

# From Sexuality to Abercrombie & Fitch

**Benoit Denizet-Lewis opened spring semester UNH Writers Series**

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Monday, February 15, 2016

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IN THIS COURTESY PHOTO FROM HIS BOOK, "TRAVELS WITH CASEY: MY JOURNEY THROUGH OUR DOG-CRAZY COUNTRY," BENOIT DENIZET-LEWIS HUGS HIS DOG CASEY, WHO JOINED HIM AS HE MET DOG LOVERS, TRAINERS AND RESCUERS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.

Neither plummeting temps nor wind-blown snow could keep fans of great writing away from MUB Theatre I on Thursday evening, Feb. 11, as acclaimed author Benoit Denizet-Lewis stepped up to the lectern.

Denizet-Lewis's most recent book, "Travels with Casey: My Journey Through Our Dog-Crazy Country," has been praised by dog-lovers and renowned authors, including Susan Cheever and Dean Koontz, and following his talk, many lined up to buy the book, chat with Denizet-Lewis and have him sign it and his 2009 book, "America Anonymous: Eight Addicts in Search of a Life."



BENOIT DENIZET-LEWIS READS IN MUB THEATRE I.

However, at the start of the event, which was the first in this semester's [UNH Writers Series](#), Denizet-Lewis explained he would not be reading from "Travels with Casey," smiling as he explained to the attendees how he has done so many readings from his newest book that he felt compelled to share a few of his other works.

One of the pieces from which he read was his 2011 New York Times Magazine piece, "[My Ex-Gay Friend](#)." The work inspired the film "I Am Michael," written and directed by Justin Kelly, co-produced by Denizet-Lewis and Gus Van Sant and starring James Franco, Zachary Quinto and Emma Roberts, which premiered in January at the Sundance Film Festival. Denizet-Lewis wrote his article after reconnecting with his former XY Magazine colleague and friend Michael Glatze after Glatze had very publicly "announced he was no longer gay."

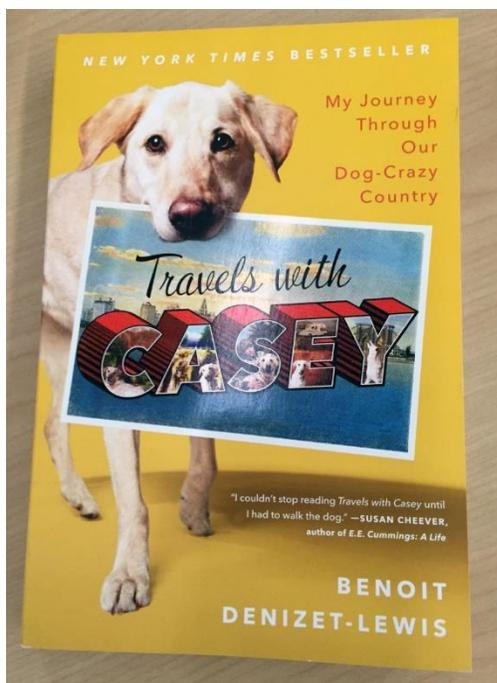
Glatze, who had previously been a gay rights activist, was enrolled in a Wyoming Bible school and had begun writing anti-gay pieces for conservative online publications. In deciding to interview him, Denizet-Lewis explained his goal was to hear his friend's story, to try to understand what happened.

"It was surreal," he said of the experience.

Benoit Denizet-Lewis writes extensively on many subjects, including sexual identity, and The Advocate named him one of the 50 most influential LGBT people working in media in 2014.

Leading into the question-and-answer session following his readings, Denizet-Lewis said, “It’s hard to write about groups that are marginalized,” explaining the importance of having a human focus.

In addition to “My Ex-Gay Friend,” his UNH readings included an article about the residents of “Gay Road” in Ohio — who petitioned their town to change the street’s name due to the “repercussions of living on a road called Gay,” one of his older pieces about the experience of interviewing then-Abercrombie & Fitch CEO Mike Jeffries at the company’s headquarters, describing the “cult-like immersion in this brand identity,” and an article about research focused on bisexuality.



#### DENIZET-LEWIS'S MOST RECENT BOOK

When one of the attendees asked him how much of a role he plays in his nonfiction writing, Denizet-Lewis explained how the author’s part varies from piece to piece.

“You impact a source less the more you hang out with them,” he said. If a journalist or author is with an individual for a short visit, they will be playing a more prominent role in the development of the interview or conversation, and might necessarily have to play a part in the written piece to acknowledge how their presence affected the narrative, whereas over an extended time, a source can become more comfortable, making the author’s presence less intrusive.

The [UNH Writers Series](#) continues with Rebecca Makkai, author of the story collection “Music for Wartime,” as well as the novels “The Hundred-Year House” and “The Borrower,” on March 10, and with poet David Wojahn, author of eight collections and

the recipient of numerous literary awards, including the O. B. Hardison Award, the Yale Series of Younger Poets prize and the Poetry Society of America's William Carlos Williams Book Award, on April 14.

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**INCLUSION**



University of New Hampshire

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