

**THE RAINIER WRITING WORKSHOP
MFA @ PLU
2019 RESIDENCY SCHEDULE**

In addition to attending all workshop sessions, each participant must take 16 credits during the residency. A one-session class counts for one credit; a double-session class counts for two credits. These count for one credit each: each morning talk, and each Grad Presentation. The “Art of the Book” counts for two credits. Everyone must take at least one class designated “Advance Reading.” Taking one session of a two-session class is allowed, but it’s a good idea to consult with the instructor beforehand, in case he/she finds it inadvisable to do so. The Grad Sessions are intended for graduates. The Pedagogy Sessions are for thesis-year participants and meet concurrently with the Mixed-Genre workshops. Students are expected to attend the afternoon Grad Readings and the evening faculty readings. Please note: as a courtesy to your peer students and the faculty, please arrive on time to all events and activities, especially workshops and classes! Lastly: a final version of this schedule will be available at the residency. Between now and the residency, there might be changes to this schedule, so please double-check the final schedule when you arrive at the residency.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2

Scan Center **4:30 ALUMNI READING: Ned Hayes ‘15, Wendy Willis ‘13**

Regency Room **6:30 DINNER**

Scan Center **8:00 FACULTY READINGS: Jennifer Foerster, Jason Skipper**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201

Kent Meyers, *Da Vinci's Helicopter and Michelangelo's Marble*

Purportedly, Michelangelo claimed he saw sculptures lying within blocks of marble, and sculpting was merely the work of removing material to release the incipient form. Such a story makes the artist a seer and places the creative act in seeing rather than working. In a related fashion, we admire DaVinci’s genius in imagining the helicopter, though he never created it. What is the difference between imagining and creating? Why do our preconceptions concerning this difference matter? Can we be too imaginative or too suspicious of reason and logic? Should we believe in the Muse or disregard that idea? This talk will suggest answers, supported by myth, history, my own experiences as writer and teacher, and contemporary research.

Admin Rooms

10:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:00 GRAD SESSION:**Xavier 201****Katrina Hays, *How to Present a Professional Reading of Your Work (Or: Here Comes Your Graduate Reading)***

If you are a writer, you almost certainly will be asked to give a reading at some point. For people who are completely confident about reading their work in front of peers, family, and strangers, readings are easy. For others, the thought of a public reading is a nightmare. Confident or cringing, this class will offer a solid approach in how to offer a reading that is professional, clear, well-thought-out, and does not leave you wrecked. (If you are an experienced reader, the class offers perspectives and tips that will enhance your presentation.) After the class, each participating graduate will be able to schedule a 30-minute private practice session with Katrina in Xavier Hall prior to her or his graduate reading.

Commons**12:00 LUNCH****1:30-2:45 CLASSES:****Admin 204A****Suzanne Berne, *Fiction 101***

Where should a story begin? What makes a character come alive? Why is setting important? How do you escalate tension? What *is* tension? This is meant to be a nuts and bolts class, one where you can ask the questions that you are secretly afraid are too basic, but which in my opinion are always the most interesting and complex questions. Readings include William Carlos Williams' "The Use of Force," Raymond Carver's "Cathedral," Shirley Jackson's "Paranoia" and Amy Tan's "Rules of the Game." [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 204B**Kevin Clark, *Poetry and Its World: An Introductory Review***

If you're an MFA poet at the Rainier Writing Workshop, you're already in love with verse. You're enamored with the way it moves and transforms us when we're reading it—and especially when we're writing it. This class will give you an "introductory review" of the flora and fauna of poetry. After briefly outlining the major poetic movements, we'll chat about the fundamental concepts, issues, and terms of poetry. Citing examples from a diverse range of contemporary poets such as Ai, Norman Dubie, Ross Gay, Larry Levis, Ada Limon, Adrienne Rich, Cathy Song, and others, we'll review form, metaphor, and theme. And we'll have an extended conversation about "plot," speaker, voice, outer and inner conflict, tension, transformation, resolution, implication of meaning, etc. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 208**Rebecca McClanahan & Sherry Simpson, *The Story Unfolds: Plot, Pace, and Revelation in Narrative Nonfiction***

Creative nonfiction writers typically organize their material through a variety of formal structures. But stories are dynamic, not static, and successful storytelling requires more than an architectural schematic to bring it live. This class will explore how writers can infuse their stories with meaning and mystery by establishing scene and setting, pacing events, manipulating time, and choosing when and how to reveal information or withhold it. We'll discuss several brief pieces to discover how the authors use these techniques and others to contour a story's momentum. Then we'll examine our own writing for opportunities to apply what we've learned. Bring a draft. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 210**Scott Nadelson, *Rhythms of Dialogue***

Often, when we talk about dialogue, we focus on its function in revealing character, deepening conflict, and advancing plot. But it also serves another, crucial purpose, especially in extended conversations: to build or release dramatic tension. In this class, we will explore the different kinds

of conversational rhythms writers use to manipulate tension in scenes and how variations in those rhythms create drama through shifting power dynamics. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

3:00-4:15 CLASSES:

Admin 204A

David Biespiel, *Writing the Figure: Poetry and Portraiture*

Modeled on methods of a drawing or painting studio session, this course is for students who want to write about individuals: from the perspective of children, parents, lovers, friends, elegists, strangers, &c. We'll spend the first session working on approaches to figures, and the second class on longer strategies that develop metaphor and draw on the "qualities" of the subject. Required: please bring to class a half-dozen photographs of people you might want to write "about." Digital or paper copies OK. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 204B

Geffrey Davis & Jenny Johnson, *Resisting Closure*

In his essay "Little Gods of Making," from *The Art of Daring*, Carl Phillips considers the question, "Why do we make?," and then he goes on to describe the ongoingness, which we often strive for as makers, what he calls "resonance" in poems. In this class, you'll be asked to consider why you make and your relationship to closure in poems. Together, we will have a rich conversation about the Phillips essay, and then extend the conversation by close reading poems that carry such resonances. Self-reflection about your own work will also be encouraged through exercises. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 208

Renee Simms, *Masters of Vice*

Many of us enjoy writing characters who behave badly but how do we create characters that are not simply bad but morally complex? And should we link a character's moral complexity to social forces in their fictional world? In this class we will look at examples of literary rascals from A.M. Homes, Toni Morrison, Tobias Wolff, Edward P. Jones, and others. We will discuss the different ways to develop characters with questionable morality. Then we'll write our own characters. We'll explore what bad acts help us understand about humanity. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 210

Justin St. Germain, *Nonfiction 101*

This class is designed to provide participants with an overview of fundamental elements of nonfiction craft. The first session will focus on craft elements nonfiction shares with fiction and poetry, such as narrative or lyric structures, setting, character, voice, point of view, and imagery. The second will focus more on aspects of craft distinct to nonfiction: use and acknowledgment of sources, approaches to factual truth, and structural considerations specific to truth-based stories. We will read published examples to illustrate craft concepts, and expand on those through group discussion and writing exercises. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

Admin 204A

John Abbasi, *Viewing Magical Realism*

In this session, we will first look at Magical Realism from a macro perspective, defining it from a historical standpoint as well as a technical standpoint. From there, we will focus in on point of view and how it affects the reader's perception of the surreal elements within the narrative. We will discuss two contrasting first-person points of view in Steven Millhauser's "A Visit" and Aimee Bender's "Marzipan." Next, we will discuss collective first-person within Magical Realism with Italo Calvino's "The Distance of the Moon." From there, we will shift to a look at second-person with Amelia Gray's "Fifty Ways to Eat Your Lover." Finally, we will look at Haruki Murakami's novel,

Kafka on the Shore, for an example of a story that shifts between close third-person and first-person point of view. As time permits, we will do an exercise and discussion of story concepts relating to point of view.

- Admin 204B** **Darien Gee, *Small Packages: Micro Narratives and Distilled Prose in Fiction and Nonfiction***
 “Never increase, beyond what is necessary, the number of entities required to explain anything.”
 Known as Occam’s razor, this dictum can be further reduced to two words: economy and simplicity. Why use more when less will do? Micro narratives, defined as prose of 300 words or less, have the power to change the way you write and look at story. In this session, we’ll consider the appeal of such dramatic reduction, play with the basic building blocks, and discuss how micro narratives can be used in your work or as part of an ongoing writing practice, regardless of genre. You’ll leave with a to-go bag of prompts for midnight snacking.
- Admin 208** **Joannie Stangeland, *A Poetic Theory of Relativity: Suspending Time in the Lyric Moment***
 How does a poem grab your attention and hold it? How does a poem make time contract or expand and take you out of your normal temporality? In this presentation, we’ll discuss the relationship between attention and reverie, and we’ll look at work by Jay Hopler, Deborah Digges, Beckian Fritz Goldberg, James Wright, Rebecca Lindenberg, and Jennifer S. Cheng, examining some of the strategies, including “looping” and “stretching,” that they use to bring us into the poem and change our experience of time.
- Regency Room** **6:15 DINNER**
- Scan Center** **7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Greg Glazner, April Ayers Lawson**

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4

8:30 MORNING TALK:

- Xavier 201** **Barrie Jean Borich, *Radical Surprise: the Subversive Art of the Uncertain***
 We live in a time mired by arguments about the veracity of facts and where power is maintained by the smugness of certainty. We may feel we can no longer afford to dwell in possibility and doubt. But for writers, uncertainty fuels investigation, experimentation, and discovery. We won’t be able to make anything new if we don’t lurch into uncertainty and risk failure. Through close reading of several recent books, as well as a fair amount of autobiographical wandering and chasing of questions, this talk explores what might come of subverting our belief that we know what we are writing before we write it, and the considers the possibilities of inviting surprise into our drafting and revision process.
- Admin Rooms** **10:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS**
- UC/Xavier/Admin** **10:00 THESIS MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES**
- Commons** **12:00 LUNCH**
- UC 201** **12:00 FACULTY LUNCH MEETING**

1:30-2:45 CLASSES:

- Admin 204A Berne, *Fiction 101* [Session 2]
- Admin 204B Clark, *Poetry and Its World* [Session 2]
- Admin 208 McClanahan/Simpson, *The Story Unfolds* [Session 2]
- Admin 210 Nadelson, *Rhythms of Dialogue* [Session 2]

3:00-4:15 CLASSES:

- Admin 204A Biespiel, *Writing the Figure* [Session 2]
- Admin 204B Davis/Johnson, *Resisting Closure* [Session 2]
- Admin 208 Simms, *Masters of Vice* [Session 2]
- Admin 210 St. Germain, *Nonfiction 101* [Session 2]

4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

- Admin 204A **Gabrielle Fairbairn, *Encompassing Home: Proprioception in Lauret Savoy's Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape***
 For a collection of essays to cohere into a book there must be a strong center or centers and a sense of unfolding from the first essay to the last toward an accumulation of meaning and feeling that allows them, though each also stands independently of the others, to become greater than the sum of their parts. The process of meaning-making itself—the work of the writer, and of readers as well—searches out these centers, follows their radii, and unfolds in time and space. As writers and readers, we hold all of this in mind and in our own bodies, that we might be transformed. In this presentation, we will discuss Lauret Savoy's *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape* as a book of essays that achieves synergy through a proprioceptive form of writing.
- Admin 204B **Jeric Smith, *Toward Building Solidarity through Poetry***
 We will discuss poetry from the Pacific, as it pertains to the islands and their relation to the rest of the world. Islands look tiny on a map, dispersed across large swaths of open water, disconnected, sometimes not even marked at all, and left out of existence it seems. Yet, on these small parcels of land, life happens, stories are told, typhoons shake their trees from the ground, people feast and fight, love and die, and persist together, still. Rather than going into the Pacific's long and varied colonial-historical traumas, we will look at how poets and writers from the islands speak to one another. And from them, we will discuss how we can build solidarity amongst each other, across distances and differences as writers.

UC Patio 6:15 DINNER

Scan Center 7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Jenny Johnson, Renee Simms

The Cave AFTER HOURS: The Cave

MONDAY, AUGUST 5

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201

Fleda Brown, *How to Get High Without Help from the Sonoran Desert Toad*

The fervent wish of most writers is not to describe the ineffable, but to have it show up: to break through simile, to wrench metaphor out of its smug centrality. When the ineffable does show its face, if it has one, it seems magical. I don't know how foolish it is to try to transmute magic into something like tools for the writer, but am willing to try, if it pays off even a little. The poem's well-documented path of resistance is only part of what I mean. A poem resists in its form, as it resists linear movement, resists its surface meaning. You could say that the backwash created by non-linear movement offers the opportunity for the ineffable to appear, but it doesn't necessarily make it happen. Using the Buddhist Heart Sutra, a study of a drug trip, and the example of poems from Wright, Dickinson, Armantrout, Barot, de la Paz, and others, my intention is to wend my way where there is no map and, in fact, there is no way.

Admin Rooms

10:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS

UC/Xavier/Admin

10:00 THESIS MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES

Commons

12:00 LUNCH

UC 201

12:15-1:00PM: BRING-YOUR-LUNCH INFO SESSION

Hannah Comerford and Garrett Brooks, *Building Your Website: A Writer's Guide to Creating a Powerful Presence Online* [Session 1]

Whether you're already a published author or just starting your writing career, your public identity is paramount. A professional website is essential for establishing that identity—but where do you begin? RWW's Creative Director, Garrett Brooks, and OE Coordinator, Hannah Comerford, will walk you through the process of establishing a high-quality and attractive web presence, covering approaches for the tech savvy and not so savvy. Monday's topics will include branding, web design, visuals, and technical aspects. Tuesday's topics will include professionalism and social media.

1:30-2:45 CLASSES:

Admin 204A

David Allan Cates, *The Stories We Tell (Might Change Our Lives)*

A close reading of four short stories in which the main action in the story is the telling of a story: "The Shawl," Louise Erdrich; "Fat," Raymond Carver; "Pretty My Mouth and Green My Eyes," J.D. Salinger; and "People Like That Are The Only People Here," Lorrie Moore. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 204B

Jennifer Foerster, *Mood, Music, and Meaning: Working with Meter in Poetry*

This class on prosody will focus on the question: how does meter "mean"? Meter is available to the poet as not only a technique or order, but also an element of the poem's "meaning." By reviewing examples of meter-driven poems, we will consider what is happening metrically in the poem and how this is significant to the poem as a whole. We will explore how various types of meter and metrical variation might support a poem's mood, argument, or objective, while also considering the poem's larger meter—its "form"—as an architecture within which sound and sense can be organized. [Two Sessions; Exercises.]

Admin 208**Brenda Miller, *Segmented, Fragmented, Braided, Collage, or Mosaic: Putting Together the Pieces in a Lyric Essay***

The fragmented or segmented essay is harder to pull off than it looks. How do you “stitch” the pieces together in a way that is satisfying? How do you incorporate other voices or tones for texture? How do you decide the right order? We’ll explore these questions in published work and your own writing. Please bring an essay of your own, single-sided, and a pair of scissors. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 210**Jason Skipper, *Writing Stories with Multiple Points of View***

In this class, we will consider approaches to writing stories that switch between different characters’ points of view. We will examine the ways that writers like Alice Munro, Yi Yun Li, and others switch between perspectives without confusing the reader, make the different points of view distinct, and use patterns of imagery and subtext to make the story cohere. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

3:00-4:15 CLASSES:**Admin 204A****Greg Glazner, *The Nature of One’s Writing, the Nature of Reality: How Does the Poem Go?***

This class begins with the drafting process for one poem, up to a mid-point ten or so drafts in, when my poem finally finds itself and “goes” under its own power. “How does it go?” is a question you might ask about a tune. Or, you might ask it about a style of motion, as in dancing, as in, “how does it *move*?” A poem can find itself through a feel for how it *goes*—what its overall style is, its textures and voice and pacing and way of handling images and abstractions. An overall style can handle so many things, including dualities and paradox, which are key to poetry. The duality of the knowable and the intuited in poetry is analogous to duality in the nature of reality. The hard problem of consciousness, the particle/wave duality, and the EPR paradox all suggest inconceivable but real dualities. What if an intuition for motion and flow, on the one hand, *and* a devotion to discrete, knowable identity, on the other, comprise a duality that is related not to artistic indulgence, but to the nature of reality? Essays on the philosophical issues, to be read in advance, will serve as touchstones. Some poems will be handed out in class. Participants will be invited to bring in moments from drafts of poems in which they start to “hear how it goes.” [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 204B**Keetje Kuipers, *Bringing Back the Magic***

If ancient poems were originally incantations and spells, why do contemporary poets often feel compelled to stick to story or straight lyric, only allowing the fantastic to feature in their work through imagistic leaps or fanciful metaphors? Particularly as a way of exploring such very real-world strictures as gender, sexuality, race, or class, magic can create opportunities for a new kind of engagement with our identities. We’ll dig into how magic-making works on the page, and what we can do to bring more of it into our poems. By examining the use of magical realism in contemporary poetry—including work by Alberto Ríos, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Brigit Pegeen Kelly, Marilyn Nelson, Sharon Olds, and Cornelius Eady—we’ll explore the effect that the surreal has when placed within a poem that might otherwise feel narrative or naturalistically lyric. Finally, we’ll cast our own spells through writing exercises that ask us to both invent magic and also acknowledge the ethereal all around us. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 208**April Ayers Lawson, *Beyond Realism***

In David Foster Wallace’s “Good Old Neon,” a man who has killed himself narrates the story of why and how he came to commit this act, and in “A Poor-Aunt Story” by Haruki Murakami, a character describes how his life changes after a supernatural being (most often manifesting in the image of a poor aunt) attaches itself to his back. Surreal, meta, and working from fantastically absurd premises,

these stories—both by masters of the form—take on uncommon psychological depth and feel more real than some of the most sturdy literary realism. How do the authors make such unbelievable premises work? And how can we employ their techniques in our own work? In this class we will learn how to write beyond realism in a way that is believable and affecting. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 210

Marie Mutsuki Mockett, *Old Question, New Story: A Process for Nonfiction*

One of our most powerful tools as writers is the ability to see what others miss. We want to invite readers on a new adventure, and to do that, we need to be sure we are going on a new adventure too—an adventure that we are the first to see. But is anything really new and unexplored anymore? Too often, we think we already know the story of a place, people, or experience. Individuals—industries—can all be guilty of this bias, particularly if we are dealing with hackneyed themes like loss, the frontier, or personal trauma. It is my belief that a book on any subject can be written on the basis of one excellent question. It does not matter what the surrounding territory is, if the question is superb. The goal of this two-part class is to fine-tune your question, rid it of any baggage and biases, and give you the energy to be sure you—and thus your readers—are on a journey to an uncharted and important place. [Two Sessions.]

Admin 212

Marjorie Sandor, *The Parrot in the Lavatory: the Art of Defamiliarization in Fiction and Nonfiction*

The art of “making the familiar strange” breathes life—and surprise—into our stories, poems, and essays. How might we recognize moments when we have relied on old habitual ways of seeing and saying, and failed to fully inhabit our characters and their physical spaces? Advance reading includes a short essay, “Art as Technique,” by early Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky, an essay by contemporary novelist and short story writer Charlie Baxter, and the first chapter of Barbara Comyn’s novel, *The Vet’s Daughter*. In class, we’ll discuss these and a few other short examples, and try some experiments of our own. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

Admin 204A

Kim Culbertson, *We Can Go Home: Geographical, Emotional, and Spiritual Homecomings in Novels*

Regardless of the culture, the time period, or the genre, storytellers continue to explore new ways to convey a human search for home. Perhaps in times of universal unrest, they provide a connective, universal human truth: we all seek a home. This theme is pervasive because each homecoming story is as unique as the specific author shaping it—in scope, in landscape, and in ideas. Still, certain consistencies prove informative as we make choices in writing our own homecoming stories. While each story is indeed distinct, these home-stories seem to fall into three basic categories—geographical, emotional, or spiritual; and in each version, the character’s interaction with a home—leaving it, finding it, avoiding it, rejecting it—act as an agent for necessary change in a character’s story arc. This presentation will explore some of the unique qualities each type of homecoming novel offers as well as examine how these qualities can work to amplify a character’s agency in the story.

Admin 204B

Jasminne Mendez, *Refashioning the Archive: The Study and Practice of Docu-Poetry in “My” America*

Why is the “my” in quotes you wonder? Because as a daughter of immigrants and a woman of color I am often reminded that the America I live in is not mine to claim or call home. I am not the only one who feels this way. Other women of color docu-poets such as Camille Dungy, Patricia Smith, Solmaz Sharif, Layli Long Solider, Tracy Cha, and others also feel this tension. In their respective works, these poets seek to use historical, personal, and societal documents, records, articles, and images to deconstruct, amplify the voices of, and reshape the narrative of the oppressed group of people they each belong to. In this presentation we will spend some time learning about docu-poetry

through the lens of the poets currently leading the way in this genre—women of color—and then practice using documents and some of their poetic techniques to craft our own poems.

Regency Room **6:15 DINNER**

Scan Center **7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Adrienne Harun, Keetje Kuipers**

<u>TUESDAY, AUGUST 6</u>

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Regency Room **Geffrey Davis, Rebecca McClanahan, Scott Nadelson, Sherry Simpson,**
Turn on the Light, It's Too Dark in Here: The Challenges and Possibilities of Writing from Joy, Gratitude, Rapture, and Mirth

Literary works often arise from the dark territories of experience, yet given that life is more than pain and difficulty, how do writers approach their work during periods of joy, contentment, or gratitude? Must literature always grow out of darkness, lived or imagined? And if, as Janet Burroway asserts, "In literature only trouble is interesting," is it possible to infuse a work with joy and lightness of spirit, sans trouble, and still hold a reader's interest? What models do we have of poets and prose writers who write from a posture of joy or are able to weave strands of light into otherwise dark works? In this panel, four writers discuss these questions and offer possibilities for shaping work that arises from the lighter territories of our lives.

Admin Rooms **10:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

UC/Xavier/Admin **10:00 THESIS MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES**

Commons **12:00 LUNCH**

12:00 MENTORSHIP PREFERENCE FORMS DUE FROM 1ST-YEARS AND 2ND-YEARS

UC 201 **12:15-1:00PM: BRING-YOUR-LUNCH INFO SESSION**

Hannah Comerford and Garrett Brooks, *Building Your Website: A Writer's Guide to Creating a Powerful Presence Online* [Session 2]

Whether you're already a published author or just starting your writing career, your public identity is paramount. A professional website is essential for establishing that identity—but where do you begin? RWW's Creative Director, Garrett Brooks, and OE Coordinator, Hannah Comerford, will walk you through the process of establishing a high-quality and attractive web presence, covering approaches for the tech savvy and not so savvy. Monday's topics will include branding, web design, visuals, and technical aspects. Tuesday's topics will include professionalism and social media.

1:30-2:45 CLASSES:

Admin 204A ***Cates, *The Stories We Tell* [Session 2]***

Admin 204B ***Foerster, *Mood, Music, and Meaning* [Session 2]***

Admin 208 Miller, *Segmented, Fragmented* [Session 2]

Admin 210 Skipper, *Writing Stories* [Session 2]

3:00-4:15 CLASSES:

Admin 204A Glazner, *The Nature of One's Writing* [Session 2]

Admin 204B Kuipers, *Bringing Back the Magic* [Session 2]

Admin 208 Lawson, *Beyond Realism* [Session 2]

Admin 210 Mockett, *Old Question, New Story* [Session 2]

Admin 212 Sandor, *The Parrot in the Lavatory* [Session 2]

4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

Admin 204A Hannah Comerford, *Beyond the Religion Section: How Christian Beliefs and Literary Excellence Coexist*

Writers of Christian faith often feel caught with one foot in the literary world and one in the Christian community. While deeply valuing their religious beliefs, many are troubled by the idea of being associated with religious institutions known for various abuses. Moreover, their work is commonly relegated to the Religion section of their local bookstore, regardless of their writing style or topic. How do Christian authors gain a greater audience and the respect of the literary world while honoring their beliefs? In this session, we'll see how Christian writers such as Brian Doyle, Bret Lott, and Flannery O'Connor used the written word effectively through vulnerability and excellence in craft. We will also look at their example to see how writers might respond when feeling a disconnect between their art form and community. Come ready to participate in a short writing exercise.

Admin 204B Jonathan Maule, *Making the Invisible Visible: Poetry as a Humanizing Force in the Age of Mass Incarceration*

With 2.3 million people behind bars, the United States is home to about four percent of the world's population but almost twenty-five percent of the world's prisoners. Despite falling crime rates over the past four decades, our incarcerated population has increased by more than seven hundred percent. Throughout history, the first step toward committing acts of institutional violence against large segments of a population has occurred through language. Relegating whole categories of people to subhuman status, scapegoating, labeling, obfuscating—the genesis of dehumanization begins in the ways we fail to honestly conceive of one another. In this presentation, we will explore C.D. Wright's *One Big Self*, Reginald Dwayne Betts' *Bastards of the Reagan Era*, and Molly McCully Brown's *The Virginia State Colony For Epileptics and Feebleminded* in order to better understand the ways in which poetry might expand our understanding of what it means to be "locked up." These poets (and others) humanize those who have been dehumanized by systemic processes, providing readers with new ways to see others, perhaps as they wish to be seen, perhaps as they truly are—as flawed, complicated human beings—and to, as poet Matthew Zapruder argues, connect and activate one imagination with another; a vital step in restoring humanity to all people.

Admin 208 Ted Olson, *Road Trips Through Time: Dynamics of the Retrospective First-Person Point of View*
How does time affect a first-person narrator's perspective? What is it about time—what happens in that conduit between the past and the present—that changes or reinforces perception and belief? How might time contribute to misperception? Does the writing process help the narrator arrive at

conclusions, and if so, how? In this presentation, we'll look at first-person narration as a three-dimensional process involving the author, the Aged Narrator, and the Younger Self. We'll look at a few ways authors can maintain tension—and thus, reader interest—in a first-person narrative. We'll also consider why a road trip always turns out better when an unreliable narrator is driving.

5:30 MID-RESIDENCY BREAK BEGINS: DINNER ON YOUR OWN

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7

Off Campus **MORNING FIELD TRIP, 9AM-2PM: PIKE PLACE MARKET, SEATTLE**

Admin Rooms **4:00-5:30 BUSINESS MEETINGS FOR COHORT GROUPS**

Kent Meyers, *Writing Critical Response Papers* [Mandatory for Incoming Cohort]

This is a nuts-and-bolts class offering advice for writing the response papers: ideas for constructing reading lists; the differences between reading as a writer (craft) and reading as a scholar (criticism); general mentor expectations; useful approaches for focusing the papers and supporting their ideas; and the relationship between the monthly CRPs and the longer, thesis-year Critical Paper. [One Session; Handout and Online Reading Required.]

Regency Room **6:15 DINNER**

Scan Center **7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Fleda Brown, David Allan Cates, Kent Meyers**

Scan Center **8:30 FACULTY BOOK-SIGNING AND RECEPTION**

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201

Jennifer Foerster, *The Visionary*

What is it to be a “visionary” writer—particularly a visionary poet—today? Our contemporary literary world is more interested in refusing poetry/story’s traditional hermeneutical impulse than engaging poetry/song/story as a way of knowing. This talk will play with the language of “vision”—as seeing, insight, and image—and its nexus with reality. For the visionary, writing is the praxis of insight. But such praxis takes many forms. We will look at several poets and writers—Sylvia Plath, H.D., Spicer, Rilke, Celan, Harjo—to see that while visionary writers may take many postures, what they have in common is their habitation in the middle-place.

Admin Rooms **10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

10:00 GRAD SESSION:

Admin 208

Geffrey Davis, *Why Do You Write?*

This session will explore some long-game questions for writers—not to put them to rest (long-game

questions don't have those kinds of answers) so much as to recognize and perhaps re-name what drives us to write. As Adrienne Rich pressed us to consider, a life committed to the alternative power of re-vision via the imaginative transformation of experience into prose or poetry requires deep and ongoing philosophical self-inquiry. In addition to meeting some questions head on, we will talk about best practices for finding healthy (head/heart) spaces and communities that can nudge or nurture us along the way.

10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:

Admin 210

Jenny Johnson, *How to Build an Inclusive Community in Your Classroom*

This practical session will offer a number of strategies for making students feel welcome, for building trust among peers when doing writing exercises, for shaking up the dynamics of who does or doesn't tend to participate, and for creating a classroom environment that is engaging, playful, and surprising. You will walk away not only having tried a few exercises, but also armed with a list of tactics to use in the classrooms or workshops that you teach or facilitate.

Commons

12:00 LUNCH

Regency Room

12:00 GRADUATES & FACULTY LUNCH [FACULTY SPEAKER: Kevin Clark]

1:30-4:00 CLASSES: [2-SESSION CLASSES]

Admin 204A

Fleda Brown, *The Complete Elizabeth Bishop*

From Bishop's letters: "Read a lot of poetry—all the time. . .not just two or three in anthologies—read ALL of somebody. Then read his or her life, and letters, and so on. . . . Then see what happens." In this session, we won't be able to cover that ground, but we can make a start. We will study *Geography III* (1971) and a sample of other poems and letters (provided ahead of time). If you don't know her work, this class will be a revelation. Bishop's poems take ordinary objects and experience and by the force of her concentrated attention, opens to their extraordinariness. We will approach her poems with humility, trying to learn what we can from someone whose every line is wrought and taut with an utterly devoted life. [One Session for 2 Credits; Handout Reading Required; Advance Reading.] [Book to acquire: Elizabeth Bishop, *Geography III*, which is also available in any collected edition of Bishop's work.]

Admin 204B

Kevin Clark & Greg Glazner, *The Essential Neruda*

Among the most globally influential poets of the twentieth century, Pablo Neruda (born Ricardo Eliécer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto in Parral, Chile) created his own unmistakably distinct style. At once fruitfully ambiguous, musical, and surrealistic, Neruda's poetry encompasses—among other things—working-class politics, romantic love, familial relations, depth psychology, and our connection to the natural world. Rich with imagery beyond the usual bounds of objective reality and in correlation with Lorca's conception of *duende*, his poetry nonetheless owns a metaphysical realism that renders the interconnectedness of mind, earth, and spirit. Focusing on several key poems (identified in the handouts on Soundings), we will discuss issues of theme, form, and translation, while also considering how his work continues to influence American poetry and how as writers we might borrow from him today. [One Session for 2 Credits; Handout Reading Required; Advance Reading.] [Download a brief handout on Soundings, and acquire the following book in advance: *The Essential Neruda: Selected Poems*, edited by Mark Fisner.]

- Admin 208** **Lia Purpura, *Pushing Memories Past Memoir: Imagining Ideas***
 Perhaps you've already written about a Big Life Event, or perhaps you're trying to get out from under it—or, on the other hand, perhaps you feel left out of the memoir era, not having a notable “big life event” to wrangle with. This writing-centered class offers alternatives and supplements to memoir, yet acknowledges that the objects, people, and histories of our lives are crucial components of any truly alive/surprising piece of writing. There are countless brilliant memoirs available today—but a dominant mode can lead to a dominant *way* of thinking—and the essay is a vast and capacious form. We'll spend the class using objects, sayings, memories, and even personal/historical incidents from our lives to land an idea, and work toward forms of the essay that *aren't* primarily memoir-based, that engage ideas and customs and social/ethical questions. [One Session for 2 Credits; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]
- Admin 210** **Jason Skipper, *Speculative Fiction Fundamentals***
 In this class we will consider the fundamentals of speculative fiction. Following a brief overview examining literary science fiction and fantasy, we will consider particular approaches used by authors working in these genres for worldbuilding, creating believable and complicated characters, and developing original storylines. To quickly cover a good number of these techniques, we will focus on three contemporary stories during our time together. [One Session for 2 Credits; Handout Reading Required.]
- Admin 212** **Justin St. Germain, *Defining Structure and Scope***
 This exercise-intensive class will help participants struggling with a common problem: figuring out the scope and structure of a prose project. We'll define those terms, discuss how and when and to what degree a writer might need to consider them, and do a series of exercises that are designed to help participants sharpen the focus of their work in progress. [One Session for 2 Credits; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]
- Xavier 201** **4:30-6:00 OUTSIDE EXPERIENCE PRESENTATION**
- UC Patio** **6:15 DINNER: MENTOR/MENTEES DINNER**
- Scan Center** **7:30 JUDITH KITCHEN VISITING WRITER READING: Carl Phillips**

<u>FRIDAY, AUGUST 9</u>

8:30 MORNING TALK:

- Xavier 201** **Renee Simms, *What If I Just Let Go?: Risk and the Creative Process***
 We often talk about writing as a series of choices that a writer makes. We say that an author chooses a formal structure or point of view because it serves the story that the author wants to tell. But we also speak of writing as more mysterious, believing that stories sometimes tell us what they want to become or emerge from unlikely sources. M. NourbeSe Philip explored this latter process in *Zong!* for which she created narratives through the disfiguration and rending apart of a 1783 legal opinion. According to Philip, she chipped away at the court's decision as a sculptor might in order to discover the stories that were “locked within its text.” What can we learn from Philip about authorial intention, experimentation, and risk?
- Admin Rooms** **10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

10:00 GRAD SESSION:**Admin 208****Kent Meyers, *Re-thinking the MFA as a Skill Set***

An MFA prepares us to write literature. That fact can prevent us from seeing that the skills we learn in acquiring it have great value in numerous, other settings. Graduates of RWW have written grants, worked in PR, written for software companies, worked for non-profit organizations. The abilities to read well, write clearly, listen to others, accurately interpret language, contribute to groups, get along with others under pressure, and think creatively are invaluable abilities. This session will help participants re-think what they have learned in the program as valuable abilities in job-seeking and career-building beyond the domain of writing. We will discuss how to present these abilities to potential employers and re-frame the MFA experience in ways that clarify its value.

10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:**Admin 210****Peggy Shumaker, *Creating a Generative Workshop***

In most writing workshops students submit their writing and everyone makes suggestions for improvement. We hone our critical skills and become articulate about our aesthetics. Ideally, students sort through an overwhelming amount of advice and then revise their work. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Consider what might happen if the focus of the writing workshop could shift away from critical analysis. What might happen if all energy were focused on generating new work, both in and out of class? We'll discuss models for such workshops, from high-level writing groups to community workshops that welcome writers of all levels of experience, to graduate workshops that include MFA students, K-12 teachers, and education students.

Commons**12:00 LUNCH****UC 201****12:00 SECOND-YEARS LUNCH WITH RB****1:30-4:00 CLASSES: [2-SESSION CLASSES]****Admin 204A****Suzanne Berne & Marjorie Sandor, *Playing with Omniscience***

Omniscience: it sounds old-fashioned and intimidating, but what rich possibilities it offers! Consider its extraordinary range, from the invisible documentarian who knows more about a town's citizens than they know about themselves, to a first-person narrator who speculates her way into her characters' minds and *seems* to know everything. But here is the question: How do we create the 'elbow room' necessary for achieving the scope of omniscience, while also creating voices both authentic and compelling? In this class, we'll look at some excerpts from great contemporary examples (omniscience is making a comeback), and experiment, through short exercises, with "story openings" that might create the necessary latitude for a story or novel in the omniscient point of view. [One Session for 2 Credits; Exercises.]

Admin 204B**April Ayers Lawson, *Useful Disturbance***

Horror is a genre of speculative fiction which is intended to frighten, scare, unsettle, disgust and/or startle its readers by inducing feelings of horror, dread, terror or disturbance. The word comes from a Latin verb meaning "to shudder" or "to bristle." But, arguably, the most disturbing fiction is fiction that horrifies without being able to be fully contained within the horror category. In this class we will study two stories that use elements of horror but aren't wholly set inside the genre of it and would also be considered literary fiction. We will talk about the use of deeply disturbing your readers—and yourself—and how to use elements of horror effectively in our own stories. The two stories

discussed will be “Child’s Play,” by Alice Munro, and “The Panic Hand” by Jonathan Carroll. [One Session for 2 Credits; Handout Reading Required.]

Xavier 201

Carl Phillips, *Managing Small: On Economy, Precision, and Restraint in the Lyric Poem*

Not being able to get words onto paper is one problem. But more often the problem I note in poems-in-progress is that they overstate their case, as if the poet didn’t trust the reader to be able to make connections—or to take particular pleasure in making connections—without the poet’s help. It’s also the case that we live in an age of speed and immediacy, which can make us feel pressured, as writers, to get things said quickly and with whatever bells-and-whistles might get the reader’s attention. In this craft class, we will look at poems that take a different approach, trusting the reader, valuing the work that stillness and silence can do in a poem, and using only exactly as many words as are required to get a point across or to bring an image to mind. Michael Palmer has spoken of language as a kind of sacrament, by which he seems to mean that words are powerful and precious at the same time, and not to be handled lightly. We will consider the relationship between restraint and resonance, between silence and argument; and we will examine in particular the degree to which form ultimately says, or can say, more than content. This is not, incidentally, about writing short poems versus longer ones. Rather, it’s about the value of such things as economy and precision at each point in a poem, regardless of length. Length is neither an argument for nor an invitation to slackness on the writer’s part. I hope we will come to see, in the course of our meeting, that there might be something to what the ancient Greeks meant by the phrase “nothing in excess.” [One Session for 2 Credits; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 208

Sherry Simpson, *The Sixth Sense: Place*

What do we mean by a “sense of place,” but more importantly, how do we create it in our writing, whether poetry or prose? We’ll explore the landscape of our lives and imaginations through a series of (fun) exercises and experiments designed to invoke this most elusive of senses. [One Session for 2 Credits; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

4:00-5:00 MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED

Xavier 201

5:00 GRAD READINGS: John Abbasi, Raquel Cook, John Donaghy, Libby Hall, Ted Olson, Kent Weigle

Regency Room

6:15 DINNER

Scan Center

7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Oliver de la Paz, Lia Purpura, Peggy Shumaker

The Cave

AFTER HOURS: The Cave

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201

Brenda Miller, *“I am he as you are he as you are me (and we are all together)”*: Point of View in Creative Nonfiction

In personal essay writing, the “I” is often paramount. But once we break free of the “I,” new vistas unfold before us. In this talk, we’ll explore a variety of points of view—2nd person, 3rd person, and

1st person plural—to see how this shift in perspective can enhance both our material and the voice of our writing.

Admin Rooms **10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

10:00 GRAD SESSION:

Admin 208 **Scott Nadelson, *Life as an Adjunct Instructor: A Cautionary Tale***

Teaching is a wonderful profession, and for writers finishing an MFA, seeking teaching appointments at the college level is an attractive possibility: there's the flexible schedule that allows time for writing, there's the built-in community, there's the opportunity to share your passion with eager young minds. But in an age when most institutions of higher learning are depending more and more on part-time and contingent faculty, there are also major risks in choosing that path. I'll share my experience teaching as an adjunct for more than ten years before landing a tenure-track position, discussing the pleasures and pitfalls of the adjunct life, and will answer questions about how to find teaching positions, how to keep them, and how to avoid getting trapped in a cycle of exploitation.

10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:

Admin 210 **Kevin Clark, *Hold that Thought: Four Steps to Teaching Revision in a Workshop***

Whether in high school or college, many students splash around in their discussion of a workshop poem. They lack focus, and often simply discuss what "sounds" good and what doesn't. Concentrating on how to present students with a helpful and orderly approach to each other's poems, this presentation would focus on teaching poetry writing but will apply to teaching fiction as well. We will consider plot, conflict, transformation, and language. I'm likely to bring *faux* undergraduate student work for us to examine in class.

Commons **12:00 LUNCH**

UC 133 **12:00 FIRST-YEARS LUNCH WITH RB**

UC 201 **12:00-6:00 SILENT AUCTION**

1:30-4:00 THE ART OF THE BOOK:

Admin 204A ***The Vegetarian*, Kang Han**

The Vegetarian explores themes of violence and humanity in a modern world. Yeong-he, a homemaker, has a disturbing dream about animal slaughter and decides to stop eating meat. This act of conscience has unintended and disastrous effects on her family. As readers, we will challenge ourselves to find the human themes that resonate with us, despite differences in culture and setting. As writers, we will ask how being aware of our own cultural biases—and examining those biases—can elevate the themes in our own work.

Admin 204B ***Pedro Paramo*, Juan Rulfo**

Considered one of the first "magic realist" novels to come out of Latin America, *Pedro Paramo* is known inside and out by every writer from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego, but few on this side of the border know it at all. This Art of the Book session will explore the novel's unique mix of the real and surreal, its evocation of place and non-place, and its concrete yet dreamlike dialogue. We'll think, too, about the following questions: How does the book work and how does, according to standard North American metaphysics, it not work? What is on the page, and why does it compel and how does it confuse? What assumptions does the reader need to surrender in order to inhabit

this novel, and once these assumptions have been surrendered, what are the rewards? In other words, what is its genius?

Admin 208

Dreaming of Ramadi in Detroit, Aisha Sabatini Sloan

Aisha Sabatini Sloan is an architect of juxtaposition. In *Dreaming of Ramadi in Detroit* Sabatini Sloan's essays mix disciplines, angles of observations, and formative locations—the work's thematic hybridity revealing a fierce intellect as well as an eye for the beauty of the disregarded. Through interrogations of difficult social crossings, close observation of contemporary art, engagements with her mixed-race family, adventures with her father, and forays through her beloved city of Detroit, her work reinvents both essay and lyric inquiry with bold formal leaps, balletically immersive sentences, and subtly queer sensibilities. We will examine this book's focal points and segmentations, and discuss what might come in our own works of the linking of seemingly unlike materials of autobiography and critical research.

Admin 210

In Cold Blood, Truman Capote

Capote's 1966 "nonfiction novel," about a quadruple murder in the American heartland, remains an American classic more than fifty years after its publication. It's one of the bestselling books of American nonfiction, and is often cited as the beginning of the massively popular true crime genre. This session will discuss some of the reasons for that enduring fame, and the ways in which Capote created a template for future true crime works to follow. We'll also engage extensively with questions of truth, representation, and what it means to write a "nonfiction novel," one that Capote himself claimed was "immaculately factual."

Admin 211A

Oculus, Sally Wen Mao

Dramatic, swooning, and intensely critical, Sally Wen Mao's second poetry collection, *Oculus* explores identity, the future, being observed and being the gazer. She takes on the persona of iconic cinema star, Anna May Wong and transforms her into something elemental. This session will look at Sally Wen Mao's careful crafting of her latest collection, discuss motif-making, and imagine ways that we can use similar structural impulses in our own work.

Admin 212

The Dream of a Common Language, Adrienne Rich

Of Rich's work, Claudia Rankine says, "She developed in her writing the appearance of the unadorned simplicity of a mind in rigorous thought." How does Rich do it—craft moments of such unadorned power? Together, we'll close read, *The Dream of a Common Language*, Rich's groundbreaking feminist collection published in 1978, the first after she had recently come out as a lesbian. For context, we'll also read a few critical essays by Rich, which offer evidence of her ever-evolving ideas about the relationship between language and power. Without sacrificing attention to image, line, or form, Rich teaches us again and again how to name experiences of injustice with clarity, complexity, and immediacy, and when one fails, how to—across a career—grow, change, and revise.

4:00-5:00 MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED

Xavier 201

5:00 GRAD READINGS: Alice Capshaw, Hannah Comerford, Darien Gee, Judith Landy, Jonathan Maule, Jeric Smith

Regency Room

6:15 FINAL DINNER & AUCTION

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201

David Biespiel, *Don't Take My Advice*

Writing turns you into a person who's always wrong, but also a person who lives under the illusion that you may get it right someday, perverse as that idea might be. Maybe the best thing for any writer is, to forget being right or wrong (about what you're writing), to forget being good or bad at it, correct or incorrect, au- or non-au-courant, and just go along for the ride. Ask yourself, might it be better for you, in the long run, long after you've completed your MFA program, to chart your own way? To learn to do that now? To follow your own impulses? Wherever they lead? To avoid the "swarm" of writers chasing the latest fad, since the latest fad fades? To seek the....fill in the blank...of your own skills and limitations, the...fill in the blank...of your world view? Of your imaginative vision? Imagine this: if you take the stance toward your writing that "Writing is impossible," then what? Might that be freeing? Imagine this: if you take the position that you will never "get it right," then what? I mean, all that we don't know is vast. The best you can do is, learn what your individual distance is to your best material and write in the direction of your interest and your impulses. Of course, doing that will most certainly lead to failure. Which is where you want to wind up. Thomas Edison made over a thousand unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. Asked what it felt to fail so much, he answered, "I didn't fail. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps." For a writer, nothing bad can happen to you when you think like this. But, you know, don't take my advice.

Admin Rooms

10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:00 GRAD SESSION:

Admin 208

Oliver de la Paz, Peggy Shumaker, Jason Skipper, *The Other Side of the Desk*

This panel will delve into aspects of the publishing and professional spheres of the writer's life. Each faculty member will present on a specific topic, and there will be ample time for questions and discussion. Oliver de la Paz: "What does it mean to publish a work? And what does it mean to publish a work in progress? How does publishing change the vision of a work and how should you as a writer imagine your own work in the context of the 'bigger picture'?" Peggy Shumaker: "You write, revise, polish, repeat. After years of effort, you send your work out to live its life in the world. What can you do to help it find its readers? We'll talk about how to select appropriate journals for your work. We'll discuss how chapbooks work. We'll talk about the differences between small literary presses, university presses, and commercial presses. We'll share stories of what is likely to appeal to an editor and what is likely to move your work closer to publication. I will draw on my experience as a writer and as editor of the Boreal Books Series and the Alaska Literary Series, as contributing editor of *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and as a member of the advisory board for the *Prairie Schooner Book Prizes*." Jason Skipper: "We will discuss resources available to writers to help them get acquainted with different journals, how to submit strategically, methods for writing cover letters, dealing with rejection, and requests to revise and re-submit."

10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:**Admin 210****Barrie Jean Borich, *Group Texting While Walking on Stairs***

In this session we will explore experiential methods for helping students bring fresh information and perspective to their work by demonstrating ways that creative writing study is a creative act that extends beyond our necessary reading, writing, workshopping, and researching in libraries and archives. Methods we will discuss include site visits, writing from art, technology-based immersion exercises, group blogs, student-centered collaborations, visual-and-movement-based classroom activities, and varieties of creative project-making.

Regency Room**12:00 GRADUATION LUNCH [FACULTY SPEAKER: Suzanne Berne]****1:00-3:00 MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED****Scan Center****4:00 GRAD READINGS: Kim Culbertson, Gabrielle Fairbairn, Jasminne Mendez, Joannie Stangeland****Scan Center****4:40 GRADUATION CEREMONY & RECEPTION [FACULTY SPEAKER: Jenny Johnson] [ALUMNI SPEAKER: Holly Hughes]**

<u>MONDAY, AUGUST 12: DEPARTURE DAY</u>
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