

Gerald McKnight featured at lecture and book signing

Gerald D. McKnight of Frederick, chairman of the department of history and political science and professor of history at Hood College, will discuss his latest book, "The Last Crusade," at a lecture and book signing on Monday, March 23, at 6:30 p.m. at the Beneficial-Hodson Library, second floor, at Hood College. Refreshments will be provided and the public is invited to attend the event at no charge.

In "The Last Crusade," Dr. McKnight examines the Poor People's Campaign, the last large-scale demonstration of civil rights-era America, and the systematic efforts of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and his executive officers to subvert Martin Luther King Jr.'s ambitious effort to force the federal government to live up to its promises of a Great Society. The book also looks at Dr. King's last days as he helped Memphis sanitation workers in their labor-cum-civil rights struggle with a recalcitrant and racist city government. Although there is no persuasive evidence that the FBI and the Memphis police conspired to assassinate Dr. King, Dr. McKnight marshals evidence to show that neither agency was blameless.

According to Dr. McKnight, the conventional view of the Poor People's Campaign is that it was a self-inflicted failure. The blame rested squarely on the shoulders of the secondraters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference who failed to fill the leadership vacuum after Dr. King's assassination. But, as Dr. McKnight shows, there was a hidden, dark counterpoint to the accepted version — namely, the triumph of the 1960s American surveillance state and its repressive power and flagrant violation of protected freedoms. "In fact," said Dr. McKnight, "whatever the FBI wanted to do to disrupt the campaign, it did, aided and abetted by local police agencies and elements of the federal government, including mili-

tary intelligence."

Dr. McKnight has been at the college since 1971. He is known at Hood for his lively classes and for being the college's leading authority on political assassinations and the conspiracy theories of the John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinations. Dr. McKnight earned his bachelor of science and master of arts degrees from Pennsylvania State University and a doctorate degree from the University of Maryland. Prior to joining Hood, he taught at the University of Maryland and Howard University. Dr. McKnight has had his writings published in many newspapers.

The event is co-sponsored by the African American Studies Program and the Office of Academic Affairs at Hood College.