

All lectures are scheduled to last 90 minutes and are located in Chautauqua Hall.

American Author: John Steinbeck

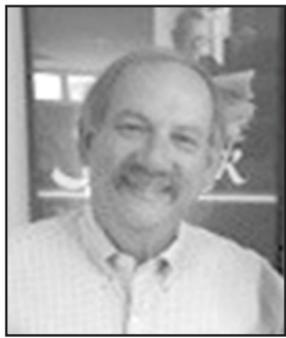
10:30 a.m., Monday: American Writer, John Steinbeck with Robert DeMott, PhD

Several decades ago, a small California company, Aaron Blake Publishers, produced a 26" x 20" fold-out multi-color map, The John Steinbeck Map of America. The map featured locations and events from 14 of John Steinbeck's books, from *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) to *Travels with Charley* (1962). The impression the map creates, is that Steinbeck's true subject was not just what has come to be known as "Steinbeck Country" (the Northern California area around Salinas and Monterey Peninsula), but America itself. Not as an idealized nation-state (though he would occasionally highlight its uniqueness and exceptionalism), but as a problematic entity "complicated" and "paradoxical," as he announced in the foreword to his last book, *America and Americans* (1966). Steinbeck (1902-1968) is still with us. Much of what he wrote addressed America's future, the country's sodden morality, ecological carelessness and long struggle with racial relations.

His prose about migrant poverty is equally compelling in an era where we must be aware of the ever-increasing chasm between haves and have-nots and the devastating effects of natural disasters. Steinbeck was and remains one of America's prophets, the country's conscience and a writer of fiction, journalism, film scripts and essays from 1930-1960 who never stopped caring passionately about the nation's politics, intentions, goals and shortcomings. He was an engaged artist, body and soul, who admitted that his "whole work drive [was] aimed at making people understand each other..."

The hard questions that Steinbeck's writing poses are manifold and timely. He asks what empathy means. What understanding the woe of others requires. What a holistic grasp of experience entails. In urging us to participate in his fictional world, Steinbeck shows a grasp and understanding of the country's political and social scene as memorably as any writer in the last century.

Robert DeMott, PhD, is an internationally respected expert on Steinbeck. His first scholarly book, *Steinbeck's Reading*, was published in 1984. This work was followed by *Working Days: The Journals of the Grapes of Wrath*



(1989) and *Steinbeck's Typewriter: Essays on His Art* (1998). He has also written authoritative introductions and notes for three Steinbeck novels in Penguin Book's Classic Series. In addition, he served as editor of a three-volume Library of America series on the author.

DeMott is the Edwin and Ruth Kennedy Distinguished Professor at Ohio University, teaching humanities there. He was honored with both the undergraduate and graduate outstanding teaching award during his tenure.

He served as the Director of the Steinbeck Research Center at San Jose State University and is currently on the Board of Editors for the *Steinbeck Review*. An avid fly fisherman, DeMott's more recent publication is *Angling Days: A Fly Fisher's Journals*. He earned his bachelor's degree from Assumption College, master's degree from John Carroll University and PhD in American literature from Kent State University.

1:30 p.m., Monday: The Grapes of Wrath: Still Trampling out the Vintage with Robert DeMott, PhD

The Grapes of Wrath (1939) is one of the most famous novels in America, perhaps even in the world. When Steinbeck wrote this book he had no inkling that it would attain such wide-spread recognition, though he did have high hopes for its effectiveness. Wherever human beings dream of a dignified and free society and harvest the fruits of their own labor, *The Grapes of Wrath's* insistent message is still applicable. As a tale of dashed illusions, thwarted desires, inhuman suffering and betrayed promises, all strung on the slenderest thread of hope, *The Grapes of Wrath* summed up the Depression era's socially conscious art.

"Steinbeck shaped a geography of conscience in *The Grapes of Wrath*," novelist Don DeLillo once claimed, "for it is a novel in which there is something at stake in every sentence." Beyond that, for emotional urgency, evocative power, sustained impact and continued controversy, the book still has few peers in American fiction. Its inception, historical background, composition, publication and aftermath will be discussed in this lecture.

10:30 a.m., Tuesday: The Journals of John Steinbeck with Robert DeMott, PhD

Steinbeck was happiest when he was writing, for writing in its most capacious, determined sense was the deeply engaging residence and intellectual habitation that he sought for and dwelled in during most of his life; it was a home space of deep association that stemmed from "the connection between mind and being and the place inhabited," as he once said. Working at writing, he confessed, was "the only way I am ever even reasonably happy."

Steinbeck spoke on this frequently in his correspondence and publications, but nowhere concentrated on them more exclusively than in *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Wayward Bus* and *East of Eden*, where Steinbeck's habitual inward turn manifested itself in sustained composition journals.

Treating Steinbeck's journaling as a habitual tic necessary to the technology of his novel writing, rather than as a coopted venture, allows insights into Steinbeck's self-created authorial biography. In each one, he manages to fashion a self-revealing and dramatic, though often piecemeal and covert, inside narrative that historicizes three different eras in his creative and personal life. Even in their occasional "purposely obscure" (his term) shorthand notation, these work diaries enable our understanding of and appreciation for his total career, his driving impulses, desires and methods as a writer and the content of his daily life.

1:30 p.m., Tuesday: John Steinbeck & Fishing with Robert DeMott, PhD

Steinbeck, a life-long fisherman, certainly understood that in angling it is more than fish we seek. He understood the implications of water's primal archetypal relationship to the human unconscious—a mythic, elemental and symbolic relatedness evident throughout his fictive work from *Cup of Gold* (1929) to *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961). Steinbeck loved the intimate process of fishing, the simple rituals and preparations associated with the act and the sense of well-being that came from doing something for himself outside his work-a-day routine. It was a form of therapy for Steinbeck, who spoke of Gardiner's Bay off his Bluff Point summer home in Sag Harbor, N.Y. ("my little fishing place" and "healing waters"). Water gazing and its related activities created a respite from daily obligations, imposed deadlines and duties, and created a sphere of retreat and introspection in which he recharged himself, both as a person and as a writer.

"A Peace of My Mind"

'Peace' continued from page 1

In 2011, the exhibit won support from a Kickstarter campaign to produce a book with a foreword written by Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter, Ela Gandhi. The book earned first place in the Midwest Book Awards and won a silver IPPY from the Independent Publishers Association.

"A Peace of My Mind" has been presented at the Peace & Justice Studies Association National Conference, the Nobel Peace Prize Forum and the Dayton International Peace Museum. The project was honored in 2013 with EDIT's Art for Change Award, Jovial Concept's Peace Initiative and a Jefferson Award for Youth Service.

In addition to the exhibit, Noltner will present a lecture at 8:15 p.m. Tuesday, June 20 in Hoover Auditorium. Special exhibit viewing opportunities with Noltner will be held from 3-5 p.m. Wednesday, June 21 and Thursday, June 22.



"A Peace of My Mind" is made possible in part by state tax dollars allocated by the Ohio Legislature to the Ohio Arts Council (OAC). The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically.

10:30 a.m., Wednesday: Using Stories to Explore Identity with John Noltner

Join author and photographer John Noltner as he leads an in-depth conversation on identity based on stories from his first book, *A Peace of My Mind*. Participants will use writing exercises, small group discussions and large group reflection to address the notion of identity, drawing on issues of faith, gender, religion, class, race and political affiliation. Stories can



help us reveal and dismantle bias, and these stories are all around us... if we choose to listen.

With more than 20 years of experience as a freelance photographer, Noltner has specialized in images of people, lifestyle and travel. His award-winning work has been published in numerous magazines, including *National Geographic Traveler*, *Smithsonian*,

Forbes and *Midwest Living*.

In 2009, he embarked on a journey to explore the meaning of peace, one story at a time. This journey led him to produce an exhibit of personal stories, as well as a book in which ordinary people reveal extraordinary insights into how we can work toward common good and create a world that is more just for all. The exhibit has traveled the country and engaged audiences in dialogue relating to peace, conflict resolution and social justice.

In follow up to his first project, he developed a new collection of stories, *A Peace of My Mind: American Stories*, to inspire and empower people from diverse backgrounds to create positive change in the world. "A Peace of My Mind's" combination of art and storytelling transcends barriers and provides a human approach to the challenging issues of today.

1:30 p.m., Wednesday: Going Outside of Your Comfort Zone with John Noltner

We all see the world through the lens of our own personal experience. It becomes a comfortable place to be, but it can be limiting at the same time. How do we challenge ourselves to go outside of that comfort zone in our social interactions and learn from the experience of others as we try to expand our own worldview?

Join Noltner as he shares examples of how he has done this in the development of his second book, *A Peace of My Mind: American Stories*, and engage in dialog with others in exercises designed to help uncover both common ground and new ways of seeing the world.

10:30 a.m., Thursday: Interviewing, Writing, Editing & Honoring with John Noltner

What is the difference between editing and censoring? When is the reflection of someone else's story appropriate and when does it honor? What is the difference between intent and perception? These questions are central to the journalistic process and what it means to document the lives of others. Join Noltner as he explores these and other questions related to the interviewing, writing and editing processes as he has developed his exhibit, "A Peace of My Mind." The structure of this program will be focused on an informal discussion, including small group discussions and a free flow of ideas based on the experiences in the room.

1:30 p.m., Thursday: Photography: Reflecting the Spirit of Person & Place with John Noltner

A picture is worth 1,000 words, but are your pictures saying what you would like them to say? Have you ever shared photos with friends after returning from a trip and said, "Well...a picture just doesn't do it justice?" Join Noltner as he shares stories from a 20-year career as a travel photographer. Hear stories of how he captured some of his favorite images, and learn how to improve your own photography. Yes, it helps to have good equipment, but even today's cell phones can make remarkable images. The final result has less to do with the equipment you use and more to do with how you use it. Learn simple techniques for putting yourself in the right place, composing thoughtfully and creating images you will be proud to share with your friends.