

WITTENBERG
SERIES 26/27

Opening
Convocation

COUNTING CROWS

RICHARD PHILLIPS, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY AND
DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

AUGUST 25

11:30 A.M. WEAVER CHAPEL

wittenberg
UNIVERSITY





RICHARD PHILLIPS, Ph.D.

Dr. Richard Phillips is a wildlife ecologist who teaches classes in environmental science and ecology and serves as the director of the First Year Research Program (FYRA). Described as embodying “the University’s commitment to student engagement, mentorship, and transformative learning experiences,” he uses humor and experiential learning opportunities to inspire his students in their study of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Incorporating a heavy field component, his classes take advantage of Wittenberg field sites in Mississippi, Michigan, and Ohio. His lab is currently working with various stakeholders to determine the presence of Kirtland’s snakes and spotted turtles at several locations in Clark County, Ohio. Phillips holds a B.A. in biology from Emory University and a M.S. and Ph.D. from Texas Tech University in wildlife science.

ABOUT OPENING CONVOCATION

A formal ceremony that marks the beginning of the new academic year, Opening Convocation traditionally welcomes new students, introduces student leaders, and recognizes faculty promotions and tenure. Keynote speakers have included new Wittenberg presidents and provosts, prominent alumni, respected scholars, writers, and others, and in recent years, the recipient of the University’s top faculty prize, the Alumni Association Award for Distinguished Teaching. Since 1982, Opening Convocation has also served as the first event in the annual Wittenberg Series, a selection of cultural activities available to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community.

PROGRAM

PROCESSIONAL

Please stand.

“Elegy”

by C. Hubert Parry (1848-1918)
David Weimer, Chapel Organist

INVOCATION

The Rev. Dr. Nathan A. Esala
Matevia University Pastor

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKER

Mary Jo Zembar, Ph.D.,
Interim Provost and Professor of
Psychology

ADDRESS

“Counting Crows”

Richard Phillips, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of Biology and
Director of Environmental Science
*2026 Alumni Association Award for
Distinguished Teaching Recipient*

INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT LEADERS

Joi Garrett Scales,
Vice President and Dean of Student
Engagement

RECOGNITION OF FACULTY PROMOTIONS

RECOGNITION OF FACULTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD COLLEGIUM AWARD RECIPIENT

Mary Jo Zembar, Ph.D.,
Interim Provost and Professor of
Psychology

BENEDICTION

The Rev. Dr. Nathan A. Esala
Matevia University Pastor

ALMA MATER

by Robert H. Miller

Wittenberg, dear Wittenberg,
Once again to thee
We, thy grateful children, pledge
Love and loyalty.
We shall always love thy groves
And thy classic halls;
Mem’ry, like the ivy twines
Round thy hallowed walls.
Wittenberg, dear Wittenberg,
Time flies fast away;
Soon our happy college days
Will be gone for aye;
But in all life’s storm and stress,
Whate’er we may do,
To our Alma Mater dear
We will e’er be true.

RECESSIONAL

*Please remain seated until the platform
party and faculty have left the chapel.*

“March in G”

by G.F. Handel (1685-1759)
David Weimer, Chapel Organist

ABOUT THE WITTENBERG SERIES

Now celebrating its 42nd season,
the Wittenberg Series offers a
selection of cultural activities
available to students, faculty, staff,
alumni, and the community. For
more information about the 2026-
2027 schedule, please visit www.wittenberg.edu/wittseries.

WITTENBERG SERIES 26/27

PREVIOUS OPENING CONVOCATION SPEAKERS

1982-1983 Robert C. Williams,
Professor & Dean, Washington
University, St. Louis

1983-1984 Martin Marty,
Professor, University of Chicago
Divinity School

1984-1985 Peter Stansky,
Professor of History, Stanford
University

1985-1986 Daniel Walden,
Professor, Pennsylvania State
University

1986-1987 William Wiebenga,
Provost, Wittenberg University

1987-1988 Norman A.
Graebner, Emeritus Professor,
University of Virginia

1988-1989 Richard Reeves,
Author, Columnist & Political
Correspondent

1989-1990 Michel C.
Oksenberg, Professor, University
of Michigan

1990-1991 Frances Moore
Lappe', Director of Food First

1991-1992 Sammye C. Greer,
Provost, Wittenberg University

1992-1993 Terence Hardy Waite,
Hostage Negotiator

1993-1994 Bernice R. Sandler,
Women's Rights Advocate

1994-1995 Cornel West,
Author, Philosopher, & Scholar

1995-1996 Baird Tipson,
12th President of Wittenberg
University

1996-1997 The Honorable
William A. McClain '34, Judge,
Attorney, & Community Leader

1997-1998 Arnold Rampersad,
Woodrow Wilson Professor of
Literature, Princeton University

1998-1999 Mihaly
Csikszentmihalyi, Professor,
University of Chicago

1999-2000 Eric Booth, Actor,
Author & Educator

2000-2001 Manning Marable,
Educator, Author & Journalist

2001-2002 Paul Rogat Loeb,
Author

2002-2003 Donald McCabe,
Educator & Specialist in
Organization Management

2003-2004 The Hon. Jennette
Bradley '74, Ohio Lieutenant
Governor

2004-2005 Gus Lee, Ethicist &
Author

2005-2006 Mark H. Erickson,
13th President of Wittenberg
University

2006-2007 Dan P. McAdams,
Psychologist

2007-2008 The Rev. Dr. Mark
Hanson, ELCA Bishop

2008-2009 Max J. Roberts,
President, Barnes & Noble
College Booksellers Inc.

2009-2010 David Rusk, Urban
Policy Expert

2010-2011 Linda Stuntz,
Environmental Attorney

2011-2012 Christopher M.
Duncan, Provost, Wittenberg
University

2012-2013 Laurie M. Joyner,
14th President of Wittenberg
University

2013-2014 Kenneth Cukier '91,
Data Editor, *The Economist*

2014-2015 Jeremy Hunter '94,
Management Philosopher

2015-2016 Sandy Dukat '94,
Paralympian

2016-2017 Christal Morehouse
'98, Senior Program Officer,
Open Society Foundations

2017-2018 Michael Frandsen,
15th President of Wittenberg
University

2018-2019 Shakeer Abdullah '99,
Diversity Scholar-Practitioner

2019-2020 Michelle Mattson,
Provost, Wittenberg University

2020-2021 Julius Bailey, Assoc.
Professor of Philosophy, and
Brian Yontz, Assoc. Professor &
Chair of Education (*pre-recorded
video due to COVID-19 pandemic*)

2021-2022 John Schumate '99,
Global Marketing Expert &
Wittenberg University Board of
Directors Member

2022-2023 Sally Brannan,
Professor of Education
& 2022 Recipient of the
Alumni Association Award for
Distinguished Teaching

2023-2024 Brian Yontz,
Wittenberg University Provost
and Professor of Education

2024-2025 Amy R. McGuffey
'95, 2024 Recipient of the
Alumni Association Award for
Distinguished Teaching

2025-2026 Christian M.
M. Brady, DPhil (Oxon.),
16th President of Wittenberg
University

Free Admission: For more information, visit www.wittenberg.edu/wittseries