

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Journalists for Human Rights lecture opens new speaker series

Relationship between media and social issues to be highlighted for students and public

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BRANTFORD – The executive director of an organization working to increase the quality and quantity of media coverage of human rights in Africa will launch an interdisciplinary speaker series at Laurier Brantford.

Ben Peterson, executive director of Journalists for Human Rights, will deliver the first lecture in the new Journalism and Human Rights Speaker Series at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, January 26, at the Brant Community Church. Peterson's address, entitled Taking Action: Journalists for Human Rights, will outline why an organization like Journalists for Human Rights is needed, how it operates as a non-governmental organization and how students can make a difference by starting a chapter.

"The work that Ben and his organization do strikes me as an innovative approach to raising the profile of human rights abuses in Africa and worldwide," says Andrew Robinson, a contemporary studies professor with Laurier Brantford's human rights and human diversity program. "With greater knowledge of issues and the opportunities, our students will be able to participate in the advancement of human rights, while our journalism students have a chance to increase the number of stories in the news about human rights issues."

Organizers of the event hope students will support an initiative to start a local chapter of the organization at Laurier Brantford. Contemporary studies student Melinda Cheevers sees an opportunity for students to put their education into practice.

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“The idea to start a local chapter has grown out of my interest in the organization and a desire to be a part of it,” says Cheevers. “The fact that Laurier Brantford offers both journalism and human rights courses makes this club an even better fit.”

This will be the first event in the three-part speaker series, all of which will be held at the Brant Community Church and open to the public. The two other lectures are:

- On Tuesday, February 7 at 12:30 p.m. Bill Dunphy, poverty reporter from the Hamilton Spectator and John Clarke from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty will discuss poverty and the press.
- On Tuesday, March 7 at 3 p.m. Martha Kuwee Kumsa, an assistant professor with Laurier’s faculty of social work and former Ethiopian journalist who was jailed for almost a decade, will speak about her journey to freedom and a new life in Canada, as well as her perspective on the role of journalism in human rights at home and abroad.

For more information about Journalists for Human Rights, please visit www.jhr.ca/index2.html and for more information about the journalism or human rights and human diversity programs, please visit www.wlu.ca/brantford.