *The Speaking Drum*, the Sacramento Area Black Causus Magazine, IMPURUZA, an international journal of Banyarwanda in Diaspora, *Rwanda Nziza*, RPF information bulletin and *Wihogora Rwanda*, an international journal of 1994 tutsi genocide survivors.

Professor Kimenyi has organized many colloquia and conferences such as the 1976 to 1990 CSUS Linguistic Forum colloquia, the 1995 symposium on Academic Freedom, the 1998 first international conference on genocide and the 2004 second international conference on genocide. He has also organized these conferences out of state and abroad as well. The most notable is the 1988 Washington, D.C. International Conference on Rwandan Refugees which he organized in collaboration with the U.S. Committee for Refugees headed by Roger Winter.

Professor Kimenyi is involved in refugees’ and genocide and holocausts’ survivors’ issues. A dissident of RPF, the party in power in Rwanda, he was elected in 2000 as President of AMAHORO-People’s Congress, a rival party.

He has received many awards and was the recipient of the CSUS 1994 Outstanding Scholarly Achievement Award, one of the University’s highest honors.

## THE JOHN C. LIVINGSTON ANNUAL FACULTY LECTURE

The John C. Livingston Annual Faculty Lecture is a University Convocation, called for the purpose of honoring a distinguished member of the CSUS faculty who has played an active role in the life of the University including governance, who has displayed a consistent collegiality, and who has shown a strong commitment to students while maintaining an active participation in creative and scholarly activities.

Annual convocations of this type were held between 1959 and 1971 (with the exception of the 1967-68 academic year), under the title “Distinguished Faculty Convocation Address.” The practice was discontinued after the 1971 address, but reinstated in 1985 upon the Academic Senate’s recommendation. In 1986 the convocation was renamed in honor of Professor John C. Livingston, the presenter of the first Distinguished Faculty Convocation Address in 1959.

Professor John C. (Jack) Livingston was a professor of Government at CSUS from 1954 to 1981. In addition to his repute as a teacher and a scholar, Professor Livingston is remembered for his leadership in the development of the character of collegial governance in the CSU, in general, and on this campus, in particular.

The following recollection by Professor Robert Curry, in the proposal to name this event in honor of Professor Livingston, aptly describes the reasons for Jack’s distinction as a member of the CSUS faculty.

“He was an important conscience of the faculty for many years, a person respected for his sense of humanity, for his wit and good humor, and a man gifted with an extraordinary capacity for friendship. His most important legacies were his insistence that the faculty of the University gain a sense of themselves and their actions, and his commitment to students.”

## THE LIVINGSTON ANNUAL FACULTY LECTURE COMMITTEE

Tim Capron (Criminal Justice) 2005

Dan Decious (Chemistry) 2005

Scott Farrand (Mathematics & Statistics) 2006

Geetha Ramachandran (Mathematics & Statistics) 2005

Valerie Wheeler (Anthropology) 2006