

Bestselling author Tim O'Brien to speak about the writing life and the experience of war

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY – His haunting novel *In the Lake of the Woods* raises thoughtful questions about the role of the citizen and the writer during a time of war – much like the war in Iraq our nation is experiencing now.

But this timeliness is just one of the reasons Vassar College has invited author Tim O'Brien to serve as the William Starr Distinguished Lecturer for the Class of 2011, and why *In the Lake of the Woods* was suggested summer reading for this entire new group of Vassar freshmen. O'Brien's widely praised work not only explores the lasting effects of Vietnam, it is also a gripping, expertly crafted mystery. And, O'Brien has been honored with multiple awards for his eight books, including the National Book Award in Fiction, prompting the San Francisco Chronicle to call him "the best American writer of his generation."

O'Brien will discuss his major works and the writing life in the Vassar Chapel at 5:30 pm on Thursday, September 27, 2007. This event is free and open to the public.

The New York Times praised the book as "a novel about the unforgivable uses of history, about what happens when you try to pretend that history no longer exists." In it, a Minnesota woman vanishes and her husband, a disgraced politician, is forced to face his secret past in Vietnam. Through this veteran's evocative story, O'Brien explores the true nature of politics in America and the role citizens play during times of war.

About Tim O'Brien

Tim O'Brien graduated from Macalester College in 1968 and was drafted into the Vietnam War soon after. He served in Vietnam, despite his opposition to the war, and his unit was enlisted during the Mai Lai Massacre. In 1970, when his tour ended, O'Brien enrolled in Harvard's graduate school, but left to take a newspaper internship and then to write his first book.

Although many of O'Brien's novels include references to Vietnam and its lasting impact on our citizens and our world, he does not consider himself a Vietnam writer. He is the author of eight books, including *Going After Cacciato*, which won the National Book Award in Fiction in 1979. *The Things They Carried* was named by *The New York*

Times as one of the ten best books of 1990, received the Chicago Tribune Heartland Award in fiction, and was a finalist for both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. The French edition of *The Things They Carried* received the Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger, and John Updike selected the title story for *The Best American Short Stories of the Century*.

Time magazine named *In the Lake of the Woods* the best novel of 1994. The book also received the James Fenimore Cooper Prize from the Society of American Historians and was selected as one of the ten best books of the year by *The New York Times*. O'Brien's other books include *If I Die in a Combat Zone*, *Northern Lights*, *Tomcat in Love* and *July, July*, and his short fiction has appeared in such journals as *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic*, *Esquire*, *Playboy*, and *Granta*. Tim O'Brien currently holds the Roy F. and Joann Cole Mitte Endowed Chair in Creative Writing at Texas State University. Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations at Vassar should contact the Office of Campus Activities at (845) 437-5370.

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Posted by [Office of Communications](#) Thursday, September 6, 2007