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Author, Playwright and Rabbi Chaim Potok to Speak at UD's Distinguished Speaker Series

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**AUTHOR, PLAYWRIGHT RABBI CHAIM POTOK
TO SPEAK AT UD'S DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES**

DAYTON, Ohio — Chaim Potok first submitted a story to the *Atlantic Monthly* at age 17.

The piece was not published but he received a complimentary note from an editor asking if he was writing a novel. The encouraging note paid off.

Potok has written eight novels including best-selling books such as *The Gift of Asher Lev*, *The Promise* and *The Chosen*, which has been made into a movie and musical. Potok has also written numerous plays, short stories, articles, children's books and non-fiction books.

Potok will speak on "Authority and Rebellion: The Writer and the Community," at 8 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 28, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom at the University of Dayton. Admission to his speech, the second of UD's 1998-99 Distinguished Speaker Series, is free and open to the public.

Potok was raised in an Orthodox Jewish family but was drawn to the less restrictive doctrine of Conservative Judaism and was eventually ordained a rabbi. His interest in writing and literature was opposed by both his family and teachers. This conflict between religious heritage and secular interests is a reoccurring theme in Potok's novels.

In his third novel, *My Name is Asher Lev*, Potok writes about an artist who grew up in a devout Hasidic Jewish family who considers art a form of vanity. The character is reluctant to abandon his religious tradition but finds it impossible to avoid his artistic instinct.

It was while writing this book that Potok took up painting. Some examples of his work can be found on the Web at <http://www.lasierra.edu/~ballen/potok/Potok.paintings.html>.

In 1990, Potok published a sequel, *The Gift of Asher Lev*, that begins 20 years after he left off in *My Name is Asher Lev*.

Although much of Potok's writing focuses on the Jewish traditions, Potok's stories are not limited to conflicts faced by Jewish men. In *Davita's Harp*, Potok tells the story of a young

-over-

girl born to a Jewish mother and Christian father who both give up their religions. Davita embraces Orthodox Judaism traditions but soon realizes the limitations of her religion when she is denied an academic award solely because she is female.

And in *I Am the Clay*, set in Korea during the 1950s, Potok portrays two elderly peasants and a young orphan as they travel from Seoul to a refugee camp. The book touches on feelings of human connectedness amid suffering and the confusion and hope associated with religious beliefs.

Potok, a resident of Merion, Pa., is also the special projects editor for the Jewish Publication Society.

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