

**UPDIKE IN TUCSON**  
**7<sup>th</sup> Biennial John Updike Society Conference**  
**Tucson, Arizona, Sept. 20-24, 2023**



**Celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of**  
***The Centaur and Collected Poems***

**Keynote speaker: Arizona Poet Laureate Alberto Ríos**

**Conference directors: Robert Luscher and Jan Emery**

**Venues: Pima Community College, Skyline Country Club,  
Mission Hills Casitas, Embassy Suites Tucson Paloma Village**

**Ríos co-sponsor: Pima Community College Foundation**

## Conference Highlights



—Tour of the Mission Hill “casitas” (pictured) that John and Martha Updike owned and lived in several months annually over the course of five years, located a short walk from the Skyline Country Club where Updike golfed and the couple dined. Updike wrote about **the casitas** in “**A Desert Encounter**” and also wrote the birthday poems here.

—Keynote talk/reading by ASU endowed chair and **Arizona Poet Laureate Alberto Ríos**, who has won numerous awards, including the Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry. Books will be available for purchase and signing.

—A trip to the world-renowned **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum**: a 98-acre hybrid zoo, natural history museum, and botanical garden. The only place where the iconic Saguaro cactus grows, the Sonoran Desert is the most bio-diverse ecosystem on Earth.



—Optional day trip to the Old West town of **Tombstone**, site of the famous gunfight at the O.K. Corral and Boot Hill (pictured). Tombstone has two churches, a city hall, courthouse, and historic district that are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, along with fun reenactments, small museums, a saloon that’s popular for lunches, small museums, fun reenactments, and upscale shopping.

—Optional half-day trip to visit the underground **Titan Missile Museum**, last of the 54 Titan II missile sites that were on alert across the U.S. from 1963-87 and the only one open to the public. Former Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano proclaimed this Cold War museum a national treasure. Must be able to handle 55 stairs. Includes a stop at **San Xavier Del Bac Mission** (c.1692, pictured on p. 5), a historic, still operational church.

—Optional day on your own at the Univ. of Arizona, David Foster Wallace’s alma mater, to explore the world-class **Arizona State Museum**, one of the oldest archaeological museums in the Southwest, and the **Arizona Historical Society Museum**, which has a wide range of western artifacts.

—Optional trip to **Kartchner Caverns State Park** and hikes to **Catalina State Park** (pictured, p. 1, easy hike) or **Black Sheep Cave** (moderate, steep ascent) to a cave that has 1000-year-old pictographs.



## **Keynote Speaker: Alberto Ríos**

**Alberto Ríos**, Arizona's first (and continuing) poet laureate, is the author of thirteen books of poetry, three collections of short stories, and a memoir. The son of a Mexican father from Tapachula, Chiapas, and an English mother from Warrington, Lancashire, Ríos was raised on the American side of the city of Nogales, Arizona, on the Mexican border. He is the recipient of the Arizona Governors Arts Award, fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Walt Whitman Award, and the Western States Book Award for Fiction. A chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, he resides in Chandler, Arizona.

In the first part of his presentation, Ríos will talk about “What Makes for Good Poetry,” using the poems of John Updike and others as illustrations. In the second part, Ríos will read from his own work, with time for questions. Books of his will be available for purchase and signing.

Ríos' collections of poetry include *Not Go Away Is My Name* (2020); *A Small Story About The Sky* (2015); *The Dangerous Shirt* (2009); *The Theater of Night* (2006), winner of the 2007 PEN/Beyond Margins Award; *The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body* (2002), a finalist for the National Book Award; and *Whispering to Fool the Wind* (1982). *The Iguana Killer: Twelve Stories of the Heart* (1984) is considered a classic of Chicano fiction, while his short story collection *Pig Cookies* (1995) has been lauded for its magical realism and ability to capture the magic of ordinary life.

## Call for Papers (or Panels)

Papers (15-20 min.) and panels (no formal papers, discussion only) on ANY aspect of John Updike's work or life will be considered, but topics that are especially appropriate for this conference include:

—**John Updike's poetry.** *Collected Poems* was published 30 years ago.

Updike was serious about poetry and published 10 volumes. Significantly, his first published books in 1958 were a volume of fiction and a volume of poetry (*The Carpentered Hen and Other Tame Creatures*), and his last published books in 2009 were a volume of fiction and a volume of poetry (*Endpoint and Other Poems*). Many were written about/in Tucson.

—***The Centaur***, which celebrates a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023. The Southwest is known for inspiring artists, and Peter Caldwell is, of course, an artist.

—**"A Desert Encounter,"** in which Updike describes losing a favorite hat in the casita parking lot as he was trimming bushes. Also appropriate are Updike's writings about nature.

—**S.**, Updike's final volume in his *Scarlet Letter* trilogy, is set in Arizona.

—**Comparative papers on David Foster Wallace and Updike.** "Penis with a thesaurus" remarks aside, Updike was an influence on Wallace, and their publications and career trajectories pose some interesting possibilities for discussion. Tucson is Wallace country; he attended the Univ. of Arizona.

—***Brazil*** celebrates a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023 and represents one of Updike's attempts to understand a culture other than his own.

**SUBMIT PROPOSALS** by **April 15, 2023** to Robert Luscher

([luscherr@unk.edu](mailto:luscherr@unk.edu)). The number of presenters may be capped, so if your participation is dependent upon having a paper accepted you should submit your proposal sooner rather than later. Presenters must be members of The John Updike Society or join after their papers have been accepted. Annual dues are \$30/year for regular membership and \$25/year for students and retirees (<https://blogs.iwu.edu/johnupdikesociety/join/>). Decision notices will be sent within three weeks of your submission, along with registration and lodging information, if your proposal is successful. Moderators are also needed, and volunteers should send an email to Robert Luscher indicating a desire or willingness to do so.



## Schiff Travel Grants

Thanks to the generosity of The Robert and Adele Schiff Family Foundation, the John Updike Society will award up to FOUR \$1500 travel-to-conference grants for scholars under 40 to be able to attend the Tucson conference. Applicants need not be members at the time, but must join before grants can be paid.

In addition, up to THREE \$1000 travel-to-conference grants will be awarded to current society members at any career stage who need assistance to be able to participate in the conference.

Both grants are merit- *and* need-based, and paid after travel-to-conference has been booked. Interested scholars should **apply by Feb. 20, 2023.**

**To apply**, send a one-page proposal for a 15- to 20-minute paper appropriate for the conference, along with one paragraph about yourself, what grant you are applying for, and why the grant is important to you, to society president James Plath (jplath@iwu.edu). The selection committee will make their decisions and announce successful applicants by the end of the last week of January 2023.

# Conference Fees

## **Basic Registration—\$125 (IMPORTANT: REGISTER BY APRIL 15 after which basic rate jumps to \$175 and outings are not guaranteed)**

Includes all academic sessions, Thursday's Sonoran Desert Museum half-day trip, Thursday's Casita visit/reception (any country club drinks on own), and Saturday's dinner at the hotel (drinks on own).

## **Social Registration—\$70**

For significant others who accompany members and wish to participate in the Thursday events and the Saturday dinner.

## **Membership—\$30, \$25 for students/retirees**

Membership is required to attend, present, or moderate and includes all issues of *The John Updike Review* published during the calendar year and free admission to The John Updike Childhood Home in Shillington, Pa. The society, which has 270 members from 18 countries and 37 states, is inclusive and welcoming, with both academic and non-academic members. Current members can email [jplath@iwu.edu](mailto:jplath@iwu.edu) to check on their dues status. See [blogs.iwu.edu/johnupdikesociety/join/](http://blogs.iwu.edu/johnupdikesociety/join/) for more information.

## **Optional Wednesday Day Trip for Early Arrivers: Kartchner Caverns State Park Tour—\$28**

Features 2.4 miles of underground passages, with a tour encompassing one-half mile; takes 1.5 to 1.75 hours to complete, with 50-60 minutes of that underground. Price includes transportation and admission to the Rotunda and Throne Tour. Photos or videos are not permitted.

## **Friday Day Trip: Tombstone—\$43**

Features a visit to the Old West town in Cochise County, famous for Wyatt Earp and the O.K. Corral shootout and site of the Guinness sanctioned World's Largest Rose. Includes transportation, admission to O.K. Corral and gunfight show, admission to historic Bird Cage Theatre, and a brief stop at Boot Hill; a historic newspaper office/museum is free, but participants are on their own for other small museums. We may be able to get a group reservation at Big Nose Kate's for lunch, but the cost of lunch is not included. Be advised that many places in Tombstone accept only cash.

## **For those who don't go to Tombstone: Alternate Friday Day Trip: University of Arizona area of Tucson—\$5**

Includes *transportation only* to the UA area, where you will be dropped off to explore on your own. You can elect to visit the Arizona State Museum at UA (\$12 admission) or the nearby Arizona Historical Society Museum (\$8 admission), or just explore the beautiful AZ campus and nearby shops and eateries. The Arizona State Museum is the oldest and

largest anthropological research facility in the Southwest, with expansive collections of indigenous culture—especially Southwest Indian pottery and baskets.

**Saturday Half-Day Trip: Titan Missile Museum and San Xavier Mission—\$22**

As with Kartchner Caverns, this is mostly underground and you must be physically able to handle 55 stair steps. The Titan Missile Museum is the only remaining Titan II site open to the public, one of what used to be 54 missile silos/complexes across the U.S. Think *John Updike and the Cold War*. Think *Dr. Strangelove*. This national historic landmark, originally part of the 571<sup>st</sup> Strategic Missile Squadron, is the sole remaining Titan II Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) complex of 54 that were on alert between 1963-1987. Parts of the *Star Trek* movie *First Contact* were filmed at the museum. We will stop at San Xavier Del Bac Mission, which was founded in 1692, with construction of the current church starting in 1783 and completed in 1797. Constructed on land belonging to the Tohono O’odham Nation, it is the oldest intact European structure in Arizona, and the church is filled with original statuary and mural paintings. It is a working church, still used for worship.

**For those who don’t go to Titan Missile Museum/Mission: Alternate Saturday Half-Day Trip: U of Ariz. area—\$5**

Same as Friday’s alternative to Tombstone (see above).

**Sunday afternoon Easy Hike: Catalina State Park—\$8**

The \$5 covers transportation. The conference officially ends with the membership meeting, but attendees who don’t fly out until Monday or Tuesday might want to take this nature hike led by our conference co-director, Jan. If you can manage a 1-1.5 mile hike on a easy trail through more iconic Saguaro cacti and a wealth of other local flora (and some fauna), you might enjoy this hike with fellow Updike enthusiasts.

**Sunday afternoon Intermediate Hike: Black Sheep Cave—\$8**

The \$5 covers transportation. Be advised that this hike is every bit “intermediate” for experienced hikers and may seem “difficult” for non-hikers or occasional hikers. Total hiking time is 4-4.5 hours. For this one, Jan and her husband Jim say you’ll need good hiking boots, a small daypack to carry two water bottles and a snack, and most certainly collapsible hiking sticks. There’s one steep part near the cave where you’ll need the sticks, both for balance and to give yourself a boost. But the payoff? You get to see an anthropological treasure: centuries old pictographs in an off-the-beaten-path cave that people know about, but which isn’t mapped or marked. Jim will be your guide, and he’s been there several times.

**IMPORTANT: Because Tucson is a tourist destination, day trips are not guaranteed and may be limited. The earlier you reserve space, the better your chances. Refunds will be given if we cannot accommodate you.**



**REGISTRATION FORM** Mail with payment by **April 15** to:  
James Plath, 1504 Paddington Dr., Bloomington, IL 61704 or email form  
and send payment to [johnupdikesociety@iwu.edu](mailto:johnupdikesociety@iwu.edu) via PayPal.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_Basic Registration—\$125/person. Includes all academic sessions,  
Thursday's Sonoran Desert Museum half-day trip, Thursday's Casita visit/reception (any  
country club drinks on own), and Saturday's dinner at the hotel (drinks on own).  
ADDITIONAL SIDE TRIPS ARE EXTRA.

Special dietary needs (Circle one) No Yes (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_Social Registration—\$70/person. For significant others who accompany  
members and wish to participate in the Thursday events, keynote, and Saturday dinner,  
not the academic presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_Membership (\$30/year; \$25/students, retirees). Email [jplath@iwu.edu](mailto:jplath@iwu.edu) if  
uncertain about your membership dues status.

\_\_\_\_\_Kartchner Caverns Trip (\$28), Wednesday, Sept. 20, for early arrivers.

\_\_\_\_\_Tombstone Day Trip (\$43/person).Friday, Sept. 22. Includes  
transportation, OK Corral admission and gunfight show, Bird Cage Theatre admission,  
and brief stop at Boot Hill. Lunch and other attractions on own.

\_\_\_\_\_Titan Missile Museum & San Xavier Mission Half-Day Trip  
(\$22). Saturday, Sept. 23.

\_\_\_\_\_Alternate Trips to Univ. of Arizona campustown (\$5 for  
transport/each day). Circle which day(s) you need: Friday Saturday

\_\_\_\_\_Post-conference Sunday Hikes (Circle one): Easy Catalina State  
Park Hike (\$8) OR Intermediate Black Sheep Cave Hike (\$8)



## **Conference Hotel (sessions held here)**

**Embassy Suites by Hilton Tucson Paloma Village**  
3110 E. Skyline Dr., Tucson, AZ 85718

**—MUST BOOK BY 8-20-23 TO GET JUS GROUP DISCOUNT—**

This boutique hotel has a restaurant and bar onsite, with hot breakfast included in the room rate, along with two drinks provided during the hotel's daily "happy hour." It features an outdoor pool, fitness room, and numerous places to gather informally. La Encantada, "Arizona's premier open-air shopping center," is a short walk from the hotel, as are numerous restaurants.

**Conference room rate:** \$115/night, taxes not included (roughly \$130 total/night). **To book online:** <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/johnupdikesintlociety/>. Link may not work with all browsers. To book by phone, call (520) 352-4000 and identify yourself as a member of The John Updike International Society Conference group; be sure you get the group rate of \$115 per night, even for up to 2 additional nights at the front and/or back end of the conference dates.