Writers to share work in debut series

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LAFAYETTE — The Deep South Festival of Writers makes its spring debut Friday with a reading from one of UL Lafayette’s distinguished professors.

The festival is sponsored by UL Lafayette’s department of creative writing and offers the public an opportunity to hear and learn from contemporary literary minds.

On Friday, Subrata Dasgupta, director of UL Lafayette’s Institute of Cognitive Science, will read from his novel, “Three Times a Minority.” The novel is about an Indian woman struggling to balance her roles as wife, mother and research scientist in a male-dominated field.

Dasgupta is a “well-known genius,” said Jerry McGuire, director of UL Lafayette’s creative writing department.

It is the first work of fiction produced by Dasgupta, who spends his days studying the workings of the mind and the creative process. In writing the book, Dasgupta had a first-hand look into the artist’s perspective.

“When you do it yourself, you can’t stop to think about what you’re doing,” he said. “I just don’t know where it came from. I don’t mean it in a highfalutin’ sense. It just happens. You’re just creating something.”


The festival will also feature fiction writer Josh Russell of Tulane University on Feb. 6. Russell’s novel, “Yellow Jack,” was selected as a Borders New Voices selection and a finalist for the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award.

On Feb. 18, Jerome Rothenberg will offer a lecture on ethnoetics, which studies connections between poetry and anthropology.

McGuire described Rothenberg as the festival’s “rarest draw.”

“He’s absolutely brilliant,” McGuire said. “He’s probably the world’s greatest authority on ethnoetics.”

Rothenberg won’t leave Lafayette without sharing his own work. He’ll read poetry selections on Feb. 19.

The festival was formerly a weekend conference with lectures, readings and workshops. Last fall, the department opted to expand the conference into a year-long festival to make the event more accessible.

“Our attendance had slipped a bit and our sources of funding have slipped also,” McGuire said. “We were concerned to try to find a way to economize a bit and also to give more people in the community access.”

That includes a “poetry crawl,” a night of poetry readings that move from venue to venue with an open mic for both the novice and published poet to share their work with an audience.

The crawl has been a part of the conference in the past and is a favorite with the community, McGuire said.

“It’s very lively,” he said. “It’s something that people can really get involved in. They can read their own stuff, and it takes place at friendly places — coffeehouses, pubs, art galleries.”

Want to go?

The Deep South Festival of Writers continues this spring with readings and lectures open to the public.

- Subrata Dasgupta, director of UL Lafayette’s Institute of Cognitive Sciences, will read from his novel, “Three Times a Minority,” at 7 p.m. Jan. 30 in Room 315 in UL Lafayette’s H.L. Griffin Hall.
- Fiction writer Josh Russell at 7 p.m. Feb. 6 at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church.
- Lecture by Jerome Rothenberg, an internationally renowned poet, on “Ethnoetics At The Millennium” at 7 p.m. Feb. 18 at the UL Lafayette Alumni Center.
- Poetry reading by Jerome Rothenberg at 7 p.m. Feb. 19 at the UL Lafayette Alumni Center.
- “Poetry Crawl” at 7 p.m. April 9 at a series of downtown venues with readings traveling from location to location.
- Poetry reading by Camille Martin at 7 p.m. April 23 at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church.
- For more information, call (337) 482-6908.

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