

**THE RAINIER WRITING WORKSHOP
MFA @ PLU
2020 RESIDENCY SCHEDULE [FINAL]**

In addition to participating in all morning sessions—workshops, thesis critique sessions, pedagogy sessions, and grad sessions—each student must take 16 credits during the residency. A two-session class counts for two credits. These count for one credit: each morning talk and each Grad Presentation. The “Art of the Book” counts for two credits. Taking one session of a two-session class is allowed, but not encouraged. The Grad Sessions are intended for graduates only. The Pedagogy Sessions are for thesis-year students and meet concurrently with the Mixed-Genre workshops. Students are expected to attend the afternoon Grad Presentations, Grad Readings, and the late-afternoon faculty readings. When we get closer to the residency, we will send out information regarding the logistics related to Zoom and how to link to each session. Please note: as a courtesy to your fellow students and the faculty, show up on time to all events and activities, especially workshops and classes. In fact, each Zoom session will be open about 10 minutes before each start time, which will give you an opportunity to show up early and chat with your peers before the session officially starts.

FRIDAY, JULY 31

4:00 ALUMNI READING: Emily Holt '16, Jen Soriano '18

5:30 OPENING REMARKS & INTRODUCTIONS

6:00 FACULTY READINGS: Marie Mutsuki Mockett, Sejal Shah

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Wendy Call, *Writing and/as Art: The Long View*

Cupules, rounded pockmarks beaten into rock, are the world’s longest-surviving art. The oldest examples we have found, in Australia, were created at least 290,000 years ago. Cupules—an art form made by many people pounding rock together for hours or days—exist worldwide, from California to Cameroon. It is an art form so old that it’s not even unique to modern humans; *Homo neanderthalensis* made cupules, too. By comparison, writing is an art form in its infancy. If our entire art-making history were compressed into one year, we started writing *six days ago*. “Writing and/as Art: The Long View” explores the history of art-making, the neurological basis of writing, the fundamentally collaborative nature of all art forms, and our new relationship to time in this unprecedented era we are living.

10:30-12:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:30-12:00 THESIS CRITIQUE SESSIONS

12:00-1:00 MID-DAY BREAK

1:00-2:15 CLASSES:**Jennifer Foerster, *What Is—and What Isn't—Documentary Poetics?***

Muriel Ruykeyser wrote, in *U.S. 1*, “poetry can extend the document.” Documentary poetics is a growing mode in the poetry of the Americas, with its origins from Lorine Niedecker, W.C. Williams, and Langston Hughes, to Raul Zurita, M. Nourbese Philip, Simon Ortiz, and C.D. Wright. Today, Native poets in particular are on the cutting edge of this documentary work; examples include Layli Long Soldier’s *Whereas*, Jordan Abel’s *Injun*, and Craig Santos Perez’s series, *from unincorporated territory*. But what is—and what isn’t—documentary poetics? This class will explore the origins of “documentary work” and its intersection with modern and contemporary poetry. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

Rebecca McClanahan, *You Think “You” Got Problems? (The Expansive, Surprising, Useful, and Sometimes Pesky Second Person in Nonfiction)*

Though the second person “you” can be challenging to use effectively, it offers rich opportunities for essayists, memoirists, and writers of hybrid, experimental, and other forms of nonfiction. As a stand-in for the “I,” second person can create a sense of intimacy with the reader. Or, conversely (and sometimes simultaneously) the “you” can create the spatial, temporal, and emotional distance often required for confessional or trauma narratives. The second person also appears in epistolary works addressed to a real or imagined “you”—the recipient of advice, instructions, criticism, wisdom, secrets, or stories. (*Between the World and Me*, *The Fire Next Time*, *The Disappearance*, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, *Letters to a Young Poet*, etc.) Some writers sustain the second person construction throughout a text; others move in and out of “you” sections within first person works. In this class, we will look closely at several brief literary selections and practice incorporating the second person into our own nonfiction writing. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Kent Meyers, *Fiction 101: Tension and Desire*

If your day contains tension, you have a story to tell at dinner. Tension is often based in desire: a salesman desires you to buy something, and you have a desire to avoid it. Amplify desire, and you have dream or obsession: Ahab wants revenge on Moby Dick, Lear wants his daughters to love him. A useful framework for conceiving of fiction is this: A character wants something; that desire gets amplified; the resultant obsession or dream spirals out into various interlocking tensions. Almost all other elements of fiction—plot, setting, characters, dialogue—can be connected to desire and tension. We will study and discuss these relationships. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Brenda Miller, *Creative Nonfiction 101*

In this course we will explore some fundamental concepts of the broad term “creative nonfiction,” as well as get a sense of how your own work can fit into or expand the genre. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Advance Reading.]

2:30-3:45 CLASSES:**Suzanne Berne & Marjorie Sandor, *The Pleasures of Imitation: Riffing and Modeling on Older Stories to Discover Your Own***

In the arts of music and painting, students have always learned by studying and “copying” the masters: as Henri Matisse’s teacher once said, “this allowed the student to focus on methods of construction rather than inventing new compositions.” Could the same be true in the art of writing? Janet Malcolm put it this way (writing about a favorite author of hers, the late Joseph Mitchell): “As listening to Mozart is widely known to be a cure for flagging creativity, so reading Mitchell has been famous among writers as a remedy for stuckness.” From ear-based “riffing” on a writer whose rhythms pull you forward, to recasting the basic bones of great old narrative structures, the pleasures of emulation await. We’ll read three pairs of stories—an older “master” story and its great-grandchild from contemporary writers—to see the way everything from an 18th century fairy tale to a story by an early 20th century Russian writer might provide influence and inspiration for our own writing—and we’ll try some short exercises ourselves. The advance reading will include six short stories, by Charles Perrault, Anton Chekhov, Isaac Babel, Aimee Bender, Scott Nadelson, and Michael Shou-Yung Shum. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Barrie Jean Borich, *Memoir Fundamentals*

In this class, we break down the craft fundamentals of literary memoirs and narrative essays. We read as writers and look closely at craft elements such as character, scene/summary/reflection, space/place, voice, time, and structure. We consider linear and nonlinear memoir forms, as well as narrative and lyric approaches to memory-based writing, and we try out a few strategies with low-stakes in-class writing exercises. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Advance Reading.]

Greg Glazner, *Poetry 101*

This class offers participants who may not have a thorough background in poetry the opportunity to work with some craft elements, including associative connections and movement, images, voice(s), and various ways to use the line. I will provide a few handouts, with diverse poets as examples, but advance reading is not required. There will be a few brief exercises as illustration. [Two Sessions; Exercises.]

Scott Nadelson, *Unsolvable Mysteries*

I'm a sucker for hard-boiled mysteries, but I'm always disappointed when the detective solves the crime. Why waste all that atmosphere just to pin a murder on a particular suspect? In this class, we'll look at literary fiction that uses some of the tropes of the detective story but does so to reveal deeper mysteries—mysteries of personality and memory and history—that can never be solved. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

4:00-4:45 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

Chris Liek, *Juxtaposing Place: The Middleness of Imagery, Audience, and Form in Rural Poetics*

In this session we'll talk about how poets Edgar Kunz, Tim Earley, Will Brewer, Julia Spicher Kasdorf, and Philip Levine, among others, use everyday imagery and language specific to the working-class, as well as juxtaposed truths, in order to build associations and create oppositions between rural and urban life, between the beautiful and the depraved realities of country landscapes, between the experiences of locals and the assumptions of outsiders, all in compressed, collected forms. We'll see such writers critically employing at least three poetic strategies of juxtaposition to explore and express certain rural realities of middleness: imagery's creation of literal and figurative meaning, labor and commodification, and life and death.

Maureen Reiser, *Modern Languages for Loneliness: The Necropoetics of Illness and Elegy*

When we bury our dead, we commend their bodies back to the earth. Our culture leads us to meet death in the darkened graveyards and the creeping, dripping underworld. It is well understood that it is best if the living stay as far from these intersections as possible. In Greek mythology, Orpheus is cautioned not to look back at Eurydice but he cannot resist making sure she is following and she is lost to the Underworld. Our modern culture takes heed of this warning and refuses a look back at our lost. But what do you do when you can't move on? We'll look at poets such as Tracy K. Smith, Kevin Young, Matt Rasmussen, and Marie Howe to see how they embrace memory, reunite with their dead, or use the landscape around them to conjure the vastness of their experience in response to these gaps in our cultural conversation about death. Others use their poems as a foothold as they navigate the rocky path to acceptance. We'll also look at the shortcomings and failures of the elegy and what happens when a poet is forced to confront their own inevitable meeting with death.

Sari Sapon-White, *How to Make a Painful Parent into a Person: Memoir Techniques that Contribute to Compassionate Portraits of Difficult People*

When adult memoirists write about abusive or neglectful childhoods, they often depict what I have come to call a "painful parent." While details of parental abuse add authenticity and create sympathy for the narrator, immersing in these specifics without respite may leave a reader unwilling to continue, even traumatized. In order for the overall effect to be positive and meaningful, memoirists must also include perspective, hard-won insight, and a portrayal of the painful parent as a flawed yet complex human being for whom a reader can feel some compassion and understanding. In this presentation, I will focus on four broad craft techniques I have identified that help render a painful parent as a fully dimensional person, drawing on memoirs by Rigoberto Gonzalez, Vivian Gornick, Richard Hoffman, Peggy Shumaker,

Luis Alberto Urrea, and my own memoir-in-progress. Through examples and discussion, I hope you will leave with an expanded palette from which you can paint your own painful parent.

5:30 FACULTY READINGS: Barrie Jean Borich, Geoffrey Davis

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Oliver de la Paz, *Writing Beyond Borders: Notes on Genre and Social Justice*

In this conversation I will look to various approaches to writing that move freely between one genre and the next even in the midst of the work. Often, part of the difficulty of writing about the political is that the form of one mode is insufficient and cannot begin to capture the emotional weight of a subject from within the confines of a set of pre-defined principles.

10:30-12:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:30-12:00 THESIS CRITIQUE SESSIONS

12:00-1:00 MID-DAY BREAK

1:00-2:15 CLASSES:

Jennifer Foerster, *Documentary Poetics, Session 2*

Rebecca McClanahan, *Second Person in Nonfiction, Session 2*

Kent Meyers, *Fiction 101, Session 2*

Brenda Miller, *Creative Nonfiction 101, Session 2*

2:30-3:45 CLASSES:

Suzanne Berne & Marjorie Sandor, *The Pleasures of Imitation, Session 2*

Barrie Jean Borich, *Memoir Fundamentals, Session 2*

Greg Glazner, *Poetry 101, Session 2*

Scott Nadelson, *Unsolvable Mysteries, Session 2*

4:00-4:45 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

Margaret Flaherty, *Religious Speech in Contemporary Poems*

Traditional forms of religious speech, such as prayer, prophecy, and liturgy, explicitly engage with the idea of God. In doing so, religious speech makes distinctive uses of grammar and rhetoric. Syntax may be upended to convey mystery, distress or confusion. Verb tenses may be scrambled. Consider prophecy, where present tense is used to describe past or future events. The rhetoric of traditional religious speech is equal part praise and complaint. It expresses wisdom or

authority by use of archaic diction or reference to obscure knowledge. These, and other distinctive patterns of religious speech can be found in the works of contemporary poets who do not expressly engage with the idea of God. For what other purposes are forms of religious speech used in these poems? What does religious speech convey in non-religious contexts? How does it function? How does it engage emotion and retain expressive force outside of its traditional fortress of belief? These are some of the questions we'll be asking of poems by Louise Glück, Karen Solie, and Brigit Pegeen Kelly.

Sarah Broussard Weaver, *When the Pillars of Faith Shatter: The Theory of the Assumptive World in Three Memoirs*
 “The shattering of the assumptive world” is a social psychology term for trauma that extensively changes a life. Psychologist Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, in her book *Shattered Assumptions*, proposes that the three fundamental assumptions people generally hold are: the world is benevolent, the world is meaningful, and the self is worthy. Religion ties these three common assumptions about the world and the self firmly to God, asserting there can be no good thing without God. Therefore, for people raised in overly strict patriarchal religions, losing their faith can constitute a kind of trauma. If each ingrained belief is a pillar and some are irrevocably knocked down, what remains for support? What is salvageable after a person loses God, for whom they lived their past and planned their future? In this session, we will examine three loss of faith memoirs, using the lens of the assumptive world: *Leaving the Witness: Exiting a Religion and Finding a Life* by Amber Scoriah, *Educated: A Memoir* by Tara Westover, and *When I Spoke in Tongues: A Story of Faith and Its Loss* by Jessica Wilbanks.

Nathaniel Youmans, *Seizing the Rapacious Lyric: Birds of Prey and the Cognitive Poetics of Predation, Obsession, and Revelation*

Few intelligences in the ecological world captivate the human psyche like those of birds of prey. Owls, eagles, hawks, falcons—their impeccable precision and utterly foreign, chillingly graceful predator knowledge is a combination of extremes that we humans, as a sort of apex-predator-by-technical-foul, adore and glorify. Yet, as a species wired by an evolutionary history of also being prey, we are wary, even perturbed, by raptor birds. At the epicenter of the conflicting obsession humans have had for millennia with raptors are these two mutual qualities: the ability to carry away toward revelation, transcendence, and an elevated state of consciousness, and the ability to force, coerce, violate. This presentation will discuss, with particular emphasis on birds of prey, interspecies theory of mind, and the neuroscience of sensation and perception, the ecological poetics of Peter O’Leary, Andrew Feld, Brian Teare, C. D. Wright, and Carl Phillips. The primary ecological poetic analysis is concerned with the relationships between representation, the dual nature of predator-and-prey in art-making, and conscious, ethical action in an ecological setting. Though it should be said that this entire analysis hinges upon a gruesome experience with a great horned owl.

5:05 WELLNESS BREAK:

Take a 15-minute wellness break with Sydney Elliott! Spend a few minutes to ground yourself through breathwork and stretching. This will be a gentle, restorative mini-practice that will focus on staying energized but relaxed during residency. Be prepared to sit on the floor (but use a cushion or pillow if needed). No mat necessary.

5:30 FACULTY READINGS: Rick Barot, David Biespiel

7:30 ZOOM OPEN MIC!

MONDAY, AUGUST 3

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Justin St. Germain, *Trapped in Amber: The Ethics of Portraying the Dead*

This morning talk will focus on one of the most common issues for people writing about family members and other loved ones who've left us: how can we portray them on the page in a way that does justice to who they were? We'll look at a handful of examples from writers working in multiple genres who wrote characters based on real people, and see how they approached the challenge of portraying the dead, and what they have to teach us.

10:30-12:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:30-12:00 THESIS CRITIQUE SESSIONS

12:00-1:00 MID-DAY BREAK

1:00-2:15 CLASSES:

David Biespiel, *The New Lyric: How Concentrating on Exploring Words Can Free You into Your Best Writing*

For centuries, poets in English have tended the fires of lyric poetry by concentrating on what John Keats calls "negative capability." This craft class is for poets (and non poets) who want to focus on magnifying and intensifying language in your writing—by learning to follow intuitive and associational logic, by trusting pattern-making, and by striving to write something that is enjoyed and savored. Lyric poetry is always new, always becoming new, and we will devote our time together to studying words, so that we listen to what they tell us to write and not the other way around. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Barrie Jean Borich & Jenny Johnson, *Let's Get Lost: Writing Poetry and Nonfiction from Archival Research*

What do historical papers, records, photographs, and archival ephemera have to offer the essayist and the poet? What might we write after emerging from the rabbit holes of official and unofficial research collections? In this two-part class on creating from archival sources, we'll share some of our own experiences writing from letter collections, historic photographs, oral histories, diaries, drafts and rough cuts, transcripts, notes, posters and flyers, professional records, small-run publications, and personal paraphernalia. How do we balance the work of research and the work of the imagination? How do we both invite and resist getting lost in papers, ephemera, and folios of curiosity? How do we write from the complicated gaps in what's been officially, or randomly, saved and recorded? What do we make of what has been remembered, and by whom? We'll also look at poetry and nonfiction by Carmen Maria Machado, Rick Barot, Sheila O'Connor, Kiki Petrosino, Sarah Broom, and Shawn Wen. In advance, we will send you on a very abridged archival quest into digitized collections (to be completed from the comfort of your home!), so you'll have some material to work with when we try a few generative exercises. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

April Ayers Lawson, *From Screen to Page—What the Craft of Screenplay Can Teach Us about Writing Better Fiction*

While structure is often underdiscussed—and sometimes totally ignored—in the study of contemporary fiction writing, it is something all screenwriters must be aware of and understand in undertaking the writing of a screenplay. In this class, we'll study fundamentals of screenwriting with the idea of taking what we can from them to apply to prose fiction. For each class meeting, we'll discuss the setup and structure of a film, talk about what it means to have to rely only on image, action, and dialogue to tell a story, and explore how thinking about the craft of screenwriting can make us stronger fiction writers in general. For the first class, we'll discuss *The Squid and the Whale* by Noah Baumbach, and for the second we'll do *Get Out* by Jordan Peele. PDFs of the screenplays will be provided. You will also need to rent and watch the two movies, as well as read at least the first third of each screenplay, prior to the class. [Two Sessions; Advance Reading and Viewing.]

Jason Skipper, *Flash Fiction 101*

While this genre goes by many different names—flash fiction, micro-fiction, sudden fiction, and many others—its stories are recognizable by their ability to contain a complete narrative in approximately 1500 words or fewer. In this class, we will consider the multitude of ways these chiseled-down works by authors from different time periods and parts of the world have pushed the boundaries of what constitutes narrative and expanded the possibilities for telling complex stories, sometimes with a title and a single word of text. [Two Sessions; Exercises.]

2:30-3:45 CLASSES:

Wendy Call, *Sense of Place on the Page*

When your writing has a “sense of place,” what exactly does it have? Looking at examples (both prose and poetry) from Joan Didion, Richard Hugo, Spencer Reece, A.J. Verdelle, and Jane Wong, we’ll look at some of the elements that give a literary work its strong sense of place. The term “sense of place” derives from the 18th-century term “genius loci,” or the “genius of a place.” Long before that, the “genius loci” was the genius *in* the place—a locale’s guardian divinity. We’ll trace the concept of “sense of place” back through two centuries, drawing on disciplines ranging from architecture and anthropology to sociology and theology. As the First Nations Kwakiutl people say: “A place is a story happening many times....” We will create maps, write, and think about the genius of the place. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Oliver de la Paz, *The Prose Poem*

The prose poem, which had initially been shunned by the greater writing world, has emerged as a formidable approach to creative writing with a number of practitioners who excel. But what’s also remarkable about the prose poem is that the form allows for so much stylistic variation. In this class we will talk about prose poems, look to practitioners of prose poems, explore how the form has recently shifted/changed, and write a few prose poems of our own. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Sejal Shah, *The Things People Don't Say: Writing What Is Taboo*

In this class, we will explore the power and transformative nature of writing what is taboo, including such topics as divorce, depression, invisible disabilities, job loss, sexual or gender identity, and neurodivergence. How might we say the unsayable? What forms, structures, and other elements can help us craft effective “taboo” essays and stories? And what might writing about taboos—and sharing these stories via publication—do to the taboo itself, or ourselves as writers? We’ll examine how some writers have done exactly this, including Cheryl Strayed’s wrenching essay, “The Love of My Life,” about infidelity and her grief over her mother’s death, an essay from Carley Moore’s essay collection, *16 Pills*, and two essays on chronic illness by Nafissa Thompson-Spires. We’ll also do several writing exercises together, to help put these strategies into practice. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Renee Simms, *Fabulist Fiction*

Many students love the work of Carmen Maria Machado, Helen Oyeyemi, and Kelly Link, but how do these authors and other fabulists achieve stories that balance magic and levity on one hand with explorations of serious, real-life issues? The answer is there isn’t one answer! In this class we will look at the different approaches to fabulist fiction and use exercises to practice how we might craft similar stories of our own. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

4:00-4:45 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

Darrell R. Covington, *Effective Characterizations in Trauma-Centric Narratives*

Effective characterization is key to delivering a memorable character-driven narrative. Each action, reaction, and inaction establish an air of believability meant to move the reader closer to its central character and, hopefully, build an emotional bridge to the story’s broader social themes. But how do trauma-centric narratives, especially those not explicitly engaged in social discourse, grant readers access to broader social themes from such intimate and everyday perspectives? In this presentation, we will explore the trauma-centric structure and the role characterization plays in creating memorable and authentic narratives.

Caitlin Dwyer, *A Walk in the Woods with Toddlers, or, Getting Lost Fruitfully*

In her book *Wanderlust*, Rebecca Solnit asserts that walking is the ultimate writerly activity. Writers walk because writing is like walking — in particular, like walking with a very curious toddler. We walk slowly, paying attention to every detail, veering off the path—and these are tools that help us stay fresh to new ideas and resist an unrelenting narrative push. In this class, we will explore how rambling, meandering, and just plain getting lost enriches poems, looking at examples by Brigit Pegeen Kelly, Alice Notley, Terrance Hayes, and Carl Phillips. In poetry terms, meandering means association, noticing the way thoughts leap and veer, colliding with other thoughts of similarity or paradox. While at times they resolve, they often do not. Through close reading and exercises, we will explore this meandering logic, as opposed to the linear logic of chronology and destination. You will come away with several associative techniques to open up space for surprise and delight in your work.

5:30 FACULTY READINGS: Rebecca McClanahan, Marjorie Sandor

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

8:30 MORNING PANEL:

Kevin Clark, Jennifer Foerster, Greg Glazner, Marjorie Sandor, Renee Simms, *Mystery and the Inexplicable: Writing into the Unknown*

The universe is unfathomable, impossible for human beings to grasp in all its complexity. Yet writers are forever trying to capture, in words, the sense of illimitable abundance—both beyond us and within us. Though no poem, story, or essay can solve the riddles of the macro or micro cosmos, even brief illuminations provide further avenues for inquiry—and thus more mystery. Some scientific inquiry—including quantum physics and the neurosciences—has pushed us further into the big questions. How, as writers, should we approach the state of not-knowing? Panel members will provide examples of their own work, briefly comment on how they undertook the subject, and then participate in a Q&A with students and faculty.

10:30-12:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:30-12:00 GRAD SESSION:

Wendy Call, *Your Writing Life Needs a Master Plan*

Yes, there is much about the world of writing and publishing that is out of your control as an individual writer. This session will help you identify, prioritize, and manage that which is under your control. We will discuss long- and short-term planning, as well as time management. This workshop will help you: 1) Set reasonable long-term goals and then break them down into achievable, short-term goals. 2) Transform your list of goals into annual, monthly, and weekly plans. 3) Move from a burdensome “To Do list” to a successful plan of action. Please come ready to think about the brass tacks of your writing life post-MFA!

12:00-1:00 MID-DAY BREAK

1:00-2:15 CLASSES:

David Biespiel, *The New Lyric, Session 2*

Barrie Jean Borich & Jenny Johnson, *Archival Research, Session 2*

April Ayers Lawson, *From Screen to Page*, Session 2

Jason Skipper, *Flash Fiction 101*, Session 2

2:30-3:45 CLASSES:

Wendy Call, *Sense of Place*, Session 2

Oliver de la Paz, *The Prose Poem*, Session 2

Sejal Shah, *Taboo*, Session 2

Renee Simms, *Fabulist Fiction*, Session 2

4:00-4:45 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

Jenny Apostol, *Searching for the Blueprint: Lyric Techniques in Nonfiction Architecture*

Antoni Gaudí disrupted assumptions about what is possible in architecture. His constructions are beautiful, imaginative, evocative, but their apparent whimsy belies their rigorous, masterful engineering. Lyric essayists could be called architects of innovative literary forms. They push the boundaries of traditional, linear narrative into more experimental, multi-dimensional structures. Why? To convey an experience that feels true to the often chaotic, swirl of circumstances we all face. Actuality is still the foundation, yet logic is more intuitive, open-ended, sensory. The question is, with work that is both poetic and deeply personal, how will the reader follow along? How do you weave a good story out of what seem to be random threads of material? This presentation will look at work by six memoirists who use lyric techniques to heighten awareness of their own literary forms as a way to guide their readers. As if one could enter the writer's mind for an intimate experience of what happened and how it feels. Excerpts from: *Sidewalks*, by Valeria Luiselli; *The Wet Collection*, by Joni Tevis; *Becoming Earth*, by Eva Saulitis; *The Circus Train*, by Judith Kitchen; *Nox*, by Anne Carson; and *Still Life with Oysters and Lemon*, by Mark Doty. Then we'll try a brief exercise.

Tabitha Lawrence, *Subtext Messaging: Conversation in "Millennial" Fiction*

With so many more methods of communication to choose from than ever before, how a writer chooses to write the important, tension-building conversations can offer a look into the author's vision for the tension as a whole. The nuances available in-person—a pause for reverie, audience, misspoken or misunderstood words, gesture, body language, distractions, etc.—are each tools that offer far different outcomes on the plot structure and characterizing of a scene, just as each type of technological communication offers its own sense of ritual, time to edit, more careful diction, internet slang, new rules of context and meaning. In this session, we will look at examples of written conversation in fiction and compare them with modern, in-person dialogue.

MID-RESIDENCY BREAK BEGINS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

12:00-1:00 EXTRA MEETING FOR WORKSHOP F.

1:00-2:00 ALL-FACULTY MEETING W/ RICK BAROT

2:30-3:30 BUSINESS MEETINGS FOR COHORT GROUPS:**Thesis-Year Students: Meeting w/ Rick Barot****Second-Year Students: Meeting w/ Hannah Comerford****First-Year Students: Meeting w/ Kent Meyers for *Writing Critical Response Papers***

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.]

4:00-5:15 OUTSIDE EXPERIENCE PRESENTATION**5:30 READING: Terese Mailhot****THURSDAY, AUGUST 6****8:30 MORNING TALK:****Jenny Johnson, *Change of Address***

"I know you are reading this poem..." And so begins "XIII (Dedications)" by Adrienne Rich, a poem in which a speaker envisions readers: warming milk on a stove, riding an underground train, guessing at some words... How do you picture your readers? And whom do you envision you're writing for? And when there's a "you" in a poem you've written, whom do you imagine the speaker is addressing? And how slippery is the relationship between your sense of your audiences and your invocations of a "you"? Maybe like me your answers are dependent upon the specific poem at hand. In this talk I want us to consider how deepening our sense of our audiences (whom we might be writing for) and clarifying acts of address (who is talking to whom) can radically alter a poem's scope and impact, especially during the revision process. We will consider, for example, how participation in the grassroots feminist movement of the 1970's brought nuance to the scope of address in the work of poets like Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde. We'll observe, too, how there's power to be gained both from honing and widening one's scope. In an interview from 1992 with Michael Silverblatt, Rich offered that she hoped to be able to "see more and more people in the world" as her work matured. So, I am curious, too: At the craft level, how far can we extend the reach of a poem without generalizing about the many we may wish to address? Together, we will also consider poems by Matthew Olzmann, Aracelis Girmay, Brenda Shaughnessy, and Julianna Spahr.

10:30-12:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**10:30-12:00 GRAD SESSION:****Rebecca McClanahan, *What Next? The Writer's Ongoing Journey***

At the close of your MFA *commencement* ceremony, a new stage in your writing life *commences*. How do you imagine the next phase in your journey? In this informal conversation, we discuss topics such as how to find your natural place in the world of writing, teaching, reviewing, editing, mentoring, or freelance possibilities; how to cobble together a life and a living outside the traditional model of college/university teaching; how to use work you've already done to "seed" the next work, either in your primary genre or in others; how to develop and maintain a writing habit, persevere through rejection, and discover and support a community of readers and fellow writers.

10:30-12:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:**Geffrey Davis, *The Pedagogy of Emotions***

In an effort to quantify the otherwise arbitrary advancement of knowledge and skill, our rubrics for determining the performance and progress of students can diminish if not elide the emotional voyage of that education. Despite axioms that offer soothing (if compelling) intellectual payoffs for the rigor of a creative writing curriculum — “Learn how language shapes the world!” “Refine the art of asking the right question!” “Become someone on whom nothing is lost!” — the actual sites and experiences of such development — which might include interrogating cultural stereotypes, confronting fraught family histories, admitting the danger of our partial knowledges, challenging the palatability of our own storytelling, so on and so forth — seem necessarily ripe for feelings of deep discomfort. Even the positivity of small breakthroughs (celebration!) and large breakthroughs (sublime!) come with emotional realities. Because learning necessarily involves the emotional lives of students, how can we balance our commitments to safety with our obligations to challenge? How do we cultivate a robust and evolving ethics of pedagogical discomfort? As teachers, how do we model the emotional-intellectual complexity of engaging the limits of our own understanding? Let’s talk about it!

12:00-1:00 MID-DAY BREAK**1:00-3:30 CLASSES:****Jennifer Foerster, *The Art of the Sequence: Embracing the Expanse***

Poetry is a risk. It is a risk because it tries to put the ineffable into language. The language of poetry is always in the position of trying to say something beyond itself, and yet, as language, can only do so by exploring itself. This class will look at poems that have attempted to embrace this paradox by using sequencing as a device. We will look read and discuss several poets and how sequencing has served their particular project or concern. We will also consider issues of architecture, scope, and rhythm in the writing of poems-in-sequence. [One Session for Two Credits; Handout Reading Required.]

Marie Mutsuki Mockett, *How to Write About a Disaster*

We are living through a disaster—but it’s not the only disaster. In fact, I’ve written about disaster! This class will examine how to write about a disaster in ways that don’t make the disaster feel overwhelming, or force the writer into a narrative that feels to pat. What are examples of good disaster writing and what is the writer’s responsibility in his work during times of disaster? [One Session for Two Credits.]

Scott Nadelson, *You Can’t Always Get What You Want: An Anatomy of Desire (in Fiction)*

In workshop discussions of fiction, we often ask what a character wants. Unfulfilled desire is often the trigger or occasion for a narrative. In this class, we will explore different types of wanting and different ways a writer can propel a story by probing a character’s desires—whether they are unconscious, secret, or all-consuming. [One Session for Two Credits; Handout Reading Required.]

Justin St. Germain, *The Misfit Genre: Why We All Should Write Literary Essays*

This class will focus on a frequently overlooked genre of writing: the literary essay. We’ll discuss what that term means, and read a few examples that demonstrate the form’s various possibilities in terms of craft, content, and form. We’ll also discuss why the genre is overlooked, and reasons why it shouldn’t be—chief among them that it welcomes writers from other genres, and provides an opportunity to use the tools of those genres toward a different end—as well as the roles of inquiry, discovery, and truth in the essay form. [One Session for Two Credits; Handout Reading Required.]

4:00-5:00 MENTOR/MENTEES GROUP MEET-UP

[Faculty: please schedule an additional 45-minute conference with each mentee.]

5:05 WELLNESS BREAK:

Take a 15-minute wellness break with Sydney Elliott! Spend a few minutes to ground yourself through breathwork and stretching. This will be a gentle, restorative mini-practice that will focus on staying energized but relaxed during residency. Be prepared to sit on the floor (but use a cushion or pillow if needed). No mat necessary.

5:30 FACULTY READINGS: Suzanne Berne, Wendy Call**FRIDAY, AUGUST 7****8:30 MORNING TALK:****Sejal Shah, *Story into Essay: On Genre Slippage***

If fiction and nonfiction both require imagination and draw from memory, how does one decide on a genre when working *with/from* autobiographical material? In Tyrese Coleman's *How to Sit: A Memoir in Stories and Essays*, her author's note explains that her book "challenges the concept that a distinction needs to be made when the work is memory-based, because memories contain their own truth regardless of how they are documented...this collection...is intended to make you wonder what is and what isn't true, and whether or not that matters." My first book, a memoir in essays, *This Is One Way to Dance*, is composed of 23 essays, a prelude, and a coda. Five of these essays began as short stories, which I later revised and classified as essays. Where do you draw the line between fiction and nonfiction? What is the contract between reader and writer? I began with a hybrid manuscript composed of both stories and essays and eventually separated them into two manuscripts. This talk will consider how and why I chose to make some stories into essays and will also discuss texts that may include memoir/novel *The Woman Warrior* (Maxine Hong Kingston), the story collection, *Friend of My Youth* (Alice Munro), Alice Adams's short story, "My First and Only House," and the essay anthologies edited by John D'Agata, one of which includes, for example, a short story by fiction writer Susan Steinberg.

10:30-12:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**10:30-12:00 GRAD SESSION:****Carolyn Kuebler, *A Conversation with an Editor***

Carolyn Kuebler is the editor of *New England Review*, one of the most distinguished literary journals in the country. In this informal conversation, Kuebler will take your questions regarding literary journals, the submission process, literary trends, modes of etiquette as you bring your work into the professional sphere, and about Kuebler's own journey as a writer/editor/literary citizen. Kuebler became editor of *New England Review* in 2014. Before coming to *NER* as managing editor in 2004, she was an associate editor at *Library Journal* and founding editor of *Rain Taxi Review of Books*. She began her work in publishing as an intern at Milkweed Editions in Minneapolis, served briefly as marketing director at Dalkey Archive Press, then worked as a bookseller at the Hungry Mind in St. Paul. Kuebler has published dozens of book reviews, as well as small-press profiles and author interviews, in publications such as *Publishers Weekly*, *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, *Rain Taxi*, and *City Pages*. Her fiction has been published in the *Common*, *Copper Nickel*, *Sleepingfish*, and the *Literary Review*, and she is currently working on some stories and a novel. At Middlebury College, she has taught a course in Literary Magazine Publishing and advises students on creative writing and publishing projects. She has an MFA from Bard College and a BA from Middlebury College.

10:30-12:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:***Suzanne Berne, Incorporating Critical Writing Into a Creative Writing Workshop***

Critical assignments are invaluable in writing workshops, whether you are teaching high school or college students. Short critical essays help focus discussions of reading assignments. They also encourage student in-class participation, provide a more sophisticated workshop vocabulary, and move students away from the “I liked it”/“didn’t like it” response to a story or personal essay and into a consideration of the writer’s intentions. We will also look at how to use critical assignments as creative prompts and how to give students guidelines for writing critically about each other’s work.

12:00-1:00 MID-DAY BREAK**1:00-3:30 CLASSES:*****David Biespiel, Making Metaphor***

To make metaphor is to take the words of one experience and dramatize another. But, how do you find the words? How do you select the words you find? How do you trust what you’re making is a metaphor or that the metaphor your developing from life is meaningful? This class will be a primer on metaphor making—the very essence of poetry. [One Session for Two Credits; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Geffrey Davis, What’s Line Got to Do with It? Confessions of a Free Verse Poet

We will take some closer looks at the kinetic relationship between subject and structure in poems with received forms as well as those with nonce or found forms. How might a free verse poet’s formal decisions work with, despite, because of, &c. the seemingly more active commitment to phrasing? Presenting my own hardheaded journey from resistance to admiration as a point of reference, I hope to provoke participants to (re)consider, honor, and deepen how they themselves identify within a field of formalism in order to hone the metaphoric possibilities of form in their own reading and writing of poetry. [One Session for Two Credits; Exercises.]

Brenda Miller, The Hermit Crab Essay

Hermit Crab essays (a term coined by Brenda Miller in the textbook *Tell it Slant*) appropriate already existing forms to tell their stories, such as a menu, a recipe, a to-do list, etc. In this class we will study several examples of the form and try some ourselves. [One Session for Two Credits; Exercises; Advance Reading.]

Jason Skipper, The Great Gatsby

When F. Scott Fitzgerald’s third novel *The Great Gatsby* was published, sales peaked despairingly below the author’s high hopes, and reviewers, for the most part, gave it a resounding “meh.” In a letter to one of the editors at Simon and Schuster, Fitzgerald wrote: “I’m afraid it’s not going to sell like the others but I’m delighted at the response from the people who care about writing.” Now, almost a century later, *Gatsby* is one of the most widely read novels and a ubiquitous touchpoint in instructional books and essays on prose writing. Why is this the case? What makes this book such a mainstay in conversations around craft? In this class, we will consider these questions and others, including why so many authors consider it foundational to understanding how a story works and a fundamental reference they pluck from the shelf time and again. [One Session for Two Credits; Advance Reading.]

4:00-5:00 GRAD READINGS: Jenny Apostol, Jo-Anne Berelowitz, Maggie Flaherty, Tabitha Lawrence, Chris Liek, Sarah Weaver**5:30 FACULTY READINGS: Kevin Clark, Scott Nadelson****7:30 ZOOM OPEN MIC!**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Rebecca McClanahan, *When Life Interrupts the Writing*

How do we proceed when real life circumstances intervene to change our “take” on our work in progress? Do we remain loyal to our earlier draft and carry the work through to revision, or do we dismantle the draft and start from the “now-ledge” of our knowledge, the ledge on which we are currently perched? If we are shaping a book of independent stories, essays, or poems written over a long period, how do we deal with the effect of time and experience on the unity of the text? And regarding autobiography-based texts, especially memoir, how do we know when to begin writing about an experience and when to conclude that an experience is “finished,” since we continue to live out our unfinished life stories? In this craft talk, I respond to these questions and suggest strategies for moving forward with our work in progress when real life circumstances change its direction.

10:30-12:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:30-12:00 GRAD SESSION:

Geoffrey 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.

10:30-12:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:

Scott Nadelson, *Teaching Close Reading*

I find that the most important work I do as a teacher of undergraduates is to get students to slow down and closely consider the choices writers make at the level of the word, the line, the sentence. In this session, we’ll discuss strategies for helping students learn to read closely; we’ll look at examples and practice leading close-reading discussions.

12:00-1:00 MID-DAY BREAK

1:00-3:30 ART OF THE BOOK SESSIONS:

[F] *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Gabriel García Márquez

Chronicle of a Death Foretold, Gabriel García Márquez’s 1982 novella, tells the story of a man who, like García Márquez himself, returns to his hometown twenty-seven years after a murder about which the entire town knew in advance. The narrator wants to understand who was really responsible. The drama unfolds over three days of a wedding, recalled by the narrator and various townspeople. Readers know the ending, but Márquez nevertheless builds to a climax. The book raises provocative artistic questions about genre: Is this slim novella fiction or some strange hybrid of documentary and fiction that defies categories—detective novel, murder mystery, long-form journalism? Márquez’s first-person narrator is omniscient yet not all-seeing, not a perfect knower but a flawed witness to an entire community’s complicity in a racially-charged murder. The book’s 120 pages have much to teach any writer, from the arts of narrative compression and novella structure, to the nature of tension, to the protean potentials of voice and point-of-view. [Kent Meyers & Marjorie Sandor.]

[F] *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera

This was the international *It* book of the Eighties. It is not overpraised: the book is philosophical and political while also being highly narrative and intimate, and it is as deep and serious as it is funny, sexy, and playful—all of these seamlessly woven into a text which outright questions, is it “better to be heavy or light?” The story opens with the surgeon Tomas, a womanizer, experiencing the “sudden clear feeling that” he is not going to “survive the death” of the woman lying beside him—a woman named Tereza with whom he believed he was having a fling. We follow his life, Tereza’s life, the life of his lover-best-friend Sabina, the life of Sabina’s admirer Franz, and the dog Karenin, and experience artistic and intellectual existence in Czechoslovakia before and after the Russian invasion. The discussion for this book will be dynamic. We will not only explore its exceptional craft but also dig into the questions posed in a 2015 *Guardian* article, *Is Kundera, whom some argue is a misogynist, still relevant? What do we see when we read Kundera today?* [April Ayers Lawson & Marie Mutsuki Mockett.]

[NF] *Heavy: An American Memoir*, Kiese Laymon

Kiese Laymon starts his book telling the reader that he set out to write “an American Memoir” but instead he wrote *this* book, an epistolary cry, addressed to his mother, about size, racism, family, place, and difficult forms of love. What does it mean, he asks, to be a fat black man from the American Deep South? What stories, histories, meanings does his body carry? What pulls him away from home, and what beckons him back? How does he, as a writer, use language to try to understand how to love himself and his friends? How does he choose to write for his people, instead of against them? Why does he think controlling the size of his own body will lead him to be able to control a world that was built before his body existed? Who is his “we” and how have they loved and hurt him? What does it mean to write toward reckoning rather than redemption? We will discuss epistolary form, writing against literary expectation, navigating difficult questions of audience and power as writers and readers, writing triggering content, and how to write what we don’t want to say. [Barrie Jean Borich.]

[NF/P] *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*, Deborah Miranda

Deborah Miranda incorporates family photographs, historical documents, real and fake elementary school assignments, oral history, journal entries, lyric essay, and poetry into this masterful memoir. The operating principles of the book are decolonization and survivance—both key concepts for writers at this time of reckoning with history and loss. The organizational principle of the book is collage—a literary strategy that has gained greater resonance in the isolation and fragmentation of this time. [Wendy Call & Sejal Shah.]

[P] *Sight Lines*, Arthur Sze

The National Book Award-winning collection *Sight Lines* is at once personal and global—even cosmic. The book draws on poet Arthur Sze’s lifelong concerns: the environment, contemporary physics and the world’s acausal connections, lyric beauty, sudden violence, intimate relationships, the pleasures of food, American and Chinese histories and cultures, healing communities, the New Mexico landscape. There are short lyrics and long sequences with numerous approaches to the stanza and line, prose poems, and poems that employ strike-throughs. In the hands of a lesser poet, such multi-facetedness might create mere chaos; in Sze’s hands, crystalline line-by-line clarity and a pitch-pure speaking voice create inexplicable continuity. At key points in the book, single lines are floated on a page, literary enactments of the world’s fragmenting intrusions into what might otherwise seem to be unity; these lines are revealed, late in the book, to have come from the title poem. In *Sight Lines*, many levels converge simultaneously, sometimes suggesting apparent order intruded upon by randomness, sometimes apparent randomness held together by synchronicity. Ambitious work of the highest order, it makes us reconsider what poetry can be—and what the world is. [Kevin Clark & Greg Glazner.]

[P] *alphabet*, Inger Christensen

Sublime and chilling, this work originally published in 1981 by famed Danish poet Inger Christensen has much to teach us as writers about naming and renaming our world—one where apricots and bombs coexist. Using Fibonacci’s mathematical sequence to innovate her own generative form, Christensen’s catalogue gathers gravitas as it grows. Together, we will discuss how this sequence coheres and surprises, considering craft elements such as repetition, juxtaposition, and syntax. In this session, you will have the chance to contemplate your own relationship to the frameworks you’re a part of, too, by beginning your own poetic inventory. [Jenny Johnson.]

4:00-5:00 GRAD READINGS: Darrell Covington, Caitlin Dwyer, Maureen Reiser, Sari Sapon-White, Cheryl Ward, Nathaniel Youmans

5:05 WELLNESS BREAK:

Take a 15-minute wellness break with Sydney Elliott! Spend a few minutes to ground yourself through breathwork and stretching. This will be a gentle, restorative mini-practice that will focus on staying energized but relaxed during residency. Be prepared to sit on the floor (but use a cushion or pillow if needed). No mat necessary.

5:30 FACULTY READINGS: Brenda Miller, Justin St. Germain

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Scott Nadelson, *Lost in the Woods of Brooklyn and Belgrade: The Transformative Possibilities of Disorientation*

In writing workshops we often talk about the need to orient our readers, to make sure they are aware of where they are and what's happening around them. But what happens when we intentionally make them lose their bearings? This talk will explore how writers can re-awaken and move our readers by disorienting them, confusing their senses, making them struggle to find their way, with examples from Jamel Brinkley, Imre Kertesz, Iosi Havilio, Mansoura Ez Eldin, Eduardo Halfon, and Dana Johnson.

10:30-12:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:30-12:00 GRAD SESSION:

Marie Mutsuki Mockett, Sejal Shah, Renee Simms, *The Faith Walk: A Panel*

The title of our session alludes to Second Corinthians ("we walk by faith, not by sight") as a way to capture the blind faith involved in pursuing a Masters in Creative Writing and publishing fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. In this session, we will look at data about the publishing industry and hiring in education, including data that parses out this information based on race, gender, ability, and other social identities. Then we will share our stories as alternative narratives. Here's a brief preview. Marie: "I did not get my MFA until my third book—this most recent book—and I used that manuscript for my thesis. It was a leap of faith that I would get published at all and that I could build a career. The early years were the most terrifying, and I wrestled constantly with inadequacy and sense of failure. I also knew what it looked like to be an adult who wanted to be an artist, but did not pursue the path—I had seen this on both sides of my family—and that was a fate I wanted to avoid. I still find the writing path difficult, but it has also helped to strengthen my sense of self." Sejal: "I finished my residential MFA while still in my twenties, but it took me many years to publish my first book—it came out the first week of June 2020. I remember feeling embarrassed when a grad school classmate asked me, *Why don't you have a book?* I thought she meant, *What's wrong with you?* She told me later she meant: *You're a really good writer—why wouldn't you have a book by now?* I think it had to do with many things: publishing, living with an invisible disability, and some turns in my career path. I have been surprised and grateful to find the benefits and blessings of publishing later than I would have hoped, and of my circuitous journey in getting there." Renee: "As an older person of color who attended a residential MFA program, and who currently teaches at a liberal arts college, I can share how unexpected and nonlinear my path as a writer looks in retrospect. I can also share how I persisted during the years when publishing and employment were neither promised nor a given."

10:30-12:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:**Barrie Jean Borich, *The 21st Century Workshop***

The writing workshop is a venerable tradition. The method is tried, but is it always true? What happens when we question the supposedly sacred rites of workshop method? How might creative adaptation of workshop pedagogy lead to the dismantlement of canonical discrimination, the toppling of literary power structures, the energetic encouragement of artistic innovation, and help students leave critique excited by the possibilities of their drafts to come? In this session, we will explore pushbacks against workshop convention from writers teaching today, look at alternative models from other artistic disciplines, and discuss what of our creative writing pedagogical traditions we might, keep, reinvent, or discard.

12:00-4:00 MID-DAY BREAK & MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED**1:00-2:00 FIRST-YEARS MEETING W/ RB****4:00 GRAD READINGS: Cohort 14 Group Reading**

4:30 GRADUATION CEREMONY: Erin Hollowell '09 (Alumni Speaker), Oliver de la Paz (Faculty Speaker), Geoffrey Foy, Associate Provost of Graduate Programs (Remarks)