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NEWS

For Immediate Release

Ouachita history professor Dr. Myra Ann Houser presents research in Vienna

By McKenzie Cranford

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Traveling to Vienna, Austria, last month, Ouachita Baptist University professor Dr. Myra Ann Houser presented a paper at the “African Thoughts on (Neo) Colonial Worlds: Toward an Intellectual History of Africa” conference. The gathering, hosted by the University of Vienna’s African Studies Department, hosted more than 20 speakers from across Africa, Europe and North America.

Houser, assistant professor of history, presented her paper, “The Making of Biko: Martyrdom and the Creation of an African Intellectual,” and participated in a panel with professors from the Vienna Diplomatic Institute and Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City.

Based on a chapter of her recently defended dissertation, Houser’s paper discusses a group of lawyers that defended activists in apartheid-era South Africa and Namibia. The paper describes the efforts of the group to publicize the killings of political prisoners by police and security officers, especially Biko, the group’s most famous client.

“Being able to research and write about this has been an amazing privilege,” Houser said. “Many of my subjects remain alive and have been very gracious and helpful with interviews and document supply. We are in the midst of an exciting time for research as so many papers from this era are rapidly being donated to archives, processed and made available to researchers.”

“Dr. Houser adds a unique layer of depth to the Sutton School. Her insight into the legal and intellectual struggle against apartheid opens vistas onto a tumultuous, focal moment in African history,” noted Dr. Randall Wight, dean of Ouachita’s Sutton School for Social Sciences. “Her communications skills make this moment accessible to all. And the international acclaim she receives spotlights the wide-ranging worth of her work. I am excited at the scholarly power she brings to our community and beyond.”

Noting how she ties her research into the classroom, Houser said, “There are quite a few opportunities to discuss the relationship between police and citizens across a variety of societies including, quite prominently, the United States right now.

“We also spend a few days discussing this period in southern Africa during Introduction to African History,” Houser added. “I’m hoping to eventually teach a more focused class on the apartheid era where we will investigate the system, including relationships between lawyers, activists, prisoners and faith leaders such as the ones I’ve had the opportunity to study.”

Houser graduated from Ouachita in 2007, earning a bachelor’s degree with majors in history, mass communications and Russian. In 2009, she earned a Master of Arts degree in comparative history from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va., and earned a Ph.D. in history from Howard University in Washington, D.C. in May of this year. A portion of her latest research has been accepted as part of the publication *African Culture and Global Politics*.

For more information, contact Dr. Myra Ann Houser at houserma@obu.edu.

PHOTO OF HOUSER AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

AT <http://www.obu.edu/news/2014/12/22/ouachita-history-professor-dr-myra-ann-houser-presents-research-vienna>.