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Times Festival of Reading returns to campus featuring talks by faculty

Posted October 17, 2013 at 2:19 pm by Tom Scherberger

The 21st Annual Tampa Bay Times Festival of Reading returns to USF St. Petersburg Saturday, Oct. 26, featuring talks and book signings by nationally renowned authors, including USFSP’s own Ray Arsenault, Ph.D., the John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History.

This is the ninth year in a row USFSP has hosted the free festival, which draws thousands of fans of the written word to numerous venues across the campus and the adjacent Poynter Institute.

Arsenault will discuss Dixie Redux: Essays in Honor of Sheldon Hackney, a collection of original essays by former students and colleagues of Hackney’s honoring the renowned historian and academician. Arsenault was Hackney’s student researcher at Princeton University and
contributed an essay to the collection, which he also co-edited with Orville Vernon Burton of Clemson University. Hackney, who died in September of Lou Gehrig’s Disease, was president of the University of Pennsylvania and chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

“Probably the most important thing that ever happened to me was to become his student assistant,” Arsenault said of Hackney. “To have someone like him mentoring me changed my life and career. I owe him everything, really.”

Arsenault’s first project as Hackney’s assistant was to help him turn his Ph.D. dissertation into a book. That book, Populism and Progressivism in Alabama, established Hackney “as one of the foremost historians of the post-Civil War South,” according to the New York Times.

Arsenault will speak at 12:30 p.m. at the Poynter Institute’s Barnes Pavilion. Members of the USFSP community, including faculty and administrators, will introduce authors throughout the day, along with Tampa Bay Times writers and editors.

USFSP Philosophy Professor Hugh LaFollette, Ph.D., the Marie and Leslie E. Cole Chair in Ethics, will discuss an unusual non-fiction book project he will launch next month in which he will seek public input as he writes. He will answer questions about the project from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the College of Arts and Sciences booth.

The book is tentatively titled, The Ethics of Gun Control. LaFollette plans to meet monthly with interested members of the public to discuss the main points of each chapter, soliciting feedback from the audience. It is akin to the peer-review process of a scholarly work, but done in public
with the intention of writing the book for a broad audience. At the end of each session he will offer advice to participants on their own non-fiction writing projects. The project will begin Nov. 21 with an organizational session from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at The Dali Museum. Future sessions will be held at USFSP beginning in January.

Among the more than 40 authors at the festival are three faculty members from USF Tampa:

- Karen Brown, Ph.D., a contributing instructor of creative writing, will discuss her debut novel, *The Longings of Wayward Girls*. She is the author of the award-winning *Little Sinners and Other Stories* and *Pins and Needles: Stories*.
- Ira Sukrungruang, associate professor of English, is the author of the memoir *Talk Thai: The Adventures of Buddhist Boy* and the new poetry collection *In Thailand It Is Night*.
- Phillip Sipiora, Ph.D., professor of English and film studies, is the editor of *Mind of an Outlaw: Selected Essays by Norman Mailer*. He is the founding editor of the *Mailer Review* and is a member of the board of directors of the *Norman Mailer Society*.

The festival includes book sales and signings and an outdoor food court. Complimentary parking will be available at the USFSP parking garage, 260 5th Ave S.

Other authors appearing during the festival include:

- Marcia Clark, lead prosecutor in the O.J. Simpson murder case and author of the novel *Killer Ambition*.
- Edwidge Danticat, author of the novel, *Claire of the Sea Light*.
- David Finkel, Washington Post reporter and author of *Thank You for Your Service*.
- Ridley Pearson, author of 40 novels, including *Choke Point*.
- Bernard Lafayette, co-founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and author of the memoir, *In Peace and Freedom*.

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