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Lawrence University

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Author, Scholar Martha Nussbaum Receiving Honorary Degree at Lawrence's 164th Commencement

Posted on: June 5th, 2013 by Rick Peterson

Martha Nussbaum, one of the world's pre-eminent scholars, public intellectuals and an award-winning author, will receive an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree Sunday, June 9 at Lawrence University's 164th commencement.



**Martha Nussbaum will receive an honorary degree from
Lawrence June 9 at its 164th commencement.**

Nussbaum, the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, Nussbaum also will serve as the principal commencement speaker. This will be Nussbaum's second appearance at Lawrence. She was a speaker on Lawrence's 2000-01 convocation series.

Lawrence is expected to award 308 bachelor degrees to 290 students from 32 states and nine countries during commencement exercises that begin at 10:30 a.m. on Main Hall green. The

ceremony is free and open to the public.

For the second straight year, Lawrence will provide a live webcast of its commencement ceremony.

Lawrence will hold a baccalaureate service Saturday, June 8 at 11 a.m. in the Lawrence Memorial Chapel. Joy Jordan, associate professor of statistics, presents “Your One Wild and Precious Life.” The baccalaureate service and commencement exercise are both free and open to the public.

Retiring President Jill Beck, who is presiding over her ninth and final commencement, along with Lawrence Board of Trustees Chair Terry Franke '68 and senior Yagmur Esemen from Nicosia, Cyprus, also will address the graduates.

Before joining the University of Chicago in 1995, Nussbaum taught at Harvard and Brown universities. At the same time, she served seven years as a research advisor at the World Institute for Development Economics Research in Helsinki, which is part of the United Nations University.

As the holder of the Freund chair, Nussbaum has full appointments in the University of Chicago's philosophy department and the law school, as well as associate appointments in the political science and classics departments and the divinity school. She is also a member of the Committee on Southern Asian Studies and a board member of the Human Rights Program.

A Champion of Liberal Education

Beck called Nussbaum “a great defender of the liberal arts and exemplary role model for our students.”

“She demonstrates how to bridge effectively scholarly interests with issues of the day and with the need for taking informed

positions in our lives and societies. In Dr. Nussbaum's case, she uses her knowledge of classics to generate contemporary political critique. I'm sure the graduating students will enjoy meeting her and hearing her perspectives."

Nussbaum is widely regarded as one of the country's most celebrated philosophers and celebrated thinkers. She believes philosophers should act as "lawyers for humanity" to address questions of justice, basing her work on a political philosophy of human capability and functioning that has both Aristotelian and Kantian roots. Her scholarship also has focused on the transformative aspects of the connections between literature and philosophy.

"As we tell stories about the lives of others," Nussbaum has said, "we learn how to imagine what another creature might feel in response to various events. At the same time, we identify with the other creature and learn something about ourselves."

Award-winning author

A prolific writer with more than 350 published scholarly articles, Nussbaum is the author of nearly three dozen books, including 2010's "Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities," in which she argues that the humanities are an essential element for the quality of democracy. Her book "Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education," was recognized with the Ness Book Award of the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the University of Louisville's Grawemeyer Award in Education.

Nussbaum has been the recipient of numerous national and international awards, including the 2012 Phi Beta Kappa's Sidney Hook Memorial Award, which honors national distinction by a scholar in the areas of scholarship, undergraduate teaching and

leadership in the cause of liberal arts education. In 2012 she also received Spain's Prince of Asturias Award for Social Science. The award honors a person whose work "constitutes a significant contribution to the benefit of mankind."

A native of New York City, Nussbaum earned a bachelor's degree in 1969 from New York University, where she studied theatre and classics. She went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees in classical philology from Harvard University.