

# MORE Science at UTSA

## Environmental Science and Engineering

### Spring 2007 Seminar Series

*Welcomes you to the inaugural Provost Lecture*

**Where:** Loeffler room (3.03.02) in the BioScience Building

**When:** 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM on March 30, 2007

**Refreshments will be provided**

**Provost Lecturer:** Dr. Jerome Nriagu



[Jerome Nriagu, PhD, DSc](#), is currently a Professor in the School of Public Health and a Research Professor in the Center for Human Growth & Development, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His research and teaching programs center around three main issues: (i) sources, behavior, fate and effects of toxic metals in the natural and contaminated environments; (ii) environmental justice – disproportionate exposure of communities to environmental pollutants; and (iii) environmental health problems in the developing countries. His work includes applied laboratory and field studies which has led to 29 books (authored/edited) and nearly 300 published articles. He is listed as one of 150 most cited scientists in the fields of Environmental Studies and Ecology. Before joining the University of Michigan in 1993, he was a Senior Research Scientist with the Canadian Department of the Environment Canada in Burlington, Ontario. Prof. Nriagu is Editor-in-Chief of the journal, *Science of the Total Environment*, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and the recipient of several awards including Senior Fulbright Fellowship.

**Topic: Arsenic Pollution and Poisoning Through the Ages**

Arsenic was not one of the seven metals known to the ancients and although there was no “Arsenic Age”, the king of poisons has probably influenced human history more than any other element or toxic compound. I shall trace the history of arsenic poisonings and pollution from the ancient to modern times and my discussion will include the use of arsenic in warfare (from the toxic smoke bombs or “holy smoke” of the ancients to lewisite or “the dew of death” or recent times), homicidal poisonings of famous historical figures with arsenic (Claudius, Britannicus, Napoleon, the “succession powder” of the French courts, etc), the nefarious Harmony policy or “gifts” of food laced with arsenic used to decimate the aboriginal population of Australia; medicinal uses and iatrogenic poisonings (from metallic elixirs consumed by the ancient Chinese in their quest for longevity and/or immortality to Paul Ehrlich’s “magic bullet” in chemotherapy), arsenophagy (habituated eating of arsenic); widespread intentional contamination of the environment from dissipative application of arsenic pesticides; and the recent phenomenon of worldwide contamination of groundwater with arsenic. The long association of this enigmatic metalloid with human culture is believed to have resulted in hundreds of millions of people being maimed, killed or cured.

For more information, contact Dr. Dibs Sarkar (458-5453)/Dr. Hongjie Xie (458-5445)