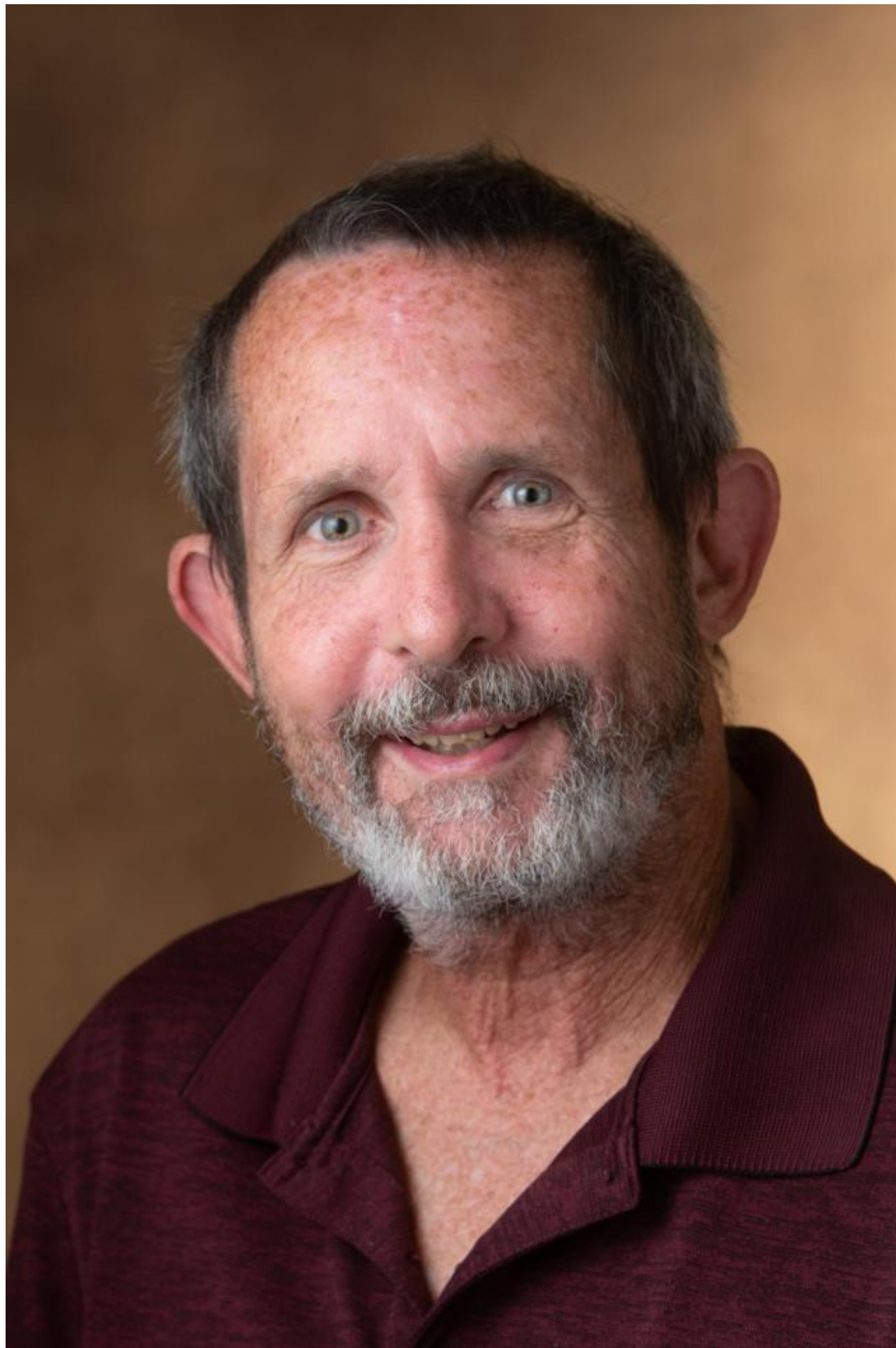


CAS presents Distinguished Going Endowed Award to Dr. Gerald O'Brien

by Megan Weiser

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Gerald O'Brien, PhD, professor in the Department of Social Work, is the recipient of the College of Arts and Sciences' (CAS) 2019 William and Margaret Going Endowed Professorship Award

The distinguished award honors faculty who fundamentally connect their scholarship to their teaching and transform students' lives. O'Brien's fascinating scholarly work centers on historical eugenics and contemporary bioethics, and brings a disability perspective to these issues. O'Brien's research also considers the relationship of pejorative metaphor themes to social injustice movements.

"The William and Margaret Going Endowed Professorship Award is the highest honor in the College of Arts and Sciences, and given to faculty who truly embody our teacher-scholar ideal," said CAS Dean Greg Budzban, PhD. "Dr. O'Brien's distinguished career, outstanding scholarship and impact on his student's lives are a wonderful example of this ideal."

"I'm incredibly pleased and humbled to receive this award," said O'Brien. "Through my research in historical aspects of disabilities, and especially my focus on eugenics, I came to realize the importance of how social problems or groups are framed, categorized or identified. This further relates to public policy, and the services and funding options that are supported, as well as the support or lack thereof, provided for measures of social control."

"I've always been interested in historical research, and drawn to understand what historical precedents can tell us about both the nature of social problems, as well as viable response options," he added.

According to O'Brien, his latest research objective is to expand his knowledge of the various ways that historical eugenics relates to both new genetic technological innovations, as well as the relevant policy issues which will likely be developed in the wake of the completion of the Human Genome Project.

"This is an extremely important issue as we consider the various ways in which the findings of the Human Genome Project and related bioethical research will be implemented," O'Brien explained. "This issue is particularly important to many in the disability community, since the policies that will be implemented in the future related to genetic research will arise in part from our collective view of disability and its presumptive place in the world. This will in turn be impacted in no small degree by the metaphors and other rhetoric that is invoked to frame both disability and biogenetic technology."

Since joining the SIUE Department of Social Work in 1997, O'Brien has lived the University's teacher-scholar model by integrating his research in the classroom, and involving students as fellow researchers and often co-authors.

"I've always liked working with students and giving them co-author credit, especially since most students see academic publishing as something that is largely unachievable," said O'Brien, who has produced approximately 10 peer-reviewed publications with graduate assistant co-authors."

"Also, there is a close connection between my research and teaching. My disability research is relevant to the disability courses I teach, and aspects are also incorporated in policy classes. The research I conduct on pejorative metaphor themes within the context of social injustice pertains directly to policy classes."

O'Brien's third book, on metaphor analysis and social welfare policy, is currently in publication with NASW Press. His fourth book will focus on eugenics, bioethics and disabilities, as these issues relate to the social work profession. He will soon be searching for a publisher. In addition, he has had approximately 25 peer-reviewed publications or book chapters.

As the Going Award winner, O'Brien will present a public lecture in fall 2019, at which he will discuss the relationship between historical eugenics and contemporary bioethics with a disability perspective. He plans to develop partnerships with local disability agencies and involve members of the local disability community in his presentation.

Central to SIUE's exceptional and comprehensive education, the College of Arts and Sciences offers degree programs in the natural sciences, humanities, arts, social sciences, and communications. The College touches the lives of all SIUE students helping them explore diverse ideas and experiences, while learning to think and live as fulfilled, productive members of the global community. Study abroad, service-learning, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities better prepare SIUE students not only to succeed in our region's workplaces, but also to become valuable leaders who make important contributions to our communities.