ABAC Faculty Member Releases Book on Flannery O’Connor


Published through Bloomsbury Press, the book is currently available in hardback. Bloomsbury has published such works as the “Harry Potter” series, “The Fault with Our Stars,” and “The Kite Runner.” Cofer has studied O’Connor’s work extensively for many years.

“The book is unique in that it is the first to argue that O’Connor’s stories are actually based on biblical stories,” Cofer said. “Many people realize that O’Connor was a strong Catholic, and they write about how her work is influenced by her Christian faith, but my book uses primary and secondary sources to argue that it is influenced by the Bible itself. Overall, I think it’s a book that combines theology with literary studies on Flannery O’Connor.”

Although he has published numerous articles and essays, Cofer’s first book has been an eight-year process. Now that it’s complete, he can’t believe it’s really finished.

“It’s certainly exciting – exciting to be finished,” Cofer said. “I’m nervous about what I’m going to do next because I’d like to write another book at some point, and it feels really
strange to be finished with my first one. I’m also worried that no one will buy it or that critics will hate it, but that’s also a little beyond my control.”

Cofer credits the book as a key component in the fact that he has earned one of the very selective spots in the National Endowment for the Humanities Institute for a workshop on O’Connor titled “Reconsidering Flannery O’Connor.”

“I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t be receiving the NEH grant if it had not been for my book,” Cofer said. “Of the 25 recipients who received the award, most of the other scholars work at large, prestigious schools such as Stanford, Duke, Harvard, and the University of Chicago, so it was great to see ABAC’s name on the list.”

Cofer will travel to Milledgeville in July with 24 other teachers selected to participate in the program. Each scholar will receive a stipend of $3,300 to cover travel, study, and living expenses.

“This is a prestigious honor because there is a lot of competition to receive an NEH grant,” Cofer said. “It’s a really hard program to get into.”

Cofer will participate in the four-week program that will be co-directed by Dr. Marshall Bruce Gentry of Georgia College and State University and Dr. Robert Donahoo of Sam Houston State University. The NEH grant selectees will attend 10 lectures, participate in seminars conducted by four leading O’Connor scholars, and spend a week working with materials available to scholars only through the Georgia College library.

O’Connor attended the Peabody Laboratory School before enrolling at the Georgia State College for Women (GSCW), now Georgia College and State University, in an accelerated three-year program after the death of her father. She is considered one of America's greatest

Cofer’s book on O’Connor will be released in paperback sometime next year. For now, he says he’s just trying to enjoy some time off from writing and then he hopes to throw himself into another project.

Currently serving as the Director of the Writing Center, Cofer is the English Department representative for the faculty senate and co-chair of the Literature committee. Previously he served as an advisor for the Rural Studies Club and the Reading Club.

Cofer earned his B.A. in English from Southwest Baptist University, his M.A. in English from Virginia Tech and his Ph.D. in English from Texas Tech University. He has been an ABAC faculty member since 2009.

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