Jose Antonio Vargas film screenings, campus visit & lecture

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The Department of Writing and Linguistics, in collaboration with Georgia Southern University and other college organizations and offices, presents a lecture by Pulitzer Prize winner Jose Antonio Vargas on Tuesday, February 2, at 7 p.m. in the University's Performing Arts Center. The event is free and open to the public. A Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist, acclaimed documentary filmmaker, and founder of Define American.com and #EmergingUS, Vargas seeks to elevate the conversation around race, immigration, identity, and citizenship in a multiracial America.

After “outing” himself as an undocumented immigrant in The New York Times, Vargas was featured on the cover of TIME magazine as the face of the conversations about immigration in America, and has testified before the US Senate. His film about his experiences, Documented, has won several awards and recognition by multiple film festivals and associations. In July 2015, he produced and starred in White People, a film for the MTV “Look Different” campaign about being young and white in America.

Vargas’ further contributions to the conversation include Define American, a non-profit media and culture organization that seeks to elevate the conversation around immigration and citizenship in America, and #EmergingUS, a multimedia news platform launched in 2015 in partnership with the Los Angeles Times, focusing on race, immigration, and the complexities of multiculturalism.

In preparation for the event, Vargas’ documentary, Documented, will be screened on campus twice prior to his appearance: on Thursday, January 28, 7:00 p.m. in IT 1004 and Monday, February 1, at 6:00 p.m. in RU 2047.

In addition to his work on immigration matters, Vargas has had a prolific journalism career, including work for The New Yorker, the Huffington Post, and the Washington Post, among others; he has covered a wide range of topics, including tech and video game culture, HIV/AIDS, the 2008 presidential campaign, and an acclaimed profile of Mark Zuckerberg. Vargas was part of the team that won a Pulitzer Prize for covering the 2007 massacre at Virginia Tech, and his 2006 series on HIV/AIDS in Washington, D.C., inspired a feature-length documentary — The Other City — which he co-produced and wrote. In 2007, the daily journal Politico named him one of the 50 Politicos To Watch.

Students interested in meeting and attending a reception with Vargas on the day of the event are invited to submit a question for the speaker using the link on GeorgiaSouthern.edu/class/vargas. Participation is also encouraged on social media using #VargasGSU and #DefineAmerican.

Though multiple Georgia Southern entities have partnered to bring Vargas to campus, the Association for Latin American Students (ALAS) was instrumental in planning the event. According to Jesus Cruz, President of ALAS, their organization believes Vargas “is a true inspiration of what we stand for. He also is someone who brings not only diversity but encouragement for people and what they stand for.” The widespread support for this event indicates that the conversations about diversity and immigration are desired by many. These conversations are necessary but not easy, and someone like Vargas brings both an expert voice and a humanizing touch that can help jump start the discussion.

In addition to ALAS, this event is sponsored by the Campus Life Enrichment Committee, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, College of Education, College of Health and Human Sciences, College of Science and Mathematics, Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health and Zach S. Henderson Library; the Departments of Communication Arts, Criminal Justice and Criminology, Foreign Languages, History, Literature and Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology, Teaching
and Learning, and Writing and Linguistics; First-Year Experience, the University Honors Program, Center for International
Schooling, Center for Irish Research and Teaching, Institute for Public and Nonprofit Studies, Multicultural Student Center,
and the Office of International Programs and Services.

Additional information is available by emailing Marti Lee and on Vargas’s website.

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