

9-22-2016

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Recommended Citation

Zimny, Brooke and News Bureau, Ouachita, "Ouachita to host Andy Davidson in fiction reading Sept. 29" (2016). *Press Releases*. Paper 296.
http://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/press_releases/296

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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita to host Andy Davidson in fiction reading Sept. 29

By Brooke Zimny

September 22, 2016

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University's Department of Language and Literature will host author Andy Davidson in a reading of his debut novel, *In the Valley of the Sun*, on Thursday, Sept. 29. The reading, which is free and open to the public, will be held at 7 p.m. in Hickingbotham Hall's Young Auditorium on Ouachita's campus.

Davidson, a 2000 Ouachita graduate, currently teaches English at Middle Georgia State University in Cochran, Ga., in addition to his work as an author. He earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing from the University of Mississippi.

"We are delighted to welcome back to campus, 16 years after graduation, an alumnus who was not only a fine student worker for our department but a superb English major who was committed to the craft of a writer from his earliest days with us, submitting for his thesis for the Carl Goodson Honors Program a novel of over 300 pages and heading straight to the University of Mississippi's distinguished creative writing program," noted Dr. Jay Curlin, OBU's Kathryn Maddox Professor of English.

"Our students should be inspired to hear a Ouachita graduate who has remained devoted to his craft throughout the years since," he added, "following that early undergraduate dream with such commitment that we are just a few months away from the publication of his most recent novel."

In the Valley of the Sun, a horror novel, is expected to be released June 6, 2017, by Skyhorse Publishing.

"The book is about a very human subject: family," Davidson said. "It's a story about four lonely, damaged souls who find each other in the worst possible circumstances, all of them victims of grief or loss or trauma of some kind.

"Horror is about what we're afraid of, and there's usually nothing we're more afraid of, as people, than being alone," he added. "So the genre, in a way, lets us explore themes like loss and grief or loneliness in a way that really gets right to the heart of what we want, which is to not be afraid of those things. So with scary stories, we get to excise those kinds of fears through catharsis, but we also get to see their effects in a way that maybe helps us understand our own fears better."

On being invited to return to his alma mater to speak, Davidson said, "I couldn't be more honored. The very first class I ever took in creative writing was as an English major here. I've worked in academia ever since I left OBU, as a student, a writer and as a teacher, and I've always been reminded over the years how very special the professors here are. In almost all things, I've aspired to be like them. They're lifelong friends."

For more information on OBU's Department of Language and Literature, contact Dr. Doug Sonheim, chair, at sonheimd@obu.edu or (870) 245-5554. For more information on Andy Davidson, visit his website, theandydavidson.com, or follow him on Twitter at @theandydavidson.

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