

2013 December GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Wednesday 11 December 2013 – 2.00pm
UQ Centre, Union Road, UQ St Lucia Campus

Faculty of Arts

CITATION

Award of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* Professor John Coetzee

Chancellor,

One of the most celebrated living authors, Professor John Coetzee has crafted a highly distinctive career as a novelist, linguist and translator. In 2003 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature by the Swedish Academy.

At the time he was only the fifth African and second South African to have received this coveted award. He is also one of only three authors to have won the Booker Prize twice: in 1983 and 1999.

After a distinguished academic career in a series of positions at the University of Cape Town teaching English literature, Professor Coetzee moved to Australia in 2002 where he is now Professor of Humanities at the University of Adelaide. His first visit to Australia took place in 1991 when he took up a visiting appointment in The University of Queensland's English department. He returned to Australia in 1996 for Writer's Week as a guest of the Adelaide Festival. He became an Australian citizen in 2006.

Other academic appointments have included Assistant Professor of English at the State University of New York and Distinguished Service Professor of Social Thought at the University of Chicago. He has also held visiting appointments at Johns Hopkins University, Stanford University and Harvard University.

Professor Coetzee has written 14 works of fiction and three fictionalised autobiographies as well as numerous essays, poems, introductions and translations from Dutch and Afrikaans into English.

His novels have cast a spotlight on many important issues. These include the politics of the apartheid era in South Africa, the complex problems that persist in that country since the end of apartheid, and the ethical responsibilities of individual humans towards other humans as well as animals.

A mark of Professor Coetzee's work is his focus on his subjects' anguish and suffering. To read his work is to be profoundly unsettled by this suffering and to sense what the author Patrick White referred to as "the incurable loneliness of the soul". Yet both the suffering and the loneliness signpost the ethical life, and it is to the need to commit to this life, no matter the cost, that Professor Coetzee ultimately draws attention.

Chancellor, I present to you Professor John Coetzee, Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters, France; Order of Mapungubwe (Gold), South Africa; Knight of the Order of the Lion, Netherlands; Master of Arts of the University of Cape Town; Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Texas; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of the University of Strathclyde; Doctor

of Letters *honoris causa* of State University of New York; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of the University of Cape Town; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of the University of Natal; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of Skidmore College; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of Rhodes University; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of the University of Hartford; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of Oxford University; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of La Trobe University; Doctor of the University *honoris causa* of the University of Adelaide; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of the University of Technology Sydney; Doctor of Humane Letters *honoris causa* of the American University of Paris; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of the University of Poznan; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of the University of Witwatersrand; Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* of the Universidad Central, Bogota; Life Fellow of the University of Cape Town; Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, United Kingdom; Honorary Fellow of the Modern Language Association, United States of America; Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities; and Honorary Fellow of Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics for the award of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*, bestowed by the Senate of The University of Queensland.