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Honorary Degree Award Citation for Mark Dintenfass

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Honorary Degree Awarded to Retiring Faculty

Mark Dintenfass, professor of English

"Mark Dintenfass, it is a pleasure and an honor to recognize you upon your retirement from the faculty of Lawrence University.

Your thirty-eight years of full-time teaching at Lawrence University have brought enormous benefits to all those who have worked with you as a teacher, scholar, and colleague. A native of New York City, you moved in 1968 to Appleton, Wisconsin, after earning degrees from Columbia University and the University of Iowa. We are very fortunate that you stayed and translated your artistic and critical talents into an academic setting, as we are the better for it. You offered an impressive range of courses in the English and theatre departments at Lawrence. Your rare mixture of talents and your breadth of knowledge have allowed you to guide students in fiction-writing workshops at the introductory and advanced levels as well as enlighten students in courses on major American writers, modern American fiction, contemporary American fiction, modern drama, and film. You taught for a number of years in the Freshman Studies program and presented various lectures in Stansbury Theatre on Blake, Achebe, Kurosawa, and others. To this day, students flock to your classes to hear you reflect with wisdom and insight on the writing process, philosophical trends in modernism, and the artistic mastery of works like Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. Your assertion that we should understand what makes a contemporary writer excellent, as opposed to popular, is but one of the many wonderful insights you have provided to generations of students. Indeed, your wisdom and wit stay with us through the many influences of your teaching and choice lines, such as: 'If you want to become a great writer, first become a great person; then write naturally.'

While teaching, you wrote and published six novels: *Make Yourself an Earthquake*; *The Case against Org*; *Figure 8*; *Montgomery Street*; *Old World, New World*; and *A Loving Place*. You have also published several short stories and numerous book reviews and articles for the *New York Times* and other periodicals. Your truly impressive accomplishments as a writer warrant our admiration at the same time that they have served to inspire many of your students. We will remember as well the success of your work in the Lawrence theatre department and Attic Theatre as director of plays by writers ranging from Aristophanes to Tom Stoppard. In addition, you served as director of the Lawrence London Centre three times and contributed to the Lawrence community through service on numerous committees.

On behalf of all members of the Lawrence University community, I offer my profound thanks for your extraordinary contributions to liberal education and to the life of the mind.

By the authority vested in me, I now confer upon you the degree of Master of Arts, *ad eundem*, and admit you to its rights, privileges, and obligations."

Citation read by President Jill Beck at Commencement, 2006