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## **Ouachita professor Jay Curlin chosen for National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Scholar program**

*By Jessica Stewart*

April 24, 2014

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Ouachita Baptist University professor Dr. Jay Curlin was selected as a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Scholar from a national applicant pool. Curlin will attend one of 30 seminars and institutes supported by the NEH.

Dr. Curlin will participate in a seminar titled "Tudor Books and Readers: 1485-1603" with 15 other scholars. The five-week program will be held at the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp, Belgium; at Senate House Library, University of London; and at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. It will be co-directed by Dr. John N. King of Ohio State University and Dr. Mark Rankin of James Madison University.

"Everything about the seminar sounds like paradise to a bookworm whose visions of Heaven have always been huge libraries with towering bookshelves filled with beautiful old books," said Curlin, who serves as Ouachita's Kathryn Maddox Professor of English.

"There is no library with so magical a name and history for me as Oxford's Bodleian Library," Curlin added. "To me, there is simply nothing more appealing than the prospect of spending four weeks there after a few days in Antwerp at the 'sole surviving Renaissance printing and publishing house' and, in London, at the Senate House Library."

The seminar is designed to study the Tudor Era book culture using a multidisciplinary lens, not only evaluating the historical and technological facts but also the implications for politics, art, literature, sociology and other fields.

"My chief hope and anticipation for the program is that it will widen considerably what I currently know about the history of the book and the intertwining of that history with Tudor literature," Curlin noted, "a period particularly dear to me since early in my graduate studies, when I first fell in love with Wyatt, Surrey, and, most especially, Spenser and Shakespeare."

Curlin has memorized all 154 of Shakespeare's sonnets and currently teaches Ouachita's senior literature seminar on Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.

"To pore over such treasures in their very cradle with other bookworms devoted to Tudor literature sounds simply like a dream," Curlin said.

Additionally, as part of the seminar, Curlin will present his own research to his fellow scholars for discussion and review. He anticipates investigating Tudor readers themselves and their attitudes toward the rare books that have survived to the present day.

Noting Shakespeare and Spenser's references to the temporality of literature, Curlin said: "It is this anxiety about the instability of the language and what the ravages of time would do to any books attempting to preserve it that most interests me at the moment when I consider Tudor readers and those magical little volumes that have managed to survive them."

Curlin is a 1983 Ouachita graduate and earned his master's degree at the University of Arkansas and his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. He joined the Ouachita faculty in 1998.

According to its website, the National Endowment for the Humanities is an independent federal agency created in 1965. It is one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States, and each summer, it supports enrichment opportunities at universities and cultural institutions so that faculty can work in collaboration and study with experts in humanities disciplines. The more than 430 NEH Summer Scholars will teach more than 113,000 students the following year.

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