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NEWS RELEASE

Oct. 19, 2009

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COMPANY RELEASES DVD LECTURE SERIES BY UM PROFESSOR

MISSOULA —

The Teaching Company recently released a 24-part lecture DVD featuring University of Montana Regents Professor Paul Lauren presenting a course on the history of human rights.

The course, titled “The Rights of Man: Great Thinkers and Great Movements,” is part of the company’s “Great Courses” series, which features top-ranked professors from colleges and universities across the country. The company follows a rigorous process to select educators for its series, and only about one in every 5,000 professors in America is chosen to film a course at its studio in Washington, D.C.

According to Lauren, a faculty member in UM’s Department of History, representatives from The Teaching Company sent the award-winning professor a letter several years ago asking if they could fly someone to Missoula to listen to a few of his lectures. Lauren said yes, but he also told them he wouldn’t change anything about his lectures for the visit.

“I told them they’re welcome to come, but I’m not going to do anything different because the students are the priority,” Lauren said.

The representative must have given him a “good report,” Lauren said, because the company contacted him several weeks later and asked him to come to Washington, D.C., to give a sample lecture. The company — and several hundred current course users — liked what they saw and asked Lauren to record a series of lectures for a “Great Courses” DVD.

Lauren didn't immediately accept the offer. He was writing a book at the time and was worried the commitment would interfere with his teaching responsibilities at UM. He sought advice from UM President George Dennison, and when asked if he should participate, Dennison said, "absolutely."

"It is no surprise that The Teaching Company sought out Professor Lauren, as he is not only one of this institution's best professors, but also one of the best in the world," Dennison said. "Our students may not realize they are being taught by someone who has committed his life to both studying and living human rights issues. We are proud of Professor Lauren and we're delighted that the rest of the world will have access to his wisdom through this lecture series."

Lauren flew to Washington several times over the course of a year to film the lectures with The Teaching Company's team of producers. The entire process — from when the company first contacted him to the DVD's recent release — took about four years, he said.

Lauren said preparation for the recorded lectures, which are similar to PBS documentaries and incorporate photo, video and audio components, was much more involved than a typical presentation he gives at UM. Plus, if he stumbles across a word during a regular class, he doesn't have to start over again as he did when the cameras were rolling.

"The challenge was to make it interesting and useful to a very broad and intellectually curious audience," he said. "I found that to be a wonderful challenge."

Lauren, named UM's first Regents Professor in 1991, takes a global approach in teaching human rights history, and his courses touch on the issues of civil and women's rights, slavery, and the freedoms of religion and speech, among many others. But he doesn't just teach human rights history — he was part of it himself.

Before starting his 36-year career at UM, Lauren was actively involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and he met the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. when he lived and worked in Harlem. He also traveled behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War and attended Yugoslavian

leader Slobodan Milosevic's trial before the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands. Lauren is considered one of the world's foremost experts on human rights issues, and he often consults with governments on the subject. He has addressed the United Nations, the Nobel Institute and audiences around the world, including some in Middle Eastern countries.

"I'm very blessed to have had personal experiences in this area. It's given me insight into the nature of human rights abuses and provided humility and gratitude for the rights that I enjoy," Lauren said.

Lauren received master's and doctorate degrees from Stanford University and taught there before moving to Missoula to teach at UM. He has been the recipient of the Most Inspirational Teacher Award, the Montana Professor of the Year Award from the Carnegie Foundation and the U.S. Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, and the Distinguished Service to International Education Award.

For more information, call Lauren at 406-243-4086 or e-mail paul.lauren@mso.umt.edu. To purchase the DVD series, visit The Teaching Company's Web site at <http://www.teach12.com>.

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