

Council for International Teaching and Research

GLOBAL SCHOLARS



2011-12 Princeton Global Scholar Slavoj Žižek

Slavoj Žižek, a Slovenian philosopher, sociologist, and cultural critic, is one of the most influential public intellectuals in the world. He has been called a superstar, a force of nature, the “Elvis of philosophy.” His lectures are compared to Bruce Springsteen concerts, with scholarly audiences packed to standing. He is a prodigious writer, an energetic speaker, a whirlwind traveler among academic institutions, and one of the most brilliant figures in literary and cultural theory of the last 20 years.

While he moves between disciplines as easily as other people change television channels, Žižek was trained in the traditions of German thought and French psychoanalysis. He holds appointments as professor at the European Graduate School in Switzerland, international director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at the University of London, and senior researcher at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Ljubljana — a major hub for scholarship that crosses boundaries between literature, film, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, and philosophy. He has been a visiting professor at many U.S. institutions: the universities of Chicago and Michigan, the New School for Social Research in New York, the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University, and New York, Columbia, and Princeton universities.

Žižek has a genius for concrete illustrations of abstract argument, seamlessly incorporating a Hitchcock film or comic book super hero to bring the most impenetrable theories to life. After he burst on the academic scene in 1989 with his first book in English, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* — a rigorous inquiry of the overlap between aesthetics and politics in contemporary culture — he wrote another 20 acclaimed books in as many years, on topics as diverse as capitalism, opera, and the Iraq War.

As a Princeton Global Scholar in the Department of English, Žižek is catalyzing discussions among a host of humanities departments and enriching course offerings in literary theory, cultural studies, politics, religion, film studies, philosophy, and history — to name a few. He lectures and gives seminars on “Theories of Ideology” and is co-organizing a conference in which U.S. and international scholars explore this topic from multiple perspectives. His appointment has established a rare and valued exchange between Princeton students and faculty and their counterparts at the University of Ljubljana. Perhaps most importantly, Princeton students are learning directly from a deeply original thinker who imparts ideas generously and, by embodying a sense of infinite possibility that transcends disciplines, inspires brilliance in all who work with him, whatever their field of study.