Pulitzer finalist Pat Bagley to speak at Utah State University

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Veteran Salt Lake Tribune editorial cartoonist Pat Bagley will be the first Morris Media and Society Lecture Series speaker of 2016.

The series, designed to bring diverse media voices to Utah State University’s Logan campus, is sponsored by the Department of Journalism and Communication.

Bagley’s visit on Feb. 9 will come just a few weeks after the former Pulitzer finalist completes his 2016 submission for journalism’s most prestigious award. This year, Bagley solicited reader feedback to make his decision about which cartoons he would present to the judging committee.

The irreverent artist’s Logan visit also comes in the wake of the announcement of another award, albeit one that — at least for now — is quite a bit less prestigious. In December, Bagley was chosen by a committee of students, faculty and alumni as the latest winner of the Ted Pease Award. That honor, named for a former department head, is presented annually to someone who has provided a lifetime of “curmudgeonly” service to journalism.

“That might not sound like a compliment to people in many professions, but journalists are a strange lot,” journalism professor Matthew LaPlante said. “Good journalists strive to be the sort of people who seek truth, stand up to power and tell the stories that need to be told, without regard to how they might be perceived by others.”

And that, LaPlante said, exemplifies Bagley. The California native and former member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was a longtime Republican whose moderate editorial cartoons took a sharp turn to the left during the presidency of George W. Bush — despite the fact that Utahns consistently gave Bush his highest political favorability ratings.

“No matter what you might think about his political leanings,” LaPlante said, “it’s hard to deny that Bagley works exceedingly hard to speak truth to power. And in this state, the political power base is firmly conservative.”

LaPlante, who will be interviewing Bagley during the presentation, said he would challenge the cartoonist on why he hasn’t taken more frequent jabs at the current president. Additional questions from the public are welcomed, and can be submitted to matthew.laplante@usu.edu.

The event will take place in the Merrill-Cazier Library, room101, at noon.