

The Gateway Presents:

The lazy student's guide to the centenary year

The University's 2008 calendar is packed with an almost-daily barrage of big-ticket items, obscure sojourns, and regular fare passed off as features. Here's what you really need to know.

28 JANUARY: Formal Launch/President's Address

Convocation Hall will be the site for the official kick off to the University's year-long birthday bash. President Indira Samerasekera will be decked out in the finest garb of her office as she delivers the keynote address, which hopefully looks nothing like Stephen Mandel's fury medal thing that he sometimes wears around his neck. Various representatives will also be called upon to speak of the U of A from their perspectives. Convocation Hall may be packed, but if you can find a spot, it'll probably be worth catching.



4 MARCH: Mary Robinson Human Rights Lectureship

Following in the footsteps of Desmond Tutu, Romeo Dallaire, and Irene Khan, Mary Robinson will be on hand to deliver the U of A's Visiting Lectureship in Human Rights. The first female president of Ireland (from 1990-1997), Robinson spent five years as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, a job description that fits ideally with the lecture. Following that, she has been the Honorary President of Oxfam International, and is currently advocating for ethical globalization addressing trade, migration, and HIV/AIDS in Africa. Just thinking about not attending this gives you bad karma.

PRIME MINISTERS' CONVERSATION SERIES

Throughout the course of the centenary year, the University will be bringing in six former prime ministers as part of its "Conversation Series"—though more likely than not, the PMs will be doing most of the talking here.

At first glance, it may seem like the University just booked whoever they could get: these are some of our most short-lived, unpopular and unsuccessful prime ministers in history. But in fact, these are simply the only living leaders we've got, which should tell us more about modern Canadian politics than the U of A's discretion in choosing keynotes.

Love them or hate them, here are the half-dozen head honchos that will be coming through town in the next year.

12 MARCH: The Right Honourable Joe Clark

Who better to start with than one of our very own? That's right, Canada's 16th PM is a former U of A student (and reluctant student councillor). In 1959/60, he was also editor-in-chief of the *Gateway*. That year is now known in some circles as "the year of masturbation," owing to a letter published at the end of that year concerning, among other things, masturbation and the female soul.

While Mr Clark will likely not be revisiting this particular aspect of his salad days at University, chances are he will take on such riveting topics as the Progressive Conservative party, Pierre Trudeau, and the '70s. There's only one way to find out, though ...



FILE PHOTO: JOSH NAULT

15 OCTOBER: The Right Honourable John Turner

Remember John Turner? Yeah, us neither. To be fair, he was only PM for three months—plus, chances are, you weren't even born in 1984. In that case, you probably don't know much about him. For instance, were you aware that his middle names are Napier Wyndham? Neither were we—until we read his Wikipedia page, anyway.

Turner had one of the shortest stints of any prime minister, and is now Canada's oldest living former PM. Coincidence? Almost definitely.

5 NOVEMBER: The Right Honourable Paul Martin

As the most recent person to inhabit 24 Sussex Drive (other than, you know, the guy who lives there right now), Martin is better able than anyone to recall his days as prime minister. Not that he would want to: his Liberals were ousted by grumpy tax payers after the Gomery Report dug up dirt on their dealings during the Quebec referendum. It may have been the Sponsorship Scandal that triggered the last election, but the only sponsorship Martin is involved in now is lucrative speaking engagements (though in this case we're sure he was jumping at the chance to one-up his PC counterparts as well).

TBA: Jean Chrétien, Brian Mulroney, and Stephen Harper

The University says it's lined up all six former living PMs as well as the current one, but only Clark, Campbell, Turner, and Martin have been scheduled so far. Likely, these three rogues have been too busy playing Prime Minister, promoting their latest book, or being involved in some form of national scandal to firm up a date yet (though not necessarily in that order).

5 MAY: The Right Honourable Kim Campbell

Where does one start with Kim Campbell? Stealing Hilary Clinton's thunder by at least 15 years, Canada's first lady-PM also bears the dubious distinction of being Canada's first unelected lady-PM. But that never stopped her from getting a gig at Harvard University, as well as gaining membership to the very posh-sounding Club of Madrid.

According to the University's website, these speeches will be recorded for later rebroadcast, but why not get in on the action as it happens? Pencil these one in on your daytimer—then ask yourself why you're not using a computerized calendar or PDA yet. Come on, it's 2008.

SEPTEMBER CELEBRATIONS

18 SEPTEMBER: Homecoming

The University is inviting back its alumni—all 207 000 of them—for this event, reviving a long-forgotten varsity tradition. No word on whether a rowdy tailgate party and football game will ensue.

23 SEPTEMBER: 100th Anniversary of the 1st Day of Classes

While there aren't set-in-stone plans for the anniversary of the first day of classes yet, there is sure to be a rather large party, a speech from the President, and lots of glad-handing of alumni. Hopefully, the cake won't be a lie.



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