For IMMEDIATE Release

“Fiction writing was my first calling,” Newberry, a professor in the School of Liberal Arts, said. “Even my poems are narrative. I am a storyteller first and foremost.”

While the story actually began as a series of poems, Newberry discovered that he needed the expansiveness of a novel to do the story justice. He wrote the first chapter about five years ago while vacationing in St. Augustine, Fla. He was inspired by two of his favorite things – his love for the Gulf Coast and southern writing, especially authors Larry Brown and James Lee Burke.

“It took a couple of years to get the first draft written,” Newberry said. “I devoted my summers to writing it. When I was invited to attend the Sanibel Island Writers Conference as a part of the faculty last year, I brought what I had written to the conference for feedback.”

That feedback came from two fellow authors and colleagues, John Dufresne, professor in the Department of English at Florida International University, and Tom Franklin, professor in the Department of English at the University of Mississippi. Newberry then got in touch with an agent in New York about his book.

“While the agency declined to represent me, they sent me a letter with some suggestions about the development of my main character,” Newberry said. “I spent last summer rewriting the last third of the book.”

In the middle of his rewrite, Newberry received a call from crime author, friend, and fellow North Florida native Michael Lister. Lister thought that his publisher, Pulpwood Press, might be interested in Newberry’s novel.
“I told Michael that I wasn’t finished yet but I submitted a chapter to them,” Newberry explained. “A few weeks later they wanted to read the whole novel.”

After an editor at Pulpwood Press finished reading the completed work, Newberry received an e-mail asking if he could chat.

“As soon as I called they said they wanted to publish the book and started talking about dust jackets and royalty packages,” Newberry said. “I was blown away.”

Newberry did a vast amount of research for the crime novel. He went back to his hometown of Port St. Joe, Fla., many times to visit his best friend and Port St. Joe Police Department Patrol Officer Vince Everett to get a better understanding of the life of a police officer, including all the protocol and terminology. Newberry’s main character, Justin Everson, is loosely based on Everett.

“There are definite contrasts to Vince and Justin,” Newberry said. “The biggest difference is that Vince is a very even-keeled guy. Nothing gets to him. Justin, the main character, is the opposite. He is a complete hot-head. He’s quick to judge and quick to anger. But I believe all characters should have flaws. Characters without flaws are boring."

Newberry also enlisted the help of ABAC Assistant Professor of History Russell Pryor in the School of Liberal Arts.

“The novel has a sub-plot dealing with organized labor, and Russell was instrumental in helping me with the accuracy of this aspect in the story,” Newberry said.

Author of two poetry collections, “Brackish” and “A Visible Sign,” Newberry is also the co-editor of a poetry anthology, “The Gulf Stream: Poems of the Gulf Coast.” He teaches
composition, literature, and creative writing in the School of Liberal Arts at ABAC and serves as faculty adviser for “Pegasus,” the college’s literary magazine.

Newberry received his bachelor’s degree in English in 1998 and his master’s degree in English and Creative Writing in 2000 from the University of West Florida. He earned his Ph.D. in Creative Writing and Poetry with a minor in 20th Century American Literature and 20th Century British Literature from the University of Georgia in 2010.

###