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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita instructor Thomas Eaton to speak at 2015 Ozark Creative Writers Conference

By Anna Hurst

October 8, 2015

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Dr. Thomas Eaton, a composition instructor for Ouachita Baptist University's Department of Language and Literature, will be a guest speaker at the 2015 Ozark Creative Writers Conference in Eureka Springs, Ark., Oct. 8-11. He will present "Supernatural Affection & American Gothic: Landscape as Spirit of the Western Motif."

The Ozark Creative Writers Conference is an annual gathering where writers, publishers and agents from Arkansas and surrounding states find new talent and work with new writers in attendance, emphasizing Southern and Western writing as well as other genres.

Eaton said he is flattered to be asked to speak at the conference and looks forward to making new connections and learning how to "be a better teacher, a better writer and a better person." His presentation will explore the roles of landscape in contemporary American genre fiction.

"I have always been fascinated with the relationship between landscape and human beings from a psychological perspective. The interplay of men and women and their blending with new landscapes generates new behaviors, beliefs and practices," Eaton explained. "I am a Wyoming native and so my landscape of the open prairie, harsh weather and vast, open spaces is intricate to the way I view the world."

Eaton added that he will be working with first-time creative writers who "feel like they have a story to tell" and he hopes to "encourage and promote the idea of using the landscape (setting) as an actual character that works within a story."

"I want to convey to these writers – especially as many of them will be Southern writers – to look beyond traditional descriptions of the South and look at the landscapes in their stories and connect those to how their characters behave. That is what makes a story work."

During the conference, Eaton also will release his debut collection of Americana short stories: *Stories from Mission County*, published by High Hill Press of St. Louis, Mo.

"It is an exciting time. It is always good when one can present at a conference and be able to show evidence of his or her work as well. This is about writers writing. I will be able to show fellow writers the struggles I went through," he said. "Being a published writer with my own book was on my life's 'to-do' list. I've done that. I have three more short story collections, three novels and one novella waiting in the wings to be published after this one. These represent nearly 15 years of steady writing, every day, but time well spent in doing something that you love. I really would write every day even if no one ever read the work."

Eaton was honored as a 2001 National William Faulkner Short Story Competition winner for his work, "Antelope," and named one of America's best Western writers in 2015 for his short story, "Nellie Parker Weeps to the Moon," in Brett Cogburn's *Rough Country* Western anthology. His second collection, *A Western Gothic Wake*, is scheduled for release in 2016. Along with his role at Ouachita, he also instructs creative writing and literature for various institutions.

For more information about Dr. Thomas Eaton, contact him at eatont@obu.edu. For more information regarding the Ozark Creative Writers Conference visit ozarkcreativewriters.com.