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The Art of Biography: Neal Gabler Comes to Chestertown, January 30

CHESTERTOWN, MD— Neal Gabler is an author, cultural historian, screenwriter, producer, critic, and commentator who has been called “one of America’s most important public intellectuals.” From now until May, he is in residence in Chestertown with a writing and teaching fellowship at Washington College’s C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience.

On Wednesday, January 30, Gabler will introduce his work in a talk, “The Art of Biography,” at 5:30 p.m. in Hynson Lounge, Hodson Hall, on the Washington College campus. The event will be followed by a book signing. It is free and open to the public.

Gabler has chronicled American politics and culture through the stories of extraordinary lives, writing prizewinning biographies of Walt Disney, Walter Winchell, and early Hollywood movie moguls. He has won many awards, including an Emmy, two *Los Angeles Times* Book Prizes, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and is a frequent commentator on television and in the press. While in residence at the Starr Center, he will be working on a book about the late Senator Edward Kennedy and modern American politics. He is also teaching a semester-long course at Washington College, “The Art of Biography,” offered through the Department of English and the American Studies Program.

In his talk, Gabler will use examples from both his work-in-progress on Kennedy and his past books to reveal how a biographer chooses his subject, researches his work, and turns the stories of an individual life into larger metaphors.

“Biographies are novels with real people,” Gabler said. “In Kennedy, I have one of the greatest protagonists anyone could ask for, and just as one studies novels for revelation, I’m studying Kennedy for revelations about modern politics, among other things.”

Gabler is the 2013 Patrick Henry Writing Fellow at the Starr Center. Launched in 2008, the Henry Fellowship aims to encourage reflection on the links between American history and contemporary culture, and to foster the literary art of historical writing. The award provides its recipients with both a home at the circa-1735 Patrick Henry House on Queen Street in Chestertown and an office at the Starr Center, in the nearby colonial Custom House. The Henry Fellowship and Gabler's talk are both co-sponsored by the Rose O'Neill Literary House, Washington College's center for literature and the literary arts.

Gabler's current work, tentatively titled *Against the Wind: Edward Kennedy and the Tortuous Course of American Liberalism*, the first major biography of the late senator, will be published by the Crown/Harmony division of Random House. Gabler has previously taught at the University of Michigan, Penn State, and SUNY Stony Brook, and is a senior fellow of the University of Southern California's Annenberg Norman Lear Center.

"Studying biography with Neal Gabler is like having Michael Phelps as your swim coach," said Adam Goodheart, the Starr Center's director. "We're excited to have him here as a teacher, a writer, and a member of the Washington College community."

The Patrick Henry Writing Fellowship is permanently endowed as part of a \$2.5 million challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Washington College acquired the Patrick Henry Fellows' Residence through a generous gift from the Barksdale-Dabney-Patrick Henry Family Foundation, which was established by the Nuttle family of Talbot County, direct descendants of the patriot Patrick Henry. Further support for the fellowship has been provided by the Starr Foundation, the Hodson Trust, and other donors.

Founded in 1782 under the patronage of George Washington, [Washington College](http://www.washcoll.edu) is a private, independent college of liberal arts and sciences located in colonial Chestertown on Maryland's Eastern Shore. For more information, visit <http://www.washcoll.edu>.

The College's C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience is dedicated to fostering innovative approaches to the American past and present. Through educational programs, scholarship and public outreach, and a special focus on the art of written history, the Starr Center seeks to bridge the divide between the academic world and the public at large. For more information on the Center, visit <http://starrcenter.washcoll.edu>.