



ALMA COLLEGE

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Summer Residency

June 20, 2024-June 29, 2024

Alma College Campus
Alma, Michigan

WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

<i>Workshop</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Faculty</i>
Workshop I	Swanson Academic Center (SAC) 109	Fiction	Karen E. Bender/S. Kirk Walsh
Workshop II	Swanson Academic Center (SAC) 110	Creative Nonfiction	Anna Clark/Matthew Gavin Frank/Donald Quist
Workshop III	Swanson Academic Center (SAC) 108	Poetry	Leslie Contreras Schwartz /Benjamin Garcia/Jim Daniels

PROGRAM DIRECTOR – SOPHFRONIA SCOTT

Office: SAC 342

General Office Hours: June 22, 3-4:30pm * June 23, 4-5pm * June 24, 1-2pm

Stop in during office hours or email for an appointment at other times: scotts@alma.edu.

Program Notes

COVID PROTOCOLS:

Face coverings are not required by the college to be worn indoors. Individual faculty may require students or staff in their classrooms to wear face coverings at their own discretion. Changes to this policy will be communicated to students and faculty via email.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS: Matty Weaver, MFA '24 and Joshua Zeitler, MFA '24 will be available to assist with tech, rides, announcements, communications with housing staff for room questions or needs, and general support throughout the residency.

NAME TAGS AND STUDENT IDs: Please wear your name tags and carry your Alma ID cards with you during the residency. There is time in the schedule for new students to get their IDs.

STUDENT READINGS: The residency schedule features an evening of student readings which will take place at Ballyhoo Books & Brew. Please sign up at the student meeting on the evening of June 19. If you would like to volunteer to emcee the readings, mention this at the meeting.

YOGA: Three gentle flow yoga classes with certified instructor Darryl Gregory will be offered during the residency. Yoga mats will be available, but you may also bring your own.

OPEN TIME: There is space built into the schedule for personal writing time and study plan meetings with your faculty mentor. It may be used at your discretion.

ALMA FARMERS MARKET: The farmers market is open **Saturdays 8am-1pm**. It is located downtown on State Street just east of Alma Hardware.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES: We encourage your participation in scheduled outdoor activities, but they are not required. No expertise is necessary but do use your discretion in terms of your health and capabilities. This time may also be used as personal writing time.

PRINTING/COPIES: There is a printer in the common area of the dormitories. If you have trouble connecting to it, contact IT at helpdesk@alma.edu. If you need to make copies, there is a copier/printer on the third floor of Swanson Academic Center. You may access the machine using your Alma login credentials.

MORNING BIRDING WALK WITH S. KIRK WALSH: Vestaburg, Tuesday, June 25, 8am-10am. *Van will leave from the parking lot at Swanson Academic Center.*

Take in the birds of Central Michigan during a morning bird walk. The Vestaburg bog and mature mesic forest are known for its variety of bird life. Birdwatching tips will be offered by Kirk, an avid birder. Bring binoculars, if you own a pair. (If not, pairs of binoculars can be shared.) If you are interested in learning the sound identifications of birds, please download the Merlin Bird app (it's free) prior to the walk. This app is very handy because it identifies birdsong while in the field. Ebird is another free app, which is helpful with learning about birds in the area.

DORMITORY INFORMATION- CAREY/BONBRIGHT HALLS

Packing

Provided items:

- Basic bed linens (1 fitted sheet, 1 flat sheet, 1 blanket, 1 pillow)
- Towels (1 bath towel, 1 washcloth)
- Hand soap
- Kitchen appliances in the common area kitchen

Not Provided:

- Toiletries
- Hangers
- Hair styling needs (dryers, etc.)
- Laundry soap (Free laundry facilities are in the building.)
- Coffee supplies
- Cooking supplies such as dishes, pots, pans

Parking

Parking is available in the lot adjacent to Carey/Bonbright Halls.

Policies and Expectations

- All students are expected to comply with the behavior policies in the Student Handbook.
- Please be respectful neighbors to each other and the Alma community.
- Alma is a tobacco-free campus.

Building Emergency Procedures

Fire Alarm:

- Evacuate the building as quickly as possible.
- Do not use elevators.
- Safe meeting point is the parking lot.

Severe Weather:

- Local tornado siren is audible throughout downtown.
- Evacuate to the shelter location.

Residency Resources

Office email: residencelife@alma.edu

Administrator on Duty: 989-560-5972

- 24/7 on call emergency support.

Campus Safety: 989-463-7777

- 24/7 on call emergency support.
- Contact for emergency facilities issues
- Safety escorts
- Lock outs

Visiting Writers/Speakers

Philip Metres – Visiting Writer

Lecture: June 21, 10:00 am; Reading: June 21, 7:00 pm

Philip Metres is the author of numerous books, including *Fugitive/Refuge* (2024), *Ochre & Rust: New Selected Poems of Sergey Gandlevsky* (2023), *Shrapnel Maps* (2020), *The Sound of Listening* (2018), and *Sand Opera* (2015). His work has garnered fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Lannan Foundation, the NEA, and the Ohio Arts Council. He has received the Hunt Prize, the Adrienne Rich Award, three Arab American Book Awards, the Lyric Poetry Prize, and the Cleveland Arts Prize. He is professor of English and director of the Peace, Justice, and Human Rights program at John Carroll University.

Laura Schmitt – Visiting Publishing Professional

Publishing Talk: June 22, 9:45 am

Laura Schmitt is an Editorial Assistant at Grove Atlantic. She has worked on books by writers such as Leif Enger, Jamie Quatro, Anna Noyes, Isabella Hammad, and Paul Lynch. Originally from Green Bay, Wisconsin, she holds a B.A in Journalism and English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an M.F.A in Creative Writing from Hollins University. Prior to joining the editorial team at Grove Atlantic, Laura worked at Tin House, Electric Literature, and as an indie bookseller in Nashville, Tennessee.

Note: *Laura has agreed to make time for a limited number of individual pitch sessions in which students may have a general discussion about their projects. A sign-up sheet will be posted.*

Michelle Webster-Hein – Visiting Writer

Reading: June 25, 7:00 pm Lecture: June 26, 9:45 am; Q&A: June 27, 10:45 am

Michelle Webster-Hein's debut novel *Out of Esau* was published in October 2022 by Counterpoint Press. Her work has been recognized as notable in the Best American series; nominated four times for a Pushcart Prize; featured on Electric Lit, The Millions, and Michigan Radio; and published in Modern Farmer, Ruminant Magazine, LitHub, River Teeth, and Hunger Mountain, among other places. She serves as a contributing editor for the Beautiful Things series from River Teeth literary journal, which began with an essay of hers by the same title, and she holds an MFA in Fiction and Creative Nonfiction from Vermont College of Fine Arts ('13). Michelle and her husband and children farm a small homestead in the southern Michigan countryside, where she was born and raised.

Jamaal May – Visiting Writer

Reading: June 28, 7:00 pm

Degree Ceremony Speaker: June 29, 10:00 am

Born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, Jamaal May explores themes of community, dichotomy, and obsolescence. He is the winner of awards ranging from *Poetry* magazine's annual Wood prize to the Spirit of Detroit award, given to Detroit citizens for outstanding achievement and service. He has also been a fellow of Cave Canem, The Kenyon Review, and the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Italy. He is currently a contributing editor of *The Kenyon Review*, co-founder, along with Tarfia Faizullah, of the Organic Weapon Arts chapbook press and video series, and serves as Distinguished Writer at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

May's debut collection *Hum* (Alice James Books, 2013) catalogues the anxiety and magic of machines. According to reviewer Marty Cain, the poems of *Hum* are "a spiritual force, presenting a potential for energy, for both violence and renewal." *Hum* was the winner of the 2012 Beatrice Hawley award and a 2014 Notable Book Award from the American Library Association, as well as earning a spot on *The Boston Globe's* list of best books in 2013.

May's second collection, *The Big Book of Exit Strategies* (2016), revisits the stark beauty and pain of Detroit in poems such as "There are Birds Here," while other poems like "FBI Questioning During The 2009 Inauguration" explore moral and political challenges. In an interview with *The Normal School*, May points out that those who ask how poetry will change the world "seem to start with the implicit assumption that it could." He says he believes it already does, "but not in the singular immediate way that seems to be demanded by some to justify the creation of literature. It is one of many human endeavors that, taken together, help to repair our minds into more thoughtful devices."

MFA Faculty

*Not at residency, but available to work with students for the term.

**Not at residency and not working with students for the term.

Karen E. Bender is the author of two story collections: *Refund*, which was a Finalist for the National Book Award in Fiction, Shortlisted for the Frank O'Connor International Story Prize, and Longlisted for the Story prize. Her collection *The New Order*, was Longlisted for the Story Prize. Her novels are *Like Normal People*, which was a Washington Post Book of the Year and a Los Angeles Times bestseller, and *A Town of Empty Rooms*. Her fiction has appeared in magazines including The New Yorker, Granta, Ploughshares, The Yale Review, The Harvard Review, Zoetrope, Electric Literature, Guernica, and others, and has been reprinted in *Best American Short Stories*, *Best American Mystery Stories*, and *New Stories from the South: The Year's Best*. She has won three Pushcart prizes. She has received grants from the Rona Jaffe Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. She is the Fiction Editor of the literary journal *Scoundrel Time*.

***Shonda Buchanan**, native of Kalamazoo, is an award-winning author, editor, and scholar. Buchanan is perhaps most well known as the author of *Black Indian*, a memoir that explores her family's legacy of being African-Americans with Native American roots: growing up in southwest Michigan, dealing with society's ostracization and the consequences of her dual inheritance. *Black Indian* won the 2020 Indie New Generation Book Award and was chosen by "PBS NewsHour" in its "top 20 books to read" to learn about institutional racism. Among her other accolades as a writer and an educator, Buchanan has received the Brody Arts Fellowship from the California Community Foundation, a Big Read grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, several Virginia Foundation for the Humanities grants, the Denise L. Scott and Frank Sullivan Awards, and an Eloise Klein-Healy Scholarship.

Anna Clark, of Detroit, is a writer driven by curiosity and a belief in the power of good stories to bring more truth and empathy into the world. She is the author of *The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the American Tragedy*, which won the Hillman Prize for Book Journalism and the Rachel Carson Environment Book Award. It was also a finalist for the Helen Bernstein Award for Excellence in Book Journalism and longlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction. *The Poisoned City* was named one of the year's best books by the Washington Post, Kirkus, the New York Public Library, Audible and others. Anna also edited *A Detroit Anthology* and wrote a book about the literary culture of the Great Lakes State. She has been a Fulbright fellow in creative writing in Kenya, and a Knight-Wallace journalism fellow at the University of Michigan. Her writing has appeared in publications ranging from the New York Times to the Boston Review. She is a reporter with ProPublica, a nonprofit newsroom dedicated to investigative journalism with moral force.

***Dhonielle Clayton** is a New York Times bestselling author of *The Conjureverse* series, *The Belles* series, *Shattered Midnight*, co-author of *Blackout*, *Whiteout*, *The Rumor Game*, and of the *Tiny Pretty Things* duology, a Netflix original series. She hails from the Washington, D.C. suburbs on the Maryland side. She taught secondary school for several years and is a former

elementary and middle school librarian. She is COO of the non-profit We Need Diverse Books. She is the President and founder of Cake Creative and Electric Postcard Entertainment, IP story companies creating diverse books for all ages. She's an avid traveler, and always on the hunt for magic and mischief.

Leslie Contreras Schwartz is a multi-genre writer, a 2021 Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow, and the 2019-2021 Houston Poet Laureate. She is the winner of the 2022 C&R Press Nonfiction Prize for the lyrical memoir, *From the Womb of Sky and Earth*. She is the author of five collections of poetry, including *The Body Cosmos* (forthcoming from Mouthfeel Press); *Black Dove / Paloma Negra* (FlowerSong Press, 2020), a finalist for 2020 Best Book of Poetry from the Texas Institute of Letters; and *Nightbloom & Cenote* (SJP, 2018), a semi-finalist for the 2017 Tupelo Press Dorset Prize, judged by Ilya Kaminsky. Her work has been featured on the Academy of American Poets Poem-A-Day and has appeared recently in *AGNI*, *Missouri Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Pleiades*, *Zocalo Public Square*, *Gulf Coast*, and the anthologies *2019 Best Small Fictions* and *Houston Noir*. She has collaborated or been commissioned for community poetry projects with the Academy of American Poets, the City of Houston, the Houston Grand Opera, and The Moody Center of the Arts at Rice University. She is a graduate of Rice University and The Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College.

Jim Daniels, a 1978 graduate of Alma College, has authored 28 collections of poetry, six collections of fiction and four produced screenplays. He has also edited or coedited six anthologies of writing. Daniels is a recipient of two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and two from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. His books have won three Michigan Notable Book Awards, the Brittingham Prize for Poetry, the Blue Lynx Prize for Poetry, the Tillie Olsen Creative Writing Award, the Milton Kessler Award, and three Gold Medals in the Independent Publisher Book Awards, among others, and his films have won many awards in film festivals around the world. His work has been published in *The Best American Poetry* and *Pushcart Prize* volumes. He has read his poetry on Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion," and his poems have been frequently featured on Keillor's "Writer's Almanac." During his long career, he has warmed up for singer-songwriter Lucinda Williams at the Three Rivers Arts Festival, had his poem "Factory Love" displayed on a race car, and sent poetry to the moon in 2021 as part of the Moon Arts Project.

Matthew Gavin Frank's latest nonfiction book, *Flight of the Diamond Smugglers*, was selected as one of NPR's Best Books of 2021, and as a finalist for the 2021 Heartland Booksellers Award in Nonfiction. He is also the author of the nonfiction books, *The Mad Feast: An Ecstatic Tour Through America's Food*, *Preparing the Ghost: An Essay Concerning the Giant Squid and Its First Photographer*, *Pot Farm* and *Barolo*; the poetry books, *The Morrow Plots*, *Warranty in Zulu*, *Sagittarius Agitprop*, and two chapbooks. *Preparing the Ghost* was a New York Times Editors' Choice, an NPR Notable Book, and a New Yorker Book to Watch Out For. *The Mad Feast* was selected as a Staff Pick by *The Paris Review*, a Best Book of 2015 by *Ploughshares*, *The Millions*, and *Paste Magazine*, longlisted for the Art of Eating Prize, and featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Saveur*, and *Entertainment Weekly*. His work appears widely in journals and magazines, including *The Kenyon Review*, *The Paris Review*, *Harper's*, *The Believer*, *Guernica*, *The New Republic*, *The Best Travel Writing* anthologies, *The Best Food Writing* anthologies, and as Notable selections in *The Best American Essays* anthologies. He is

the Nonfiction/Hybrids Editor of the literary magazine, *Passages North*. His forthcoming book, tentatively titled, *Submersed*— about the amateur submarine-building community and our obsession with the deep sea—is forthcoming in 2025 from Pantheon Books.

Benjamin Garcia's first collection, *Thrown in the Throat*, was selected by Kazim Ali for the 2019 National Poetry Series. He works as a sexual health and harm reduction educator in the Finger Lakes region of New York. A son of Mexican immigrants, he received his B.A. from the University of New Mexico and his M.F.A. from Cornell University. Benjamin had the honor of being a 2019 Lambda Literary fellow, the 2018 CantoMundo Fellow at the Palm Beach Poetry Festival, and the 2017 Latinx Scholar at the Frost Place Conference on Poetry. He is the winner of the 2018 Puerto del Sol Poetry Contest and the 2019 Julia Peterkin Flash Fiction Contest. His poems and essays have recently appeared or are forthcoming in: *AGNI*, *American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, *Missouri Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *New England Review*, *Best New Poets*, *Crazyhorse*, *Lithub*, and *Breakbeat Poets Vol 4: LatiNext*.

Donald Quist is author of two essay collections, *Harbors*, a Foreword INDIES Bronze Winner and International Book Awards Finalist, and *To Those Bounded*. He has a linked story collection, *For Other Ghosts*. His writing has appeared in *AGNI*, *North American Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Poets & Writers*, *The Rumpus*, and was Notable in *Best American Essays 2018*. He is creator of the online nonfiction series "Past Ten." Donald has received fellowships from Sundress Academy for the Arts and Kimbilio Fiction. He has served as a Gus T. Ridgel fellow for the English PhD program at University of Missouri.

****Robert Vivian** was born in Denver, Colorado and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. Dozens of his plays have been produced in New York City and elsewhere, and his poems, essays, and stories have appeared in many literary journals including *Georgia Review*, *Harper's*, *Ecotone*, *Creative Nonfiction*, and others. He has published four novels and two books of meditative essays. His first book of dervish essays (or prose poems) *Mystery My Country* was published in 2016 by Anchor & Plume. His latest published books are *All I Feel Is Rivers* (University of Nebraska Press) and an anthology co-edited with Joel Peckham called *Wild Gods: The Ecstatic In Contemporary Poetry & Prose* (New Rivers Press). Dr. Vivian holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from the University of Nebraska-Omaha, as well as a Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He has been a professor in Alma College's English Department since 2001. He has visited and taught in Turkey several times and has been heavily influenced by the works of Rumi. In the summer he tries to fly fish in northern Michigan every day and when he can't, he dreams about it anyway.

S. Kirk Walsh is a novelist, an editor and a teacher based in Austin, Texas. Her debut novel, *The Elephant of Belfast*, inspired by true events that took place in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during World War II, was published by Counterpoint Press in April. Now in its fourth printing, the novel has generated praise from *The New Yorker*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and others, as well as being selected for several top reading lists. It was published as "The Zookeeper of Belfast" by Hodder/Hachette (the UK, the Commonwealth and Ireland) in April 2021 (and forthcoming in December 2021). The novel will be translated for foreign editions in Romania, Norway and Iran. Walsh is now working on a second novel inspired by events that took place in Detroit during the 1930s and 1940s. Over the years, her fiction, essays and book reviews have

been published in the New York Times Book Review, the Virginia Quarterly Review, Story Quarterly, Guernica, Longreads, Virginia Quarterly Review, San Francisco Chronicle and Los Angeles Review of Books, among others. She has been a resident at Ucross, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Ragdale and Yaddo.

Faculty and Visiting Speakers Lecture List

Lecture handouts and resource materials will be posted on the MFA Sharepoint Site as they become available.

<https://almacollege.sharepoint.com/sites/AlmaCollegeMFA>

“Building Interiority through Perceptions: Love, Admiration and Envy in Characterization” Karen E. Bender

Building a character’s interiority consists of many elements. Characters reveal themselves through their many thoughts and perceptions about other characters. How does a character judge another? Envy another person? Love another person? Examining the ways writers show how characters react to one another helps create a sense of their interior worlds. In this seminar, we will look at stories by Mavis Gallant, Haruki Murakami, John Cheever, ZZ Packer, Deborah Eisenberg, Raymond Carver, and Eve Babitz to see how they incorporate character’s use of judgments, envy, and love into the narratives, creating a complex and living consciousness.

“How to Make Your Writing Way Better: A Brass-Tacks Guide to Revision” Anna Clark

What do you do with pages of promising prose that still feels ... off? When you sit down to revise, what do you actually, literally do? We'll get into it. In this class on how to find your way to "best words, best order," expect an array of specific and substantive ideas for self-editing. On the agenda: how to catch your unconscious writing tics; "small" changes that make a huge impact; and how to summon a spirit of creative play when you're staring down the same pages for months, or years. Revision is a radical practice. It invites us to see not only our words but ourselves with bracing clarity; to embrace the tumultuousness of change; and to be brave enough to tell the truth. It can even be fun. Let's go forth.

“Letters from a Poet, Poems as Letters: How Poets Engage in Conversations” Leslie Contreras Schwartz

In this lecture, we will look at the mystery letters of Emily Dickinson, and the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes’ *Birthday Letters*, to understand how poets start or continue poetic conversations with other people and other poems. We will look at what makes a poem epistolary, how letters are an archive of a poet’s creative life, or how poems serve as dialogue. How are epistolary poems and other poems both private conversations as well as public addresses? How is intimacy interrogated and cultivated in these poems by Dickinson, Plath, and Hughes and what conversations are launched (or continued) through this intimate lens? How do poems create a dialogue with other poems?

“What is an Artistic Statement and How to Write One?”

Jim Daniels

Writers, like other artists, are often asked to describe themselves and their work in a variety of situations. When you applied to the Alma MFA, you had to submit one. One of the challenges for writers is that we must use our own art form (writing) to describe our art, which can present various challenges and degrees of self-consciousness. While these are often painful to write, they are a necessary part of any writer's career. Unfortunately, you can't just write one statement and be done with it—the purposes and lengths of these statements often varies. This talk will give you some sense for the different types of author statements you may be asked to write and also discuss what makes a good artistic statement and some things you might want to avoid.

“The Fortunate Isles (or, The Essay's Compulsion to Mythologize the Actual, and Actualize the Dream)”

Matthew Gavin Frank

The essay finds both its origins and contemporary engines in its impulse to straddle the actual and the fantastic; in first “dreamify-ing” the great minutiae of our world, before reminding the reader, again, that the dream is real. In the 1st-and-2nd-century, Plutarch wrote on what are known as “the Fortunate Isles,” a magical archipelago that straddles the realms of the mythological and the actual. In Plutarch's time, the isles were believed to be real—a timeless, winterless paradise where the gods of Greek mythology lived and vacationed (among us humans) when earthbound. Plutarch based his writings and his pinpointing of these isles on actual reports related by ancient mariners who claimed to have found gods there. Today, scholars and cartographers have tried to pinpoint the Fortunate Isles with varying hypotheses... Beginning with my “discovery” of, and subsequent obsession with, Plutarch's isles, this lecture gathers a meditation on the relationship between the essay form and the tenets of so-called mythology; and the ways in which the essay form stresses that the existence of fact/proof often depends on its innate dance with magic/story.

“To Be or To Be Like: A Question of Metaphor, Simile, and Metonymy”

Benjamin Garcia

Metaphor is so ubiquitous in our writing that it's easy to overlook the mechanics and—for lack of a better description—magical properties of this writing staple. But how does a metaphor actually work, and why does it pack such a punch? In this lecture we will look closely at the engineering behind strong metaphor, as well alternatives, limitations, and subtypes. When should a writer, as Wallace Steven says, “let be be the finale of seem” and when might a writer listen to Lady Macbeth instead, endeavoring to make their words “look like the innocent flower, / but be the serpent under it.”

“Let’s Talk About Scene, Baby!”

Donald Quist

Emerging writers are often asked to show and not tell. While this advice can be a bit of an oversimplification, showing does tend to have a stronger impact on readers. Showing typically involves using scene: narrative moments that employ setting, dialogue and descriptions of action to deepen characterization and/or points of tension. But how do we do this? How do we build a scene, taking a moment from an idea to a fulfilling scene on the page with emotional resonance? This talk will offer reflections on the importance of scene and some guidance on how to go about rendering resonant moments in prose and verse. Bring something to write with and prepare to share, there will be writing exercises.

“Beginnings & Endings”

S. Kirk Walsh

Where do we begin—and where do we end? In this lecture, I will focus novels and short fiction, with specific examples that will speak to effective points of entry, narrative strategies for beginnings, and then endings. For beginnings, I’ll discuss what opening sentences set into motion and what makes us want to read on. Do we begin the story after the trouble has started? How does the opening suggest the overall structure of the narrative? How much do we need to know before we begin? How does time impact these choices and contribute to the shape of the story? For endings, I’ll examine what makes for a satisfying ending. What do we leave the reader with? Another door to walk through? Is an epiphany necessary? Despite the focus on fiction, the lecture will provide ideas and inspiration for nonfiction writers and poets. Prior to the lecture, short excerpts—from writers, such as Lorrie Moore, Alice Munro, James McBride, and Jamel Brinkley—will be circulated.

“MFA to NYC: On Breaking into the Publishing Industry”

Laura Schmitt

During the MFA, your primary focus is your own creative output. But many of the practices you inevitably hone along the way—reading widely and closely, providing peers with clear and thoughtful feedback, strategically implementing revisions—are valuable skills that seamlessly transfer to publishing roles, especially those in editorial. This talk will consider life after the MFA and the trajectory of an MFA student to a publishing professional. What does entry-level publishing work really look like? What are steps you can take to best position yourself for a career in books? Drawing upon my own path from an MFA program to an indie publisher in New York, this talk will outline and discuss the importance of identifying and articulating your editorial taste, building your literary network, questions to ask of yourself and your work, and more.

“A Round Character is a Conflicted Character: How to Use Conflicted Character Presentation to Bring a Character to Life”
Michelle Webster-Hein

In this lecture, we'll review both the direct and indirect methods of character presentation, and we'll explore the technique of conflicting these methods to create believably complicated characters. This strategy works in both fiction and creative nonfiction.

“Poetics and Social Justice”
Philip Metres

To explore how writers and writing can contribute to the struggle for justice and liberation necessitates flipping the script that limits the purpose of writing to making something beautiful and pointless. This talk writes toward the vibrant tradition of literature as a key cultural contributor to movements for social change. In particular, I want to explore a range of poetry particularly by Black poets that contribute to the Movement for Black Lives. I highlight how poets participate in the visionary aspects, as well as the struggles, of social movements. Poets are both challenged by and can challenge the pieties of social movements. Finally, I write this as an invitation for those who share a passion for both writing and social justice but have not quite found a way to bring them together.

Student Lecture List

“Excuse Me, But Your Species is Showing: How the Friction Between Anthropomorphism and Otherness Ignites Life in Nonhuman Characters”

Mary Beth Bishop

Nonhuman characters have existed since pre-humans depicted the hunt on cave walls. But somehow in modern literature, as the intended reader's age increases, the likelihood of hearing a nonhuman's voice decreases. What is appealing and empathetic for the young is often considered childish and gimmicky for adults. By looking at two works of fiction and two works of nonfiction, I explore how the authors manipulate the friction between anthropomorphism and otherness to create relatable nonhuman characters. They use a myriad of craft techniques to develop the communication, personality, and desires of these characters, including varying fonts, complex sentence structure, the “fairytale technique,” and mini chapters.

“Beware of the Snake in the Sweet Potatoes”

Lynda Blevins

This lecture is a survey of Southern authors' use of the grotesque literary mode to develop conflicted characters who move their stories forward and captures the fear reflected in the cultural and social norms of the places and times of the American South.

We will explore the following questions: What is the grotesque? How has it survived through the centuries? What makes this literary mode successful with Southern fiction? How is Southern gothic and this grotesque affecting my work? How can this help other writers?

We'll focus on the work of Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, Toni Morrison and Cormac McCarthy. In addition, we will look at William Faulkner's impact on Southern authors. The grotesque is a natural home for Southern writers to tell the tough stories of our past, present, and future and of the ancestors who haunt us.

Trigger Warning: Issues of race, religion, and culture and the impact of war will be discussed.

“The ‘Truth’ of Untruth: Exploring Unreliable Narration in Contemporary Autofiction”

Eric Sutton

This presentation examines works by contemporary autofiction writers Karl Ove Knausgaard, Claire-Louise Bennett, Rachel Cusk, and W.G. Sebald for craft techniques that posit unreliable narrative storytelling. By admitting to the fiction of their autofictional truths, these writers reveal a new, enlightened, compassionate form of truth that occupies the marginalia between fact and fiction and accounts for our inherent mistruths, engendering a freeing and universal reading experience. Unreliable narration, therefore, presents a paradox whereby admission to untruths enables acquisition of truths that exist beyond mere recollection of factual events.

Residency Schedule

Wednesday, June 19, 2024 (Arrival Day)

1:00-5:00 pm	Check In. Carey/Bonbright Halls. <i>Students Note: If you do not have an Alma photo ID card, please alert the check-in staff so they can assist in getting one made. You will need it to access the outside doors of your dorm.</i>
7:00 pm	Meeting for All Students. Carey/Bonbright Lounge (Common Area). Sign up for Student Readings.
7:00 pm	Faculty Meeting. English Dept., 3 rd Floor, Swanson Academic Center.
<i>During the residency</i>	<i>Students Note: If you have completed a term and have not had an end-of-term phone conference with your mentor, please schedule 30 minutes with your mentor to do so.</i>

Thursday, June 20

7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
8:30 am to 9:15 am	ORIENTATION. ALL STUDENTS AND FACULTY. Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
9:30 am to 10:30 am	3 RD Semester Students: Critical Thesis Discussion. Swanson Academic Center English Dept., 3 rd Floor, Swanson Academic Center.
9:30 am to 10:30 am	1 st and 2 nd Semester Students: Critical Writing Discussion. Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
9:30 am to 10:30 am	4 th Semester Students: Graduation Meeting. Loch Lomond Café, Hatcher Learning Commons.
11:00 am to 11:30 am	ID Cards. <i>If you don't have an ID card, please go to Hamilton Commons at this time to have one made.</i>
11:30 am to 12:30 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
2:00 pm to 3:15 pm	LECTURE: Matthew Gavin Frank, <i>"The Fortunate Isles (or, The Essay's Compulsion to Mythologize the Actual, and Actualize the Dream)."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
3:45 pm to 5:00 pm	STUDENT LECTURE: Mary Bishop, <i>"Excuse Me, But Your Species is Showing: How the Friction Between Anthropomorphism and Otherness Ignites Life in Nonhuman Characters."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.

5:00 to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
7:00 pm	FACULTY READING: S. Kirk Walsh, fiction writer. Introduction by Lyndie Blevins. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.
7:30 pm	FACULTY READING: Donald Quist, fiction and creative nonfiction writer. Introduction by Cash Whitney. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.

Friday, June 21

7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
8:15 am to 9:45 am	Faculty Interviews. Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons. NOTE: FACULTY PREFERENCE LIST DUE IN CANVAS BY 7PM.
10:00 am to 11:15 pm	VISITING WRITER LECTURE: Philip Metres, <i>"Poetics and Social Justice."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
11:30 am to 12:30 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS (see locations on page 1).
4:15 pm to 5:00 pm	Faculty Meeting. English Dept., 3 rd Floor, Swanson Academic Center.
5:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
7:00 pm	VISITING WRITER READING: Philip Metres. Introduction by Jim Daniels. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.

Saturday, June 22 - Open House Day

8 am to 1 pm	Alma Farmer's Market. State Street near Superior.
7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room. Faculty Mentor Assignments Posted via Email.
8:00 am to 9:00 am	Yoga. Stone Recreational Center, Multipurpose Room.
9:45 am to 10:45 am	PUBLISHING TALK: Laura Schmitt, <i>"MFA to NYC: On Breaking into the Publishing Industry."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
11:00 am to 11:30 am	Faculty Mentor Meetings. Faculty meet with their assigned students as a group to discuss study plan preparations and schedule individual study plan sessions. Location: Faculty Choice
11:30 am to 12:00 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.

1:00 pm to 2:15 pm	LECTURE: Karen E. Bender, <i>"Building Interiority through Perceptions: Love, Admiration and Envy in Characterization."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
3:00 pm to 4:30 pm	Study Plan Meetings/Director Office Hours.
3:00 pm to 5:00 pm	Pitch Sessions with Laura Schmitt. Alumni House Common Room.
5:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
7:00 pm	FACULTY READING: Leslie Contreras Schwartz, poet and nonfiction writer. Introduction by Alyssa Evans. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.

Sunday, June 23

7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
8:00 am to 9:00 am	Yoga. Stone Recreational Center, Multipurpose Room.
9:45 am to 11:00 am	LECTURE: Donald Quist, <i>"Let's Talk About Scene, Baby!"</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
11:30 am to 12:00 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
12:30 pm to 1:45 pm	LECTURE: Anna Clark, <i>"How to Make Your Writing Way Better: A Brass-Tacks Guide to Revision."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS.
4:00 pm to 5:00 pm	Director Office Hours.
5:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
	Evening: Free Time.

Monday, June 24

7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
8:45 am to 10:00 am	LECTURE: Benjamin Garcia, <i>"To Be or To Be Like: A Question of Metaphor, Simile, and Metonymy."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.

10:15 am to 11:30 am	STUDENT LECTURE: Lynda Blevins, <i>"Beware of the Snake in the Sweet Potatoes."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
11:30 pm to 12:30 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm	Director Office Hours.
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS.
4:15 pm to 5:00 pm	Faculty Meeting. English Dept., 3 rd Floor, Swanson Academic Center.
5:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
7:00 pm	GRADUATE STUDENT READINGS: Matty Weaver and Joshua Zeitler. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.

Tuesday, June 25

7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
8:15 am to 10:30 am	Morning Birding Walk with S. Kirk Walsh. Van will leave from the parking lot near Swanson Academic Center.
11:30 pm to 12:30 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
1:15 pm to 2:30 pm	LECTURE: Leslie Contreras Schwartz, <i>"Letters from a Poet, Poems as Letters: How Poets Engage in Conversations."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
3:00 pm to 4:15 pm	STUDENT LECTURE: Eric Sutton, <i>"The 'Truth' of Untruth: Exploring Unreliable Narration in Contemporary Autofiction."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
5:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
7:00 pm	VISITING WRITER READING: Michelle Webster-Hein, fiction. Introduction by Karen E. Bender. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.

Wednesday, June 26

7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
8:30 am to 9:30 am	Preview of Upcoming Residencies: Lake Junaluska, North Carolina and Oxford, England (with Janet Simmonds). Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
9:45 am to 11:00 am	LECTURE: Michelle Webster-Hein, <i>"A Round Character is a Conflicted Character: How to Use Conflicted Character Presentation to Bring a Character to Life."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
11:30 pm to 12:30 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS.
4:00 pm to 5:00 pm	Study Plan Meetings.
5:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
7:00 pm	FACULTY READING: Jim Daniels, multi-genre writer. Introduction by Katherina Thomas. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.

Thursday, June 27

7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
8:00 am to 9:00 am	Yoga. Stone Recreational Center, Multipurpose Room.
9:15 am to 10:30 am	LECTURE: S. Kirk Walsh, <i>"Beginnings & Endings."</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
10:45 am to 11:30 am	Writer's Life Q&A with Michelle Webster-Hein. Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
11:30 pm to 12:30 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS
4:15 pm to 5:00 pm	Faculty Meeting. English Dept., 3 rd Floor, Swanson Academic Center.
5:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
7:00 pm	Student Readings. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.

Friday, June 28

7:30 am to 8:00 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
9:00 am to 10:15 am	LECTURE: Jim Daniels, <i>"What is an Artistic Statement and How to Write One?"</i> Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
10:30 am to 12:00 pm	CREATIVE THESIS READINGS: Derek Blumke (creative nonfiction), Douglas Henning (poetry), Cash Whitney (creative nonfiction), Deborah Yeager (poetry). Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
12:00 pm to 1:00 pm	Lunch. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS
4:30 to 5:30 pm	STUDENT LED DISCUSSION: "After the Residency." Andison Room, Hatcher Learning Commons.
5:30 pm to 6:30 pm	Dinner. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
7:00 pm	VISITING WRITER READING: Jamaal May. Introduction by Benjamin Garcia. Ballyhoo Books & Brew.
8:00 to 11:00 pm	End-of-Residency Dance Party. Opera House Ballroom.

Saturday, June 29 (Degree Ceremony and Departure Day)

8 am to 1 pm	Alma Farmer's Market. State Street near Superior.
7:30 am to 8:30 am	Breakfast. Hamilton Commons Dining Room.
10:00 am to 11:00 am	MFA Degree Ceremony. The Thomas Andison Chapel.
	SEMESTER STUDY PLANS MUST BE TURNED IN VIA CANVAS BEFORE YOU LEAVE RESIDENCY.
	RESIDENCY JOURNALS MUST BE COMPLETED IN CANVAS BY JULY 8.

See you next winter!

***December 27, 2024-January 4, 2025
Lake Junaluska, North Carolina***
