

# CENTER FOR COGNITIVE SCIENCE

University at Buffalo, State University of New York

**Wednesday, January 21, 2004**

280 Park Hall  
North Campus  
2:00 pm –4:00 pm

## **"Cognitive Implications of Diabolical Witchcraft Beliefs"**

**Phillips Stevens Jr., Ph.D.**  
**Department of Anthropology**  
**University at Buffalo**

The term "diabolical witch" is used here to distinguish this belief from the several other meanings of the loaded words "witch" and "witchcraft." This is the nearly universal complex of beliefs in an evil supernatural being that flies through the night, steals children, and engages in the most despicable acts imagined by people. Allegations of certain of these behaviors have been made in all cultures and throughout history, most recently in the satanism scares of the 1980s and early 1990s. They seem to represent fears deeply-rooted in human nature, like Jung's "archetypes" or Rodney Needham's "primordial characters." Illustrated with slides.

Phillips Stevens, Jr., is Associate Professor of Anthropology. He has conducted fieldwork in West Africa, the Caribbean, and urban areas of North America. He has authored or edited several books and numerous articles in cultural anthropology and African studies, particularly in areas of religion, folklore, and cultural change. In 1993 he received a SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, and in 2000 the UB Student Association gave him a Milton Plesur Award. He is currently working on a major book on the anthropology of magic, sorcery and witchcraft.

**Refreshments will be available**  
**Everyone is welcome to attend!**

For information please call the Cognitive Science Office at (716) 645-3794 or check  
<http://www.cogsci.buffalo.edu/Activities/Colloquium/CLLQs04/2004spring.htm>

The Center for Cognitive Science Colloquium Speaker Series is sponsored by the  
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