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Professors of English will give annual Barber Lecture

Summary: Russ Castronovo, the Jean Wall Bennet professor of English and American studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Dana Nelson, the Gertrude Conaway professor of English at Vanderbilt University, will give the 2008 Barber Lecture on September 22.

(August 25, 2008)-Russ Castronovo, the Jean Wall Bennet professor of English and American studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Dana Nelson, the Gertrude Conaway professor of English at Vanderbilt University, will give the 2008 Barber Lecture at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 22, in the Humanities Fine Arts Recital Hall. Nelson conducts research in comparative democracy theory in the Americas, while Castronovo explores the use of literature in forming critical citizenship.

A reception will follow the lecture, which is free and open to the public.

Castronovo holds a doctoral degree from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley. His research interests include American literature, African American literature, American Studies, cultural theory and popular culture. Castronovo has begun a project on the relationship between propaganda and literature, starting with Tom Paine, revolution, and the British East India Company.

"I am interested in the uses of literature in forming critical citizenship. In my classes, this interest entails a commitment to analytic exchange and dialogue, collective interpretation, and interdisciplinary pursuits of knowledge," said Castronovo. "My classes seek to implement this approach by ranging across topics such as modern critical theory, popular culture, 19th and 20th century American literature, propaganda and the political novel."

He is the author of several books and articles, including *Beautiful Democracy: Aesthetics and Anarchy in a Global Era*.

Nelson holds a master's and doctoral degrees from Michigan State University and a bachelor's degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Her research areas include American colonial literatures and history, early U.S. literature and history and democracy studies, race theory, gender theory and political theory.

She is the author of *Bad for Democracy: How the Presidency Undermines the Power of the People*, among others.

The annual Barber Lecture is made possible through philanthropic gifts from the late Dorothy Barber and Laird Barber, UMM professor emeritus of English.

Free parking is available in the campus' North Lot.

Photo: Russ Castronovo

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