

THE RAINIER WRITING WORKSHOP
MFA @ PLU
2025 RESIDENCY SCHEDULE [FINAL DRAFT]

For classes below with a “Handout Reading Required” designation, those readings can be accessed in the “Advance Readings and Handouts” page in the residency section of Soundings. Books for the “Art of the Book” sessions must be read before the residency. Students are required to attend the morning sessions specific to their cohorts—Workshops, Thesis Critique Sessions, Pedagogy Sessions, Grad Sessions. Students are also expected to attend the Grad Presentations, Grad Readings, and faculty/guest readings in the evenings. The Grad Sessions are for graduates only. The Pedagogy Sessions are for rising thesis-year students and meet concurrently with the Mixed-Genre workshops.

FRIDAY, JULY 11

CK **6:00 DINNER**

Scan Center **7:30 OPENING REMARKS & FACULTY READINGS: Kelli Russell Agodon, Renee Simms**

SATURDAY, JULY 12

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201 **Brian Teare, *How to Make Nothing Happen***
 “I have nothing to say,” John Cage once famously declared in his “Lecture on Nothing,” “and I am saying it and that is poetry as I need it.” Inside of this provocative paradox is a series of radical claims: that *nothing* is something that can be articulated, that it is as important to art as *something*, and that some artists not only prefer to work with *nothing* but *need* it. But what is *nothing* in art? Is it silence? White space? Is it plotlessness? Pointlessness? Wordlessness? Is it unspectacular experience? The unspoken ordinary? Unseen interiority? Or is it what society has deemed unimportant, unworthy of artistic treatment? Taking its cues from Zen, feminist and disability theories, Afropessimism, and art history, among other discourses, this lecture will encourage us to think critically about the variety of forms *nothing* has taken in fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry, and will explore it as a productive and important shaper of our experience of aesthetics and of experience itself. This lecture supposes, with W. H. Auden, that because, like all art, “poetry makes nothing happen...it survives,/A way of happening, a mouth.”

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

10:00 GRAD SESSION:

Xavier 201 **torrin a. greathouse, *Singing for Your Dinner: The Art of Public Performance***
 Regardless of what genre(s) you write in, the ability to not just read, but perform your work aloud, is

an invaluable tool. Being able to infuse clarity and emotion into your readings can have a profound effect on the reception of your work and even effect things like book sales and performance bookings. In this session students will learn the basics of how to perform effectively, as well as tips and tricks on structuring a performance, balancing creative work and banter, and more.

Commons

12:00 LUNCH

1:30-2:45 CLASSES:

Xavier 201

Wendy Call, *Making a Scene: The Fine Art of Scene-Setting in Nonfiction*

Character(s) + Action + Setting = SCENE. In this high-energy exploration of scene-setting, you will learn a twelve-step process to (re)create events on the page. We'll become playwrights, giving our characters lines. We'll be directors, too, moving our characters about the stage. We'll work as stagehands, creating the backdrop that transforms our prose into an uninterrupted dream for our readers. All the while, we will be mindful of the fact that we're in the realm of nonfiction—attending to and troubling those boundaries. Please bring a draft or outline of an important scene from a work-in-progress. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

UC 133

Jenny Johnson, *Poetry Fundamentals*

In this class, you'll learn how to close read as poets do: insatiably curious about technique, hungry to understand how a memorable poem works, to learn what it's *doing*, so that you might learn how to *do* just that thing in your work. Together, we'll observe how craft and content engage one another. We'll attend to poetic elements, such as: form, line, syntax, sound, and imagery. You'll learn how to strategically approach Critical Response Papers during your mentorship year from a space of inquiry. We'll also make time for a few in-class writing exercises. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Scan Center

Matt Young, *Narrative Architecture: Linear and Modular Design*

This session is designed to explore various narrative structures in fiction—most specifically linear and modular design. This session aims to unravel how these design principles can be effectively utilized to create compelling and innovative storytelling. Students will delve into the fundamentals of linear narrative and modular narrative. By reading and discussing various examples of both, participants could gain a deeper understanding of the creative possibilities these approaches offer, empowering them to push the boundaries of traditional storytelling in their own work. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

3:00-4:15 CLASSES:

Xavier 201

Barrie Jean Borich & torrin a. greathouse, *Hybrid Forms/Hybrid Thinking*

What are the possibilities of hybrid and experimental forms across literary genres? How do we define work at the interstice of traditional genres or outside of them entirely? And what do the techniques and conventions of each genre teach us when we shift them into a new context? In this class, we will read and analyze works in hybrid forms, discussing how these hybrid, genre-bending approaches alter how we think about craft. Then, students will brainstorm and begin drafting their own hybrid texts. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Scan Center

Geffrey Davis, *Writing the Wounded World: Poems of Awe and Grief*

As Mark Doty writes, "When our imagination meets a mind decidedly not like ours, our own nature is suddenly called into question. We place our own eye beside that of the fish in order to question our own seeing. Consciousness can't be taken for granted when there are, plainly, varieties of awareness."

The result is an intoxicating uncertainty. And that is a relief, is it not, to acknowledge that we do not after all know what a self is?" To be alive and aware today is to live in a wounded world. Let's discuss how we navigate eco-grief, solastalgia, and more-than-human beings in our work. Our complicity in the deterioration of ecosystems and the loss of other living beings carries lamentation, anxiety, and depression. For guidance, we will turn to published poems that alert us to wild awe and grief, our attempts toward healing, and the communities we call home. We will also explore a writing exercise related to habitat and the intersections between nature and human culture. [Two Sessions; Exercises.]

UC 133

Scott Nadelson, *Single-Sitting Stories*

The year I turned fifty, I gave myself a project: I would draft fifty very short stories in fifty days, and then give myself the rest of the year and beyond to revise them. (I accidentally wrote fifty-one.) The only restriction I gave myself was that I had to be able draft the entire story in a single sitting. This process was not only fun but profoundly freeing—it allowed me to sprint through a narrative arc, improvising every step of the way, playing with language, image, dialogue, and characterization. In this class, we'll read some very short stories—what Yasunari Kawabata termed "Palm of the hand stories"—and then focus especially on process: what a compressed drafting timeline might bring out of a writer that a slower process hasn't, and what might result from experimentation within tight restrictions. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

UC 133

Megan Connolly, *Nonhuman Animals as Narrative Agents in Creative Writing*

In E.O. Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Biophilia: The Human Bond with Other Species* (1986), he posits that humans are born with an innate desire to connect with other living creatures. In this presentation we will explore how our close observation of and deep connection to nonhuman animals can lead our writing in new and unexpected directions. Animals "lead us into a world that is qualitatively different from the world of people," writes Caroline Knapp, "a place that can transform us," and, I would add, our writing. First, we'll discuss our favorite depictions of nonhuman animals in literature, consider what sets these works apart as literary, and how to avoid the most common pitfall of animal-writing: sentimentality. We'll look at examples of creative nonfiction that center animals, while simultaneously grappling with intensely human experiences—such as trauma, addiction, and loss. During the second half of the session, we'll engage in a multistep writing exercise that will help participants generate a story, poem, or essay in which an animal is the narrative force driving the work forward.

UC 134

Liz Kingsley, *Poetry as Unserious Business: Five Women Poets Over 50 Who Crack Us Up*

How can you identify with readers? Create intimacy? Make writing (and maybe loving) fun? With humor, the great unifier. Laughing at yourself—your foibles, families, jobs, body, and relationships—can take your writing to new and increasingly vulnerable places. We'll look at five women poets over the age of 50 who make us LLOL (literally laugh out loud) and establish a sense of community by making us think, *Whew, it's not just me!* Come relish in the comedy of some of poetry's funniest and leave with ideas about how you can invigorate your work with humor.

Xavier 201

Eric Lochridge, *Safe Containers for Trauma: Book Structure and Figurative Language in the Exploration of Painful Experiences*

Poet Gregory Orr asserts that writing poetry can stabilize the traumatized self by permitting one's imagination to make sense of the disorder created by traumatic events. According to Orr, a poem represents a suspended moment of clarity that provides an opportunity for the poet to safely contain the disorder. Similarly, book structure can extend that momentary threshold to contain the chaotic emotions that trauma incites. Within a structure defined by the poet, the buffer that figurative

language creates can provide space enough for someone who has experienced trauma to safely write about it. We will look at examples by Diane Seuss, Oliver de la Paz, Kaveh Akbar, Claudia Emerson, and Donika Kelly. Time permitting, the class will conclude with a brief writing exercise. Care warning: parts of the discussion will address addiction and sexual assault.

CK 6:15 DINNER

Scan Center 7:30 FACULTY READINGS: April Lawson, Aram Mrjoian

<u>SUNDAY, JULY 13</u>

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201 **Jennifer Foerster, *Ecocriticism and the American Literary Imagination***
 I believe the challenges posed by our climate crisis (which is also our socio-economic-political crisis) necessitates a re-evaluation of our own literary practices—as well as the literary imagination of the Nation within which we write. How does the American imagination of “Nature” shape our writing, whether unintentionally or imaginatively? And what do we mean when we say Nature? When we think Nature? How we write Nature? And what is the difference between Nature writing and Eco literature anyway? This talk is offered not as an answer but a way of thinking through these questions.

UC Rooms 10:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS

Various Rooms 10:00 THESIS MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES

Commons 12:00 LUNCH

1:30-2:45 CLASSES:

Xavier 201 **Call, *Making a Scene* [Session 2]**

UC 133 **Johnson, *Poetry Fundamentals* [Session 2]**

Scan Center **Young, *Narrative Architecture* [Session 2]**

3:00-4:15 CLASSES:

Xavier 201 **Borich & greathouse, *Hybrid Forms* [Session 2]**

Scan Center **Davis, *Writing the Wounded* [Session 2]**

UC 133 **Nadelson, *Single-Sitting Stories* [Session 2]**

4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:

UC 133 **Ronda Pizsk Broatch, *Letters from the Old Country: Hybridity and Historical Poetic Narrative***
 In 2017, I learned that two sisters—my Jewish aunts Olga and Zerline Pizsk, siblings of my

grandfather Karl Oskar Pizsk—existed, were deported, and six months later murdered in the Shoah. While searching for information on my grandfather, I discovered a receipt for his young family's passage to America. After that, the floodgates opened. I found a photograph of Olga and Zerline in a box of other photos and some letters, and began to write. The problem was, I had little else to go on. I discovered that textual and visual hybridity in poetic texts facilitates a dialogue that encompasses multiple mediums. In this case, the works of Anne Carson, Karen Green, and Monica Ong invite readers to explore their complex familial and cultural histories in depth. Together, we will investigate how these three poets use archival materials to confirm existence, creatively filling gaps within those archives, and crafting a cultural collage that embraces the tension between reality and what we wish to be true. We will conclude with a writing exercise designed to initiate a dialogue with those who have left their homeland or those who have passed away, leaving the vastness of their stories behind them. Note: If possible, please bring something from a family archive (digital photos or copies are fine) that sparks a desire for connection in you.

UC 134

antmen pimentel mendoza, *Getting Silly: On Failure, Play, and Irreverence*

What if writers took our silliness seriously? What possibility-rich waters await the writer willing to wade into creative refusal? How might we understand writing in rejection of an oppressive world as always inherently the writing of a new, even marginally more livable world? Grounding in a queer of color poetics of irreverence, this session will invite participants into discussion, reflection, and writing exercises to reveal that play, silliness and irreverence are craft and survival strategies to write and live in an antagonistic world.

Xavier 201

Janna Wagner, *Archetypes of Narrative Position in the Literature of Witness: Authenticity, Resonance, and Arrival to Story*

You have observed, ran towards, happened upon, or experienced a Story of injustice, a violation of personhood, a blown open or insidious atrocity. You *have* to write it. But this Story stretches beyond the personal; the stakes are life. How can you engage your reader to care? Care enough to *act*? For observers and survivors, *compulsion to record*, fight back, and spur action are hallmarks of witness literature. Though *positionality* (and many craft elements) differs between narrators in many books of witness, all of them met or experienced a Story they refused to look away from. In this talk, we will expand “narrative distance” to include *an exploration of distance between the narrator and the Story they are creating*. We will examine where authors of witness literature might place their narrator(s) in relation to Story, and explore how each narrator is portrayed as *arriving at Story*, discussing how transparency and positionality assist to create space in which the reader's own story is ignited and mirrored—and why this matters. Each narrative position examined can be thought of as archetypes; we will meet *The Accidental Witness*, *The Seeker*, *The Survivor*, and *The Weaver* in four diverse “Literature of Witness” texts. Each archetype is compelled to record. Each arrives at Story by revealing their personal stakes. Participants in this talk are invited to bring with them a story, fragment, poem, thought—anything you are working on—for a quiet writing exercise where we will play with (or invent more of!) these narrative archetypes, and see what juxtaposing one of their positions with transparency of personal stakes (even by a line or two) might add to the text.

UC Patio

6:15 DINNER

Scan Center

7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Jenny Johnson, Justin St. Germain

The Cave

AFTER HOURS: The Cave

MONDAY, JULY 14

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201 **Kelli Rusell Agodon, April Lawson, Sequoia Nagamatsu, Matt Young, *Ritual & Process: On Being a Creative Writer***
 Woolf and Hemingway wrote standing up. Marcel Proust wrote almost exclusively at night. Stephen King once said he believed the secret to successful writing is strongly brewed black tea, and, when under pressure to produce, Victor Hugo was known to have his valet lock away his clothes so that he wouldn't be tempted to go out. The list of what writers do (or don't do) to facilitate the production of great art is endless and varied, and suggests that even the most experienced writers can't really control the "muse," only encourage it. If creativity is a fundamental aspect of being human, then why is this so difficult? And what do you make of the fact that the best writing surprises even the author—as they're writing it? In this panel, writers will discuss their rituals and processes, their beliefs about creativity formed along the way, and the challenges they've encountered in their writing lives.

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

Various Rooms **10:00 THESIS MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES**

Commons **12:00 LUNCH**

CK **12:00 FACULTY LUNCH WITH RB**

1:30-2:45 CLASSES:

Xavier 201 **Jennifer Foerster, *The Poetic Line***
 The poetic line has become, in our centuries of written language, a fundamental aspect of poetry, but we know that arranging language into lines doesn't automatically make a poem. In this class, we will look deeper into the poetic line: its origins, its transformations, its functions, and its possibilities. We will discuss the relationship between line and the poem as a whole, considering the line's various qualities and functions. Exemplary poems will aid us in identifying how lineation can work to support the poem, hopefully helping us to write more deliberate lines and make more confident choices of lineation in our own poems. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

Scan Center **Aram Mrjoian, *What Makes a Strong Beginning? How to Develop a Strong First Page***
 Beginnings are often cited by writers and editors alike as one of the most important parts of good prose, but what makes for a strong entry point? In this 75-minute class, we'll read about and discuss our contemporary fixation with the first page, as well as look at first-page examples from works of fiction and creative nonfiction that take different creative approaches. We'll also discuss traditional advice on beginnings and where common formulas can fall short. [One Session; Handout Reading Required.]

UC 133 **Sequoia Nagamatsu, *From High Concept to Believable Characters, From Cool Idea to Story Engine***
 Have you read the news lately or flipped through a magazine and thought "Wow, that would make a cool story!" Except, you realize that the cool or fascinating thing isn't quite a story. Not yet. As a lifelong Star Trek fan, I've long been susceptible to thinking every new piece of technology that I read

about should become a story. And while some of these musings have come to fruition, the journey from cool concept to a story often comes with significant development and planning. Sometimes, the cool thing recedes into the background—omnipresent but never the main point while other cases might call for my initial fascination to become inextricably tied to a main character or the emotional engine of a narrative. In this session, we'll look at some examples of work that weave high concepts with deft character development and experiment with strategies of how to integrate the news, technology, and other weirdness into our work all while considering your intended genre container(s). [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

3:00-4:15 CLASSES:

Scan Center

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 Richard Hugo, Spencer Reece, A.J. Verdelle, Jane Wong, and Ofelia Zepeda, we'll look at some of the elements give a literary work its strong sense of place. 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. 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 will consider that history, then explore what the First Nations Kwakwaka'wakw people (in Western Canada) say: "A place is a story happening many times...." We will create maps, write, and think about the genius of the place. [One Session; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Xavier 201

Jenny Johnson & Brian Teare, *Varieties of Syntactical Experience*

Ellen Bryant Voigt in *The Art of Syntax* calls the power-holding unit in a sentence the fundament, and suggests that, in ways we may not perceive, our sentences are vehicles for ascribing agency to what matters most to us. Ann Lauterbach in her essay "As Is: Toward a Poetics of the Whole Fragment" favors a more skeptical relation to grammar's illusions of power and control. In choosing "whole" fragments over sentences, Lauterbach argues that because "meaning is found within...contingency," the fragment acknowledges the "actual conditions, possibilities, and complexities in which we find ourselves." In this class, we'll consider all the interesting grammatical and syntactical choices we get to make on the continuum between sentences and fragments. We'll also consider the effects those choices have on our readers. We'll look at sentences that create sensations of accumulation as they branch, disorientation as they leap, and suspense via delay; we'll look at fragments that pivot between images, hinge between parts of speech within a sentence, and unsettle logical expectations of sequence. To prepare, we'll read an excerpt from Voigt's book, Lauterbach's "As Is," and an essay by Virginia Tufte from *Artful Sentences*. We'll also look at a judicious selection of poems. No particular grammatical background or confidence is required to join us on this adventure. We'll talk about both grammar and fragments playfully and subversively as poets do, building a vocabulary for what we observe together. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required; Exercises.]

UC 133

Renee Simms, *Name One Hero Who Was Happy*

Our class title, taken from Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles*, describes the core task of fiction, which is to explore the vagaries of the human soul. This is true regardless of sub-genre. In this class we will look at contemporary fantasies and fables by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, Lesley Nneka Arimah, and Victor LaValle to see how they use the archetypal hero to explore the human condition. In what ways do clear-cut rules and boundaries of setting contribute to a hero's inner turmoil? How do we create and balance deeply realized heroes with genre traditions and inventive world-building? [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:**UC 133*****Ravitte Kentwortz: Inquiries into Translating the Language of Non-human Animals into Human Speech in Poetry***

An anthropocentric point of view recognizes only human languages as languages even though each species of animal has their own form of communication. But is it possible, acceptable, or necessary to imagine another's consciousness in one's language? By opening themselves up to the question of their relationship to the natural world, some poets have come to question their own understanding of what a human is, and that interrogation may change their own, and their reader's, worldview. But how can human language be used for the purpose of describing the unknowable? The poet may ask what would be a successful strategy for translating a non-human animal's perceived language, and how to walk the thin line between anthropomorphizing and respect? The dilemma of how to use human language to convey the complexity and the otherness of each living creature naturally stretches the capacity of its use. Each poet answers these questions differently. In this talk, I will focus on three poets' manipulation of their language to express their perception of consciousness of the non-human animal.

UC 134***Dawn Sly-Terpstra, Follow the Feet: Learn How Rhythm and Meter Add Power to Poems***

Learn why and how rhythm and meter are important to poets developing a powerful craft toolbox. During this workshop we will learn about types of meters and how to quickly and easily identify them through scansion using Annie Finch's three-step method. We will also learn about metrical contracts along with the importance of metrical variation. Together we will discover what meter reveals in poems when we scan work by David Baker, Layli Long Soldier, Arthur Sze and Patricia Smith. You can put your newly found super power to work when you bring one of your own poems to class to scan. (If you are a prose writer, bring some work and discover what this technique reveals.) Please double-space your poem/prose before printing, as you will want to allow room for scanning.

CK**6:15 DINNER****Scan Center****7:30 GUEST READING: Paul Lisicky****TUESDAY, JULY 15****8:30 MORNING TALK:****Xavier 201*****Justin St. Germain, "Total Indecency": What Documentary Film Can Tell Us About Portraying Real People in Our Work***

Almost every writer, in any genre, will eventually run into the problem of how to portray real people. Whether it's family or friends, the living or dead, people we love or loathe, the craft and ethical questions involved can be fraught and complicated. This morning talk will discuss examples and concepts from the fields of documentary film and theory that can show us how other artists have handled some of the most challenging situations related to portrayal in public works of art. By examining how practitioners in other media have "solved" this core problem, we can discover creative ways of approaching it in writing.

UC Rooms**10:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS****Various Rooms****10:00 THESIS MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES**

Commons **12:00 LUNCH**

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

1:30-4:15 CLASS:

Scan Center

Paul Lisicky, *Endings as Openings*

How to write an ending at a time in which everything around us seems to be ending? How to say no to the old certainties and imply a vision in which care and community are given their due? How to do this in a way that signals light and darkness, absurdity and grace, emotional and intellectual complexity? In this craft session we'll talk about struggles and strategies that feel true to this challenging moment. We'll look at the work of several recently-published writers of creative nonfiction and try out some exercises suggested by their excerpts. Along the way we'll work hard, take care of each other, and make sure gravity and play share the same space. [One Session; Exercises.]

1:30-2:45 CLASSES:

Xavier 201

Foerster, *The Poetic Line* [Session 2]

UC 133

Nagamatsu, *From High Concept* [Session 2]

3:00-4:15 CLASSES:

Xavier 201

Johnson & Teare, *Syntactical Experience* [Session 2]

UC 133

Simms, *Name One Hero* [Session 2]

4:30 MID-RESIDENCY BREAK BEGINS: DINNER ON YOUR OWN

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16

UC Rooms

4:30-5:30 BUSINESS MEETINGS FOR 2ND YEAR & 3RD YEAR COHORT GROUPS

CK

6:15 DINNER

Scan Center

7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Jennifer Foerster, Scott Nadelson

Scan Center

8:30 BOOK-SIGNINGS & RECEPTION

THURSDAY, JULY 17

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201

Matt Young, *Constraint Is Freedom*

Can limits make us more inventive? In this talk, we'll explore the strange paradox at the heart of

creative work: how boundaries—whether inherited, chosen, or imposed—can actually open doors rather than close them. From poetic forms like the sonnet or pantoum to narrative templates like the fairy tale or hero's journey, from strict word counts to experimental hybrid forms, we'll look at how working within constraints can generate unexpected energy, insight, and originality. We'll also talk about what happens when a constraint begins to feel like a cage rather than a catalyst—and how to tell when it's time to break the form or rewrite the rule.

UC Rooms

10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:00 GRAD SESSION:

Xavier 201

Wendy Call, *Landing the Fellowship / Residency / Literary Opportunity of Your Dreams*

In this pen-to-paper workshop, you will learn the basics of applying for the grant, writers' residency, or conference opportunity that you have always wanted. First, we will break down the application process step-by-step, from researching possible opportunities to polishing your work sample and application. We'll review guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare your application and complete several writing exercises to get started. We will also discuss how to find opportunities, how to determine the most compelling aspect of your writing project, how to present your project to an unknown audience, and what happens behind-the-scenes when your application is reviewed. Come to this session with a specific opportunity in mind and by the end of the session, you will have a rough draft / outline of your application. *Please bring an actual opportunity that you would like to apply for to this workshop.*

10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:

Scan Center

Renee Simms, *The Pedagogy of Becoming*

In *The Art of Fiction*, John Gardner writes about personal traits of a beginning writer, like timidity, that can show up on the page. As a teacher, how do we encourage our students to be confident and daring artists? How might a student's willingness to take risks be complicated by their subject matter, workshop protocol, or the vulnerability most students feel when receiving critical feedback? In this session we will talk about how to cultivate a pedagogy of self-reflection, self-work, and care through sustained revision, individual and collective feedback, close reading and listening skills. The main question we will consider is, How do we guide our students towards intellectual and emotional growth?

Commons

12:00 LUNCH

CK

12:00 GRADUATES & FACULTY LUNCH

1:30-4:00 CLASSES:

Xavier 201

Barrie Jean Borich & Brian Teare, *Moving Writing: Image and Place in CNF and Poetry*

The Walker is a literary figure that connects the Romantic and the Modern, natural landscapes and built environments. In the 19th century, Thoreau described walking without premeditated purpose or route through the countryside as a rebellion against "Church and State and People," an act as metaphysical as it is physical. In the early 20th century Benjamin described walking through urbanity as a search for images that capture the *genius loci*, or the spirit of the place. In the 21st century, when most landscapes we encounter on a daily basis are a combination of the natural and the built, and when disability activists have critiqued the ableism intrinsic in the figure of the Walker, how can going outside serve our writing? What images capture the spirit of the places we frequent now? With

what syntax or lineation do we render the ways our specific bodies move, whether aided or unaided, through the world? This class will focus on how movement supports writing built, natural, and hybrid landscapes. Through assigned readings we'll explore the way image captures, expands, and reimagines the spaces and places we inhabit. Through writing exercises we'll attempt to render vivid imagery that reflects a contemporary sense of place; we'll craft sentences and lines that embody each writer's unique sense of pace, gait, and positionality. [One Session; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Scan Center

Scott Nadelson, *Re-imagining History in Fiction*

During this fraught historical moment, in which new crises seem to emerge daily, many of us are looking to the past to make sense of our confusing present. But often the historical record alone offers only partial or oblique answers; to understand more deeply or fully, we have to imagine what's only suggested by the facts we can gather. In this class, we'll explore how fiction writers engage with history, borrowing from the historical record and using the imagination to fill in gaps the record doesn't cover. In addition to discussing the role of research, we'll focus on the motivations behind and methods of creating compelling fiction from historical subjects, with a particular attention to questions of authenticity, form, detail, and point of view. [One Session; Handout Reading Required.]

UC 133

Jasminne Mendez, *YA 101*

The YA novel is not a new genre but its form has evolved and has increased in popularity and readership in the last two decades. Both young and older readers seem drawn to these compelling stories that feature young protagonists finding their voice, changing their communities, saving the world, or simply surviving the highs and lows of adolescence. But what else differentiates a young adult novel from adult fiction? What are the tools and craft elements that make a YA novel "good" and how can you begin to craft an "authentic" young adult voice and experience on the page? We will address these and many other questions in this workshop, where we will read, explore, discuss, and better understand the mechanics, craft, and narrative techniques used to write an effective and compelling novel for young readers. We will read excerpts from award winning authors such as Jacqueline Woodson, Kwame Alexander, Renee Watson, Elizabeth Acevedo, Jonny Garza Villa, Isabel Quintero, and Thannha Lai to explore themes and subject matter relevant to youth today, including race & ethnicity, sexuality and gender, body image, coming of age, "firsts" and others. We will also engage in exercises modeled after the writers we've read. [One Session; Handout Reading Required.]

Xavier 201

4:30-5:30 OUTSIDE EXPERIENCE PRESENTATION

UC Patio

6:15 DINNER: MENTOR/MENTEES MEET-UP

Scan Center

7:30 ALUMNI READINGS: Jasminne Mendez '19, Kalehua Kim '25

Scan Center

SILENT AUCTION BEGINS, ENDS SATURDAY, JULY 19

FRIDAY, JULY 18

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201

Danielle Duellen, *Juxtapositional Forms*

One hallmark of lyric writing is its capacity to explore contradiction and subjective truth through layered, non-linear structures—creating what Theodor Adorno describes as an "arena of intellectual

experience.” Writers working in this mode must identify meaningful, non-didactic points of juxtaposition drawn from seemingly unrelated fragments or associative leaps and organize them into a satisfying form for an audience. This talk examines juxtapositional forms and how they can be used during the drafting or revision process of a poem, essay, or hybrid work to clarify your own (perhaps unconscious) intentions, create tension, and construct complex meaning.

UC Rooms

10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS

10:00 GRAD SESSION:

Xavier 201

Geffrey Davis, *Cultivating Your Creative Purpose*

Adrienne Rich invited us to consider how a life committed to transforming our experiences into poetry or prose requires ongoing philosophical inquiry. Chris Abani has suggested that our ability to craft poems and stories that might revise the grand narratives of our lives requires us to have an evolving relationship with the core reasoning for why we write. Rick Barot has repeatedly nudged us out of shaming any part of the creative process, including the struggles or silences we encounter between putting words to paper. In the absence of structured accountability provided by a graduate program, I’ve found that curating a living tapestry of creative philosophies has been just as vital as my dedication to expanding the craft toolset I need to continue expressing myself, especially through periods of deep doubt. During this time together, we will share and discuss the wisdoms that might offer us nurturing guidance as we navigate the various joys and challenges involved in maintaining a rich writing practice.

10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:

Scan Center

Wendy Call, *Teaching Revision*

One of the most challenging aspects of the writing craft to teach—especially at the high school and undergraduate levels—is revision. At the same time, we like to say that “writing is rewriting.” But what does that mean? The truth is that “revision” is not a practice, but a set of diverse practices that require different skill sets. (Witness the fact that the title “editor” encompasses at least six different jobs.) In this workshop, we’ll break down those diverse practices and discuss effective ways to help students learn each of them. We’ll also review key tools, publications, and resources that can help us better teach revision.

Commons

12:00 LUNCH

1:30-4:00 CLASSES:

Xavier 201

Kelli Russell Agodon & Justin St. Germain, *The Art of Vulnerability: Writing Emotional Truth in Your Work*

Every act of writing is an act of courage—especially when we reach for emotional truth. In this session, we’ll explore how to write about difficult subjects in ways that feel both authentic *and* compelling. We’ll look at work that embraces vulnerability without tipping into sentimentality and consider how the tension between humor and heartbreak can add complexity to your work. How do we approach the hardest topics without making them feel overly precious? Can we stay raw and honest while still crafting something artful? What is the story or poem you need to write—and what’s holding you back? We’ll end the session with one or two writing exercises. [One Session; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Admin 205	<p>torrin a. greathouse, <i>Unlined Verse: Exploring Prose Poetry</i></p> <p>On a first encounter with a prose poem, many students question how, in the absence of the form's most visually defining feature, these texts qualify as poems. Prose poetry asks writers to lean away from lineation and instead more deeply attune themselves to sound, syntax, image, and more. In this class, we will read and analyze prose poems, discussing what is lost when the line breaks are eschewed and what various poets choose to amplify in their absence. Then, students will try their hand at writing prose poems, employing various techniques from the poets they have read. [One Session; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]</p>
Scan Center	<p>April Lawson, <i>Tell It Slant: The Readable Very Short Story</i></p> <p>Flash fiction is popular with creative writers, but people are typically more interested in writing it than reading it. This is because it's rare for a very short story to engage a reader at a deeper level. But the benefits of learning to write strong short shorts are significant: crafting a very good short piece can teach even the most experienced, and for the emerging writer, who often isn't allowed to take up much space in prestigious journals and magazines, significantly expand opportunities for exposure. In this class we'll study stories of 7 or less pages that appealed to larger audiences via <i>The New Yorker</i> and <i>The Paris Review</i>, and break down how they achieve depth, intrigue, and connection through narrative slants, voice, and detail selection. [One Session; Handout Reading Required.]</p> <p><u>4:00-5:00 MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED</u></p>
Xavier 201	<u>5:00 GRAD READINGS: Denise Baggett, Lucien Bennett, Carolyn Holthoff, Eric Lochridge, Janna Wagner</u>
CK	<u>6:15 DINNER</u>
Scan Center	<u>7:30 GUEST READING: Victoria Chang</u>
The Cave	<u>AFTER HOURS: The Cave</u>

SATURDAY, JULY 19

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201	<p>Kelli Russell Agodon, Geoffrey Davis, Jennifer Foerster, and Aram Mrjoian, <i>Dear Writer: What Editors Really Want (What They Really Really Want)</i></p> <p>Many writers wonder what's really going through an editor's mind when they read a submission, judge a contest, or choose the recipient for a fellowship or residency. In this panel, four writers who also edit—a print journal, an anthology, a small press, and an online journal—as well as judge for prizes or fellowships—share a behind-the-scenes look at the submission/application process. They'll talk about what grabs their attention, what makes them pause, and yes, what makes them say no (and also why it's not always personal). This panel also hopes to offer a variety of experiences and practical advice—insights that may reshape how you approach your own submissions.</p>
UC Rooms	<u>10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS</u>

10:00 GRAD SESSION:**Xavier 201****Justin St. Germain, *The Academic Job Market: A Crash Course***

This session is designed to demystify a process that it often seems like nobody fully understands: how to pursue an academic teaching job. We've probably all heard people complain about the process, but actual, practical advice is hard to find. And even if you can find it, even well intentioned and honest advice is often outdated, because the academic job market is constantly evolving. I've been on the market, on and off, for more than ten years, have applied to so many jobs I long ago stopped counting, and am currently a tenure-track professor in an MFA program; I've also seen the process from the other side, as a member of hiring committees. My hope is that you'll leave this session with a simple, practical plan for how to begin your job search.

10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:**Scan Center****Matt Young, *The Workshop Isn't Working: Reimagining Creative Feedback***

This session will explore challenges with traditional workshop models—especially silence from the writer, the tyranny of the draft, genre bias, or overly critical groupthink. Here, we'll discuss and test out 2–3 alternative workshop formats.

Commons**12:00 LUNCH****UC 201****12:00 FIRST-YEARS LUNCH WITH RB****1:30-4:00 THE ART OF THE BOOK:****UC 213****[F] *Eastbound*, Maylis de Kerangal**

A propulsive novella about a pair of strangers thrown together in unusual circumstances, de Kerangal's *Eastbound* makes use of the journey archetype—in particular a journey of escape—to explore a connection that transcends language. On a train ride across Siberia, a young Russian conscript decides to desert the army before arriving at his post; he finds help in a French woman who has just abandoned her Russian lover. The two can't communicate in words, but they rely on each other as they evade detection and pass through the forbidding landscape. In less than 150 pages, de Kerangal takes us deeply into both characters' inner lives while also delivering tension on every page, creating a miniature epic that's impossible to forget. In this session, we'll study the balance of internal and external characterization, pacing, use of setting and minor characters, and the possibilities offered by the journey structure. We'll also consider de Kerangal's unique syntax, as translated from the French by Jessica Moore. [Scott Nadelson]

UC 133**[F] *We Lived on the Horizon*, Erika Swyler**

As an author who persistently evades genre categories, Swyler offers up a dystopian world in the walled city of Bulwark where artificial intelligence has created a landscape of surveillance and where the contributions of one's ancestors in saving humanity determine your "life balance"—both social class and your means to escape debt for healthcare and education. But the main characters of this novel are not action heroes—they are two queer and aristocratic elderly women, a non-binary AI house system who has a new body, a woman whose calling in life is to donate organs, and the consciousness of the city itself. In this session, we will discuss the slipperiness of genre categories and how genre expectations can both constrict and inform a reading and writing experience. We'll also look at issues of narrative pacing/structure, worldbuilding, repetition, and how narrative themes are illuminated by distinct craft choices even as they may push against more typical storytelling expectations from a book published by a commercial publisher. [Sequoia Nagamatsu]

Admin 205

[NF] *World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments*, Aimee Nezhukumatathil

In *World of Wonders* Aimee Nezhukumatathil writes of creatures and plant life that surprise her, bring her joy or sorrow, sustain her, and connect her to natural environments, home, and a considered life. In doing so, she makes connections to family, identity, and memory that reveal the human place in complex ecosystems we all inhabit. Through the use of a series of short and language-attuned essays, combined with visual images, the book reads as both a field guide to plants and animal life and as a memoir about race, gender, family, and the small daily observations and studies of conscious living. We will discuss short prose forms, how to balance research and memory, writing with outward attention, and vignette-driven book structure, and students will complete exercises that might lead to their own World of__ project. Participants should obtain the 2024 version of the book, that has more essays than the original and includes the art of Fumi Nakamura. ISBN 9781639550562. [Barrie Jean Borich & Geoffrey Davis]

Scan Center

[NF] *Storyteller*, Leslie Marmon Silko

This groundbreaking 1981 book, a multi-genre, multimedia work, is widely considered a classic text of Native American literature. But it is also an instructive and pioneering craft example of how to meld different modes of writing, how to represent cultural and family stories to a wide audience, and how to approach the fragmented, associative truth-based structure we now often call the lyric essay. [Justin St. Germain]

UC 134

[P] *I Don't Want to Be Understood*, Jennifer Espinoza

Renowned trans woman poet Jennifer Espinoza's third collection, *I Don't Want to Be Understood*, is politically charged, personally vulnerable, and packed with surprising linguistic gestures. From the opening poem—in which a trans woman is patted down by the TSA for appearing as an “anomaly” on the body scanner, and expands into a cloud of cosmic energy consuming the city of Irvine—to the conclusion, Espinoza's work is at once plainspoken and lyrically charged, surrealist and deeply attuned to the material reality of her life. Orbiting the violence she experienced in childhood and the interpersonal and legislative violence enacted upon trans women daily in America, this lush collection of poems is a deeply important text for our current political moment. In this session, we will attend to these themes, while close reading Espinoza's diction, figurative language, and gestural turns. [torrin a. greathouse & Jenny Johnson]

Xavier 201

[P] *Song*, Brigit Pegeen Kelly

Thirty years after its original publication in 1995, Brigit Pegeen Kelly's haunting sophomore collection *Song* continues to serve as a touchstone and wellspring for many poets. What gives *Song* its staying power? How does Kelly cast such transfixing and ever-compelling spells? In this session we will look closely at the iconic titular poem that opens *Song* and how its approach, thematically and craft-wise, introduces and complicates the collection that follows. Orbiting and spiralling deep into postlapsarian experiences of wonder, cruelty, loss, and grace, obsessed with animals and reverberations, *Song* offers a masterclass in the possibilities of repetition, imagination, overlapping lyric and narrative modes, and many other elements of craft; attending to Kelly's poetics, we will deepen our own sense of what is possible—sonically, imagistically, and otherwise—within and across our own poems. [Gabrielle Bates]

4:00-5:00 MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED

Xavier 201

5:00 GRAD READINGS: Erin Allen, Megan Connolly, Ravitte Kentwortz, antmen pimentel mendoza, Dawn Sly-Terpstra

CK

6:15 DINNER

Scan Center **7:30 GUEST READINGS: Gabrielle Bates, Danielle Deulen**

SUNDAY, JULY 20

8:30 MORNING TALK:

Xavier 201 **torrin a. greathouse, *I Against I: Self-Negation as Artistic Practice***
How can the urge toward artistic self-destruction, or even the hatred of our own past work, be mobilized in the artistic process? How do we move past the work of one project to discover new ways of approaching our work? Drawing from a broad range of texts, including hip-hop albums, poetry, and graphic novels, this talk aims to confront the question of how our work can grow in opposition to itself and how various artists have utilized this rejection of their past work to fuel new creations.

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

10:00 GRAD SESSION:

Xavier 201 **Aram Mrjoian, *Maintaining Artistic Agency Post-MFA***
After completing an MFA, it's easy to get lost in subjective definitions of artistic success that are often outside of our control. Yet, spending too much time focusing on publication, fellowships, awards, and other opportunities can be quite stifling to the creative process. In this session, we'll explore how writers of all genres can continue developing their craft while navigating the expectations and restraints of the market. We'll discuss how to take agency when working with editors, writing artist statements that honestly explain our work, and how to reframe advice that doesn't align with our goals.

10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:

Scan Center **Jennifer Foerster & Jenny Johnson, *Pedagogies of Kindness and Care***
We are at a flash point for multiple sites of distress when we show up to teach—political, technological, ecological. If you're an empath (as so many writers are!) classrooms are spaces where it's impossible not to absorb some of the internal and external pressures, fears, and anxieties that your students are experiencing. It's easy in such moments to get overwhelmed, but fortunately you're not alone. In this session, we will work together to generate sustainable pedagogies of kindness and care towards students and ourselves when teaching writing. We'll share practical strategies for building community, caring for your artistic self, pacing instruction, responding to current events, and allowing space for flexibility, imperfection, and changing course. We'll also make space for collectively problem-solving some of your specific pedagogical fears and dilemmas.

CK **12:00 GRADUATION LUNCH**

Scan Center **4:00 GRAD READINGS: Ronda Pizsk Broatch, Kyle Clayton, Liz Kingsley**

Scan Center **4:30 GRADUATION CEREMONY & RECEPTION**

MONDAY, JULY 21: DEPARTURE DAY