



COMMENCEMENT

December 2017

Iowa City, Iowa

THE UNIVERSITY
OF IOWA

HONORARY DEGREES

The University of Iowa, with approval of the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, confers Honorary Degrees to individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary achievements in such areas as research, scholarship, education, artistic creation, social activism, human rights, humanitarian outreach, or as recognized by the faculty as being consistent with the values of higher education.

Honorary degrees may be conferred at commencement ceremonies in the appropriate college or at University convocations. Honorary degrees are typically conferred only when the honoree is present. On rare occasions an honorary degree may be conferred in absentia.

The first honorary degree was awarded in 1962; no honorary degrees were conferred from June 1, 1981 to 2007. Over thirty honorary degrees have been awarded, and two have been approved, but have not yet been conferred.

For more information on honorary degrees, or to see a list of award recipients, please visit <https://uiowa.edu/honorary-degrees>.

The University of Iowa is pleased to make the following award in December 2017:

MARILYNNE SUMMERS ROBINSON— HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS

Marilynne Robinson is among the most important living writers in America. For fiction, for the art of the essay, and for religious understanding, she has been nominated and/or received awards from the Pulitzer committee, the Hemingway Foundation, the National Book Award committee, the Man Booker International Prize committee, the National Book Critics Circle Award committee, and the Library of Congress, among many others. She has been awarded honorary degrees from a number of universities and been elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Robinson was a faculty member in the Writers' Workshop and in the Department of English at the University of Iowa for 25 years, until her retirement in June 2016. In 2005 she was named the F. Wendell Miller Professor of English and Creative Writing.

Her novels—*Housekeeping* (1980) and the trilogy *Gilead* (2004), *Home* (2008), and *Lila* (2014)—have won critical acclaim both nationally and internationally. *Housekeeping*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, was recognized by *The Guardian* as one of the 100 best novels ever written in the English language. *Gilead* won the Pulitzer Prize, as well as the National Books Critics Circle Award. *Home* won the Los Angeles Times Book Award and the Orange Prize; *Lila* won the National Book Critics Circle Award and was a National Book Award Finalist. Her collections of essays, which have been translated into many languages and reviewed and praised in major publications by dozens of writers and scholars, have also earned international acclaim.

President Barack Obama has frequently mentioned *Gilead* as one of his favorite books, and he has personally honored her twice: once in 2012, at the White House ceremony where she received the National Humanities Medal—the highest honor in the humanities that the U.S. Government offers—and again in fall 2015, when he requested the opportunity to interview her for what became a two-part piece in the *New York Review of Books*.

In 2016, she was awarded the Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction. Time named her to its list of 100 most influential people.

Throughout her career at the University of Iowa, Dr. Robinson has demonstrated her deep commitment to the humanities and to teaching. She has been an influential leader in her profession, taught and mentored some of the best-known writers at work today, and brought unparalleled distinction to the University of Iowa.

The University of Iowa wishes to recognize Marilynne Robinson for her extraordinarily distinguished contributions to literary fiction and non-fiction, and for her deep commitment to the humanities and to teaching.