



ALMA COLLEGE

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Winter Residency

December 27, 2024-January 4, 2025

Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center
Lambeth Inn
Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

<i>Workshop</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Faculty</i>
Workshop I	Lambeth 100	Fiction	Shonda Buchanan/S. Kirk Walsh
Workshop II	Lambeth 101	Creative Nonfiction	Matthew Gavin Frank/Donald Quist
Workshop III	Lambeth 103	Poetry	Leslie Contreras Schwartz /Benjamin Garcia

PROGRAM DIRECTOR – SOPHFRONIA SCOTT

Office: Lambeth 103

General Office Hours: December 30, 1-2pm * January 1, 1-2pm * January 2, 1-2pm

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

Program Notes

FACULTY: If you are assigned a faculty advisor who is not present, please arrange to connect with them virtually during the residency to complete your study plan.

COVID PROTOCOLS:

We ask that all residency participants get tested for COVID-19 with an at-home antigen test prior to traveling to Winter Residency. We also recommend, though not required, that each person bring a test to use mid-residency in case symptoms develop. Please consider, if you have not already done so, getting your COVID-19 and flu vaccines prior to residency.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT: Joey Meyer 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: Please wear your Alma name tags during the residency.

BOOKSTORE ORDERS: If you would like to support Alma's local independent bookstore, Ballyhoo Books and Brew, books may be ordered via Ballyhoo's site on [bookshop.org](https://bookshop.org/shop/ballyhoo_books).
https://bookshop.org/shop/ballyhoo_books

STUDENT READINGS: The residency schedule features an evening of student readings which will take place in Lambeth 100. Please sign up at the student meeting on the evening of December 27. If you would like to volunteer to emcee the readings, mention this at the meeting.

OPEN TIME: There is space built into the schedule for personal writing time and study plan meetings with your faculty advisor. It may be used at your discretion. These meetings can also take place during meal times.

THERMOSES/WATER BOTTLES: Coffee and tea will be available most days during the workshop snack. You will also have a coffee pot in your room. If you want post-breakfast coffee and tea, you may want to bring a thermos and fill up at mealtimes.

SPECIAL ACTIVITY: 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: The Lambeth Inn's copying capability is limited. If you require copies of handouts or other materials, **please print at home and bring them with you.**

VISIT TO THE BILTMORE ESTATE: Asheville, Tuesday, December 31, 2pm-9pm. *Cars will leave Lake Junaluska after lunch.*

We will be spending New Year's Eve on the grounds of America's largest home, built by George Vanderbilt. We will have timed entry to the house at 3pm. Everyone will receive an audio tour device and will be able to tour the home self-guided. Note the library! We will also have dinner at one of the restaurants on the estate and celebrate the arrival of 2025.

Lake Junaluska Group Registration and Check-in Procedures Lambeth Inn

Upon check-in, ALL GUESTS must provide:

- Photo ID to confirm their identity. The name of the ID must match the name on the reservation.
- A valid credit card for incidentals/damages. (NOTE: A hold of \$10.00 is immediately authorized on the card.)
 - This is REQUIRED, regardless of whether the account is paid in full prior to arrival, or if the account is being charged to a group's Master Bill. The card is held on file.
 - The credit card used for check in does not allow a guest to charge gift shop items to their room. Items must be paid for at area where chosen.
 - The name on the card supplied should match the name on the supplied photo ID. This is important for security, as it verifies that the card is being used by an authorized person.

Providing Room Keys

- Each guest (or party within a shared room) must check-in individually. Room keys are ONLY to be given to the guest(s) for the room in which they are reserved. Keys will not be given out to group leaders or anyone else whose name is not listed on the reservation. This important security measure ensures that the correct guests receive the correct room keys, and that no one else has access to that guest room.
- In the event of lost keys, photo ID must be provided to match the name on the reservation before keys are issued. For the security of all guests, Housekeeping and Front Desk staff must not issue keys or allow entry into a room without first verifying that the person is listed on the reservation record for that room.
- There will be a \$25 charge for each key not returned at check-out.

Check-in/Check-out

Check-in is at 4 pm at the Bethea Welcome Center, 91 N Lakeshore Drive, Lake Junaluska, NC 28745, unless otherwise arranged. (Please use this address for GPS directions.) **NOTE: If you arrive after 5:00 pm go directly to the Lambuth Inn for check-in. The Welcome Center closes at 5:00 pm.**

If you arrive earlier than 4pm, there are sitting areas available in the lobbies of the Welcome Center and the Hotels. There is also a coffee shop on the property and a restaurant, Crepes and Custard.

- Check-out is at 11 am
- Currently, as of January 2024, there will be no in room service provided by housekeeping during your stay. You may leave towels or trash outside door to be picked up and/or replaced as needed

Outside Food & Beverage

The Conference Center is licensed to serve food and beverages. Food from outside sources is not allowed in the function space. All catering and food service within Conference Center's facilities is to be provided by Conference Center. Group agrees to release Conference Center from any and all responsibility and/ or liability for illness resulting from consumption of food and/or beverage which Conference Center did not prepare, distribute or provide.

Alteration of Premises, Defacement of Property, Damages

- No alterations or changes to the property shall be made without the prior approval of the General Manager or authorized designate. Alterations include, but are not limited to, movement of interior plants, movement of equipment, or relocation of furnishings.
- Group's credit card will be charged after check-out if damage is found or excessive cleaning is required after the group's check-out.

Decor

- Burning of incense or candles is prohibited in any building except for use in corporate worship (with prior approval).
- Glitter, gum, confetti, powdered paint, adhesive-backed decals, stickers, and silly string may not be used or affixed inside or outside of Lake Junaluska facilities.
- Groups shall not post or exhibit, or allow to be posted or exhibited, any signs, advertisements, posters, or cards of any kind.
- Signs or other items may not be hung from the walls or ceilings of any Lake Junaluska facility.
- Nothing may be taped, nailed, stapled, tacked, or otherwise affixed to any surface without Lake Junaluska management approval. This includes surfaces throughout the inside and outside of all buildings.

- Lake Junaluska management reserves the right to assess an additional cleaning fee at their discretion.

Code of Conduct

- Lake Junaluska is an alcohol-free, weapon-free, and drug-free facility.
- Lake Junaluska provides a “smoke-free” environment to all of its guests. Please be courteous of guests and staff and refrain from smoking in any of our facilities. Smoking is permitted outside.
- Lake Junaluska enforces the property-wide quiet hours from 10:00 pm to 7:00 am. We ask that you respect your fellow guests and honor the quiet hours.
- Property-wide curfew is 10:00 pm. Anyone outside of the housing facility after curfew may be detained by security.
- Group leaders and counselors are responsible for their group at all times.
- Fireworks are not permitted on Assembly grounds.
- Open flame devices: due to their risk to life and property, candles (including decorative, unburnt wicks, etc.), torches, incense, and any other open flame devices are strictly prohibited inside all Lake Junaluska Conference Center Buildings and Hotels.
- Water guns, Super Soakers, water balloons, shaving cream fights, Silly String, etc. will NOT be tolerated inside any Lake Junaluska facility.
- Please conduct yourself in a manner that shows respect and consideration for fellow guests (i.e. no running in hallways, no playing in the elevators, no unnecessary horseplay, no use of profanity or public displays of affection).
- Roller blades and/or skateboards are allowed in designated areas only. Check with the Front Desk for locations.
- Sidewalks are provided for pedestrian traffic. Please do not walk in the street.
- Please be prepared to present your meal card when you enter the dining room. In the event of lost or stolen meal cards, please go to the Front Desk to receive a replacement before entering the Dining Room.
- When requesting additional room keys at the Front Desk, please be prepared to identify yourself. Youth or children may be requested to return with an adult leader. This is for your protection.

- Please be advised that you are responsible for any valuables left in your room. Lake Junaluska assumes no responsibility for lost, stolen, or damaged property unless secured in a hotel safe.
- For the safety of all guests, the Fitness Center is for guests 18 and older.

Driving Directions to Lake Junaluska

From I-40 East (Tennessee). Take Exit 20 (Hwy 276 to Maggie Valley / Waynesville). Travel south on Hwy 276 for several miles. Hwy 276 will dead-end into Hwy 19-23/74 at a traffic light (here will be a Quality Inn on the right). Turn left and drive approximately 4 miles on Hwy 19-23/74. Go straight through the next traffic light, and within ¼ of a mile, you will see the main entrance to Lake Junaluska on the left.

From I-40 West (Asheville). Take Exit 27, which puts you on bypass 19-23/74 (the Smoky Mountain Expressway). Go west on 19-23/74 approximately 4 miles. Take Exit 103 (it will be marked Hwy 19, Maggie Valley/Cherokee and Lake Junaluska). The main entrance to Lake Junaluska will be on your right.

From Atlanta Take I-985 to Hwy 441. Stay on Hwy 441 until Dillsboro, NC (just on the other side of Franklin, NC). After passing through the traffic light in Dillsboro, exit right to Hwy 19-23/74 to Waynesville and Sylva. Keep driving towards Waynesville. Take Exit 102 B. This exit will take you back under the overpass. At the 4th traffic light (approximately 1 ½ miles), turn right and travel approximately ¼ mile. The main entrance to Lake Junaluska will be on your left.

From Charlotte. Take I-277 South and continue onto US-74 West. Turn left onto the Interstate 485 Inner North ramp. Take Exit 10B to merge onto I-85 South toward Gastonia/Spartanburg. Take Exit 10B to merge onto US-74 W/Andrew Jackson Hwy towards Kings Mountain. Merge onto I-26 West. Continue onto US-74 West. Merge onto I-40 West. Take Exit 27, which puts you on bypass 19-23/74 (the Smoky Mountain Expressway). Go west on 19-23/74 approximately 4 miles. Take Exit 103 (it will be marked Hwy 19, Maggie Valley/Cherokee and Lake Junaluska). The main entrance to Lake Junaluska will be on your right.

Visiting Writers

Anna Gazmarian – Visiting Writer

Lecture: December 29, 11:00 am; Reading: December 29, 7:00 pm; Informal Q&A: December 30, 11:00 am

Anna's debut *Devout: A Memoir of Doubt* was published by Simon and Schuster in March 2024. She received her MFA from Bennington Writing Seminars and worked for six years on the editorial team at *The Sun Magazine*. She lives in Durham, North Carolina with her daughter and pitbull who manage to climb into her bed every night.

David Joy – Visiting Writer

Lecture: January 2, 10:30 am; Reading: January 2, 7:00 pm; Informal Q&A: January 3, 11:00 am
Degree Ceremony Speaker: January 4, 9:00 am

David Joy is the author of five novels including *Those We Thought We Knew* (winner of the 2023 Willie Morris Award), *When These Mountains Burn* (winner of the 2020 Dashiell Hammett Award), *The Line That Held Us* (winner of the 2018 Southern Book Prize), *The Weight Of This World*, and *Where All Light Tends To Go* (Edgar finalist for Best First Novel). His latest essays have appeared in *Garden & Gun*, *TIME*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. He lives in Tuckasegee, North Carolina.


Visiting MFA Alumni

Project Presentation: January 3, 9:15 am

Mary Peterson is a writer based in Grand Rapids, Michigan who also writes from the banks of the AuSable River in Grayling, Michigan. Prior to graduating with the inaugural class of the Alma MFA Creative Writing Program in 2023, she worked as a certified spiritual director. She created a branch of her practice which was direction by correspondence. It offered poetry as an important component of her handwritten reflective responses aiding clients invested in recognizing their own voices. Nature and solitude are the ideals in which Mary hears most freely the voice within. She is returning to the island of Iona off of Scotland on a solo trip for the month of May, 2025 to open herself to its inspirational magic. She will be staying in a cozy pod and will have a mail slot there. She would not say no to any pen pals!

Deborah Yeager is a grateful alum of Alma's MFA program in Creative Writing and a member of the inaugural class in poetry. She recently celebrated 25 years with the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, MI, a foundation centered on love. She enjoys running marathons (as much as one can) and is astonished to be dancing again after a 24-year hiatus. Most early mornings you can find her perched in an east-facing dormer with a cup of coffee and her notebook. She occasionally remembers to look up.

Joshua Zeitler is a queer, nonbinary writer based in Alma, Michigan. As an undergraduate at Alma College, while working for the campus radio station and newspaper, they taught themselves the basics of sound editing to make podcasts about campus speakers and events. They later were part of the first poetry cohort in the MFA in Creative Writing at Alma College, graduating in January of 2024. Their work has appeared in Pithead Chapel, The Account, Pacifica Literary Review, The Q&A Queerzine, HAD, and elsewhere, and been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. They work at Ballyhoo Books & Brew, an independent bookstore and coffee shop in downtown Alma.



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>

“Exploring Strategies for First Person Point of View” Karen E. Bender [VIA ZOOM]

"The house of fiction has many windows, but only two or three doors," says critic James Wood in "How Fiction Works." In this craft lecture, we'll learn about the door of the first-person perspective, and I'll go over different strategies for using first person. We'll discuss remote, descriptive, and voice-y first person points of view, and other issues relating to using first person. We'll be discussing stories of writers including James Joyce, Jamaica Kincaid, Miranda July, Toni Cade Bambara and Mavis Gallant. We'll also be doing an exercise using first person points of view.

“How to Write, Research and Craft a Sexy, Crazy Amazing Critical Thesis or That Time I Pulled My Hair Out” Shonda Buchanan

In every student's academic career, there comes the dreaded moment, the daunting and mind-bending task, of writing a Critical Thesis. What is this demon of a rhetorical strategy anyway? What's the purpose of a Critical Thesis? So different from the creative projects we've been working on during this program—and indeed the creative writing process itself—the Critical Thesis serves the purpose of deconstructing a piece of literature, usually focusing on a literary trope, motif and themes, or ideas, topics and issues an author raises in a text. The Critical Thesis can also analyze and unpack characters, techniques or strategies, symbols or even schools of thought and put them back together so that we, you, and your Thesis advisor understand the proposed scope of query and investigation, and how your work led to new meaning. This presentation will help attendees understand the role of the Critical Thesis as well as how to write, research and craft a “sexy, crazy amazing” Critical Thesis that may or may not become a book project but will certainly allow you to enter the pantheon of those who've gone before you into this great beyond of the writing, researching and crafting a Critical Thesis and lived to tell the tale.

**“Finding Abundance in Disability Poetics and Writing about the Body:
Celebrations of the Disabled and Sick Body in Poetry and the Radiant Song They
Sing”**
Leslie Contreras Schwartz

This lecture will focus on the movement known as disability poetics, as well as poetry about the body and illness, and how they serve as a vibrant alternative to the literary canon in contemporary poetry. We will also look at how intersectional narratives, communal gestures, and collective care come to life in the body of these poems. We will examine, in particular, the work of poets Aurora Levins Morales, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna Samaransinha, and ire'ne lara silva, among others, and end with a writing exercise observing our bodies with close awareness and attention.

Poetry by artists with disabilities, particularly those from marginalized Black, brown, indigenous, and queer and trans communities, create complex, nuanced perspectives that challenge tropes around disability and illness (such as categorizing impairments as tragic, or the “supercrip” narrative of the hero who overcomes their disability), or defy attitudes that promote perfect health as the only valid or worthy form of living.

These poems confront the factors that contribute to or create disability, including environmental racism, personal and historical trauma, or poverty; they also name experiences confronting ablism from an intersectional lens. Importantly, statistics show that people from these marginalized communities develop impairments in higher numbers based on various socioeconomic factors. To counteract these realities, disability poetics empowers artists and audiences by centering our experience through narrative, as well as by using culturally relevant language, and having a speaker that invites intimacy from the reader.

**“Ethically Unsound: On Trying and Likely Failing to De-sensationalize ‘True
Crime’”**
Matthew Gavin Frank

In my forthcoming book, *Submersed*, I did not plan to write about a real-life murder. I wanted to engage the eccentric micro-community of DIY submersible enthusiasts, and to scratch at their obsessions and their actions for some kind of larger—if elusive or illusory—meaning; some kind of sly microcosmic comment on the human condition and on human longing. But, in my research, I kept bumping up against violence, misogyny, and murder. I couldn't help but confront and interrogate the inflection points at which a sense of wonder sours into something more malign. When and why and how does the compulsion to sink to depth uncannily begin to dovetail with darker, more threatening traits? What is it with my own malign and fraught compulsion to sink to these depths, the ethics of inquiring into and interacting with—in book form and other art forms—real-life atrocity? This lecture will engage with my experience in navigating such questions while crafting *Submersed*, as well as with the voices of various writers and critics on the fraught nature of the “true crime” subgenre of creative nonfiction.

“The Poetic i(Phone)—Part 2: An Intro to Video Editing and Composition”

Benjamin Garcia

So you have this cool footage, now what? How does one even begin to compose a video poem or narrative? If you have never edited a video, the technological aspect alone can feel prohibitive. And how do you string videos together that are not one continuous shot in a way that feels natural? How do you add sound, music, voice readings, texture? This lecture will simplify and demystify the process of video editing by walking us through the process, start to finish, using stock software on Apple products. If you use Android/PC, the process will be very similar but may have some differences. However, the same basic principals will transfer over to whatever system you use.

This lecture is a follow-up to the one titled “The Poetic i(Phone): Creating Video Poems, Essays, and Narratives,” which you may remember from Venice! If not, don’t fret—we will do a quick recap of highlights for gathering video footage. It’s recommended that you review the handout for the Venice lecture, available on Sharepoint as “The Poetic iPhone, Part 1,” prior to this lecture.

“You Blow Who You Is”

Donald Quist

Each of us has a sound: pitch, stress, tempo, and rhythm, unique to our written voice. Just as jazz musicians *blow who they is*, writers must learn to *play* in their own voice, navigating tension, timing, and tonal shifts with their syntax and style. We’ll explore voice as a craft element to be consciously developed. Using philosophy by R.G. Collingwood as a guide, we’ll discuss how a writer’s voice emerges through the balance of sound and meaning, and how every choice in the cadence of language reveals something essential about the self. We’ll also dive into the challenges and strategies of refining one’s voice, looking at examples from Charles R. Johnson and Jamaica Kincaid.

“Ways of Seeing: An Exploration of Traditional & Experimental POV Strategies”

S. Kirk Walsh

In *The Art of Perspective*, author Christopher Castellani writes: “If perspective is a way of seeing, and narration is perspective in action, then narrative strategy is the how and the why of the seeing.” During this lecture, Kirk will examine the more traditional points of view of as well as more experimental possibilities of the third-person voice. In addition, she will cover the author-reader contract, psychic distance, multi-povs, and more. Authors discussed in the lecture include: Paul Yoon (“War Dogs,” short story recently published in *The New Yorker*), William Trevor (“A Bit on the Side,” from his collection of the same title), Jhumpa Lahiri (*The Interpreter of Maladies*), Toni Morrison (*The Song of Solomon*), and others. Through these stories and other text, Kirk will illustrate how point of view—whether it’s in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry—is often the single most important decision one makes when approaching a story that you want to

tell. The short stories by Paul Yoon, Jhumpa Lahiri, and William Trevor are uploaded on SharePoint. (Please try and read these stories prior to lecture, if possible. Thank you.)

**“I’m Not Crazy: Resisting Melodrama in Memoir”
Anna Gazmarian**

In this lecture, we will explore how contemporary female writers—YiYun Li, Esme Weijun Wang, and Rachel Aviv—grapple with the complexities of writing about mental illness in memoir, while confronting the historical and ongoing dismissal of women’s pain. From the Rest Cure to the witch trials, women have long been silenced or misunderstood in the face of emotional distress, and these cultural legacies continue to shape how women’s mental health is treated today. With political figures like Donald Trump fostering a climate of misogyny and dismissiveness, the urgency of this issue is more pressing than ever. I will also reflect on my own struggles with writing a memoir during a mental health crisis, navigating not only psychiatric institutions but also spiritual spaces that have historically failed to honor women’s pain. My work is a deliberate attempt to burn these institutions to the ground—exposing how both psychiatric and spiritual systems often perpetuate harm under the guise of care. Together, we’ll examine how these writers inspired my own work and how my book connects to their exploration of institutional neglect, the reclamation of language, and the fight for women’s voices in a world that continues to ignore them.

**“Crossing Gaps”
David Joy**

When it comes to writing outside of one’s own identity, what gaps can be crossed? Who can cross them? And what responsibility does the writer carry in getting that story right? Whether crossing gaps of gender, race, class, place, or sexuality, mistakes made are never inconsequential. Together we will examine publishing trends such as “authenticity readers,” we will discuss ideas such as representation in literature, and we will try to understand how one might come to do the work both fearlessly and responsibly.

**“Planting Onions: Cultivating Community After the MFA”
Mary Peterson ‘23, Deborah Yeager ‘24, and Joshua Zeitler ‘25**

Lest you fear that the writing life will leave you desolate and desk-ridden, wondering if your only friend goes by the name “Bic”, we’re here to bust open that myth of the lonely writer. We will demonstrate how collaboration can continue to foster the community you build in the MFA program and inspire innovation. We will present excerpts of our radio drama adaptation of Mary Peterson’s written manuscript *PLANTING ONIONS: Letters Written Out Of Season*. This project began with her exploration of Victoria Chang’s epistolary work for her critical thesis, which inspired her to respond to the found documents of her father’s love letters home from his time of service in the Korean War. In a postgraduate term, Bob Vivian encouraged her to think about the project and its presentation in a new way. She invited Joshua Zeitler and Deborah Yeager in to bring this conversation to life, with Joshua reading chosen excerpts from her dad’s

letters, Mary reading her own letters in response, and Deborah voicing the poetry Mary has written that is woven throughout.

We will feature our individual contributions to this work and the ways it has fed and broadened our creative practices. We are eager to share selections from our project with accompanying sound effects and music. There will be time for questions and discussions following.

Student Lecture List

“When the Forest Fell, Did Writers Hear It?: Wayfinding a Piecework Quilt Vision of the Lost Great Lakes Forest”

Sarah Geddes Carroll

An 11,000-year-old post-glacial forest once stretched across the land surrounding Lakes Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior. Over the course of roughly 1850 to 1910, this forest was decimated by European colonizing forces, including settler farmers, the United States and Canadian governments, and the lumber, railroad, and mining industries. In terms of climate degradation, the extent of this loss is difficult to fathom and painful to contemplate. Coextensive with this destruction was the genocide and removal by these same colonizing forces of the Indigenous people who inhabited and stewarded these lands. Guided by the Polynesian principle of wayfinding, that is, understanding where you have been in order to know where you are and envision where you are headed, this paper argues it is essential this loss be comprehended. Using the piecework quilt structure of a border that creates a negative space to frame individual quilt blocks that contrast and stand out, this paper assembles and analyzes various written accounts of the Great Lakes Forest to help understand what was lost when these forests were destroyed, and why it happened.

“Character in Palimpsest”

Seny Gonzalez (via Zoom)

This lecture will show memory as narrative structure, voice, and how context for a postmemorial narrative reveals character. I will be analyzing character of the protagonists of the following novels: *Bless Me*, *Ultima*, *Caramelo*, and *Echoes of Grace*. The novels include differing examples of memory as a narrative structure such as “nested” memories, parallel narrative, and a combination of “nested” memories organized into thematic parts.

“The Odyssey: Translations Viewed through Diction, Sound, and Characterization”

Calius Lewis

This lecture seeks to look at two different translations of *The Odyssey*, Wilson’s translation and Johnston’s translation, to examine the differences in diction, characterization, sound, and syntax. *The Odyssey* is a long and, at times, meandering tale and so this lecture focuses only

on the craft techniques that occur in book nine. This book of *The Odyssey* covers Odysseus talking to Alcinous, the king of Phaeacia, raiding the Cicones, the island of the lotus eaters, and the Cyclops. One of the main techniques this we will look at is sound and how it helps add another layer of understanding to the text. By comparing these two translations the effect of those difference can be more clearly seen than if one translation had been examined on its own. We will look at the changes in the translations through a poetical lens to further examine their importance. The examination of these differences also seeks to show where further changes in future translations could be made.

“Between Silence and Song: Rhythm and Rest Space in Fiction and Nonfiction”

Katherina Thomas

This lecture is a journey into the musicality of fiction and nonfiction, exploring rhythm and rest through the lens of sonic craft, alongside pathways and passages between literary skill and these inherent elements of music: rhythm and rest space. Many authors like to write to music, just as many musicians like to read. While literature and music are separate art forms, there are bridges between them, frequently crossed. Do writers mimic, consciously or subconsciously, the structure and pace of songs and compositions? How does musical technique slip into short story? How can we integrate rest space into literature, just as silence is woven into song and, in visual art, negative space is an element of form? Through an examination of these parallels, I would like to offer insights into the ways in which the writer makes words move on the page, mimicking song and silence, engagement and reflection, movement and pause, life and breath.

“Understanding the Narrative Struggle: Analyzing the Use of Point of View Across Genres to Address How Personal Relationships, Self-Image and Awareness are Affected by Racism and an Intolerant Society”

Kayla Williams

How much influence does a writer’s choice of point of view have on the overall message of a narrative? Can writers use point of view to their advantage to fully convey the lesson they want the reader to take away from their work? How can point of view be used creatively to connect with the reader and guide them to understanding an author’s intended message? In this cross-genre analysis that dances across memoir, fiction and science fiction, we’ll examine how three different writers utilize point of view to address how personal relationships, self-image and awareness are affected by racism and an intolerant society.

Residency Schedule

Friday, December 27, 2024 (Arrival Day)

4:00 pm	Check In. See details in program notes.
5:30 pm	Dinner. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
7:00 pm	Faculty Meeting. Lambuth 101.
8:00 pm	Self-Led Student Meeting. Main Meeting Room.
<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 adviser, please schedule 30 minutes with your adviser to do so.</i>

Saturday, December 28

7:30 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
9:00 am to 9:30 am	ORIENTATION. ALL STUDENTS AND FACULTY. Main Meeting Room.
9:30 am to 10:30 am	1 st , 2 nd , and 3 RD Semester Students: Critical Writing and Critical Thesis Discussion. Main Meeting Room.
9:30 am to 10:30 am	4 th Semester Students: Graduation Meeting. Lambuth 101.
10:45 am to 12:00 pm	LECTURE: Matthew Gavin Frank, <i>"Ethically Unsound: On Trying and Likely Failing to De-sensationalize 'True Crime'."</i> Main Meeting Room.
12:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS (see locations on page 1).
4:15 pm to 5:30 pm	Faculty Interviews. Main Meeting Room. NOTE: FACULTY PREFERENCE LIST DUE IN CANVAS BY SUNDAY 7PM.
5:30 to 7:00 pm	Dinner. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
7:00 pm	FACULTY READING: Leslie Contreras Schwartz, poet and nonfiction writer. Introduction by Calius Lewis. Main Meeting Room. FACULTY READING: Shonda Buchanan, multi-genre writer. Introduction by Sarah Carroll. Main Meeting Room.

Sunday, December 29

7:30 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
9:15 am to 10:30 am	LECTURE: Shonda Buchanan, <i>"How to Write, Research and Craft a Sexy, Crazy Amazing Critical Thesis or That Time I Pulled My Hair Out."</i> Main Meeting Room.
11:00 am to 12:00 pm	VISITING WRITER LECTURE: Anna Gazmarian, <i>"I'm Not Crazy: Resisting Melodrama in Memoir."</i> Main Meeting Room.
12:00 pm to 1:00 pm	Lunch. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
1:15-1:45 pm	PRESENTATION AND Q&A: The Alma MFA Book Award. Lisa Diane Kastner, Editor, Founder & CEO, Running Wild Press (Via Zoom)
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS (see locations on page 1).
4:15 pm to 5:15 pm	STUDENT LECTURE: Seny Gonzalez via Zoom, <i>"Character in Palimpsest."</i> Main Meeting Room.
5:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Dinner. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
7:00 pm	FACULTY READING: Donald Quist, fiction and nonfiction writer. Introduction by Mary Bishop. Main Meeting Room. VISITING WRITER READING: Anna Gazmarian. Introduction by Leslie Contreras Schwartz. Main Meeting Room.

Monday, December 30

7:30 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast. Lambeth Inn Dining Room. Faculty Mentor Assignments Posted via Email.
8:30 am to 9:00 am	Oxford Information Preview with Janet Simmonds via Zoom. Main Meeting Room.
9:15 am to 10:30 am	LECTURE: Benjamin Garcia, <i>"The Poetic i(Phone)—Part 2: An Intro to Video Editing and Composition."</i> Main Meeting Room.
11:00 am to 12:00 pm	INFORMAL WRITING LIFE TALK: Anna Gazmarian. Main Meeting Room.
12:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch and Faculty Mentor Meetings. Faculty meet with their assigned students as a group to discuss study plan preparations and schedule individual study plan sessions.
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm	Director Office Hours. Lambuth 103.

2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS (see locations on page 1).
4:15 pm to 5:15 pm	STUDENT LECTURE: Kayla Williams, <i>"Understanding the Narrative Struggle: Analyzing the Use of Point of View Across Genres to Address How Personal Relationships, Self-Image and Awareness are Affected by Racism and an Intolerant Society."</i> Main Meeting Room.
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm	Dinner. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
7:00 pm	GRADUATE STUDENT READING: Joseph Meyer. Main Meeting Room. FACULTY READING: S. Kirk Walsh, fiction writer. Introduction by Eric Sutton. Main Meeting Room. FACULTY READING: Benjamin Garcia, poet and nonfiction writer. Introduction by Selena Carranza. Main Meeting Room.

Tuesday, December 31 New Year's Eve

7:30 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
9:15 am to 10:30 am	LECTURE: Donald Quist, <i>"You Blow Who You Is."</i> Main Meeting Room.
11:00 am to 12:00 pm	STUDENT LECTURE: Katherina Thomas, <i>"Between Silence and Song: Rest Space and Rhythm in Fiction and Nonfiction."</i> Main Meeting Room.
12:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
1:30 pm to 2:00 pm	Travel to Biltmore Estate
2:00 pm to 9pm	Biltmore Estate Visit: Timed entry for house tour is 3pm . We will have dinner at the estate (6pm) and then continue to have access to the grounds until 9pm.

Wednesday, January 1 HAPPY NEW YEAR!

7:30 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
9:15 am to 10:30 am	LECTURE: Leslie Contreras Schwartz, <i>"Finding Abundance in Disability Poetics and Writing about the Body: Celebrations of the Disabled and Sick Body in Poetry and the Radiant Song They Sing."</i> Main Meeting Room.

10:45 am to 11:45 am	STUDENT LECTURE: Sarah Carroll, <i>"When the Forest Fell, Did Writers Hear It?: Wayfinding a Piecework Quilt Vision of the Lost Great Lakes Forest."</i> Main Meeting Room.
12:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm	Director Office Hours. Lambuth 103.
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS.
4:15 pm to 5:15 pm	STUDENT LECTURE: Calius Lewis, <i>"The Odyssey: Translations Viewed through Diction, Sound, and Characterization."</i> Main Meeting Room.
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm	Dinner. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
7:00 pm	STUDENT READINGS. Main Meeting Room.

Thursday, January 2

7:30 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
9:15 am to 10:30 am	LECTURE: S. Kirk Walsh, <i>"Ways of Seeing: An Exploration of Traditional & Experimental POV Strategies."</i> Main Meeting Room.
10:45 am to 12:00 pm	VISITING WRITER LECTURE: David Joy, <i>"Crossing Gaps."</i> Main Meeting Room.
12:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm	Director Office Hours. Lambuth 103.
2:00 to 4:00 pm	WORKSHOPS.
4:15 pm to 5:30 pm	LECTURE: Karen E. Bender via Zoom, <i>"Exploring Strategies for First Person Point of View."</i> Main Meeting Room.
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm	Dinner. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
7:00 pm	FACULTY READING: Matthew Gavin Frank, creative nonfiction writer. Introduction by Andrew Downs.
	VISITING WRITER READING AND INFORMAL WRITING LIFE TALK: David Joy, fiction. Introduction by Sophronia Scott. Main Meeting Room.
After the Readings	STUDENT LED DISCUSSION: "After the Residency." Main Meeting Room.

Friday, January 3

7:30 am to 8:30 am	Breakfast. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
9:00 am to 10:00 am	PRESENTATION: Mary Peterson, Deborah Yeager, and Joshua Zeitler. <i>"Planting Onions: Cultivating Community After the MFA."</i> Main Meeting Room.
10:15 am to 12:15 pm	WORKSHOPS.
12:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
1:30 pm to 2:30 pm	Free Time (Study Plan meetings, etc.)
2:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Drive time to Asheville for Readings and Reception.
3:00 pm to 5:00 pm	End-of-Residency Reception and CREATIVE THESIS READINGS: Mary Bishop (fiction and creative nonfiction), Lynda Blevins (fiction), Eric Sutton (fiction). Battery Park Book Exchange. 1 Page Ave #101 Asheville, NC 28801
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm	Dinner on your own. Asheville restaurants.

Saturday, January 4 (Degree Ceremony and Departure Day)

7:30 am to 8:30 am	Breakfast. Lambeth Inn Dining Room.
9:00 am to 10:00 am	MFA Degree Ceremony. Main Meeting Room. SEMESTER STUDY PLANS MUST BE TURNED IN VIA CANVAS BEFORE YOU LEAVE RESIDENCY. RESIDENCY JOURNALS MUST BE COMPLETED IN CANVAS BY JANUARY 15.

See you next summer!

***August 18, 2025-August 28, 2025
Oxford, England***
