

**THE RAINIER WRITING WORKSHOP  
MFA @ PLU  
2024 RESIDENCY SCHEDULE [FINAL]**

For classes below with an “Advance Reading” or 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 12**

**CK**                    **6:30 DINNER**

**Scan Center**        **8:00 OPENING REMARKS & FACULTY READINGS: Aram Mrjoian, Brian Teare**

**SATURDAY, JULY 13**

**8:30 MORNING TALK:**

**Xavier 201**            **Renee Simms, *But Is It True?***

How do we create work that burrows through the matter of our little corners on the earth, and arrives at a truth that illuminates, moves, and reveals? What do we mean when we say a poem or story rings true? And how do we render particular experiences in a way that feels expansive when read by others? This talk will explore these questions while not promising any answers. At the heart of the talk is a curiosity about writing that feels familiar and real, even when the work is fictional or strange. What are the moments in an essay, poem, or story that feel incontestable and abundantly true? What is the role of craft in creating this experience?

**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****Barrie Jean Borich & Brian Teare, *Pattern & Its Disruption—Repetition in Essays and Poems***

In this class we will explore poems and essays that employ repetition on the level of the word, typographical gesture, phrase, line, sentence, stanza, paragraph, and/or section. How do such repetitions create formal patterns as well as the opportunity for their disruption? How do braids of reoccurrence force associative surprise and foster unexpected juxtapositions of word and image? How does repetition deepen a line of inquiry until it becomes an excavation? How do refrain, variation, and return serve as homage to musical and devotional forms like song, blues, bebop, and prayer while also rearranging structures of knowledge and feeling? How does the insistence on a musical phrase become a devastation? [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

**UC 133****Oliver de la Paz, *The Ode and the Elegy***

We will be reading and writing poems that mourn and poems that celebrate and the rhetorical and stylistic qualities that encompass these subjects. Among the works we will be exploring will be poems by Ross Gay, Gary Jackson, Aracelis Girmay, Lo Kwa Mei En, and others. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**Scan Center****April Ayers Lawson, *How to Get Moving in Short Fiction***

Sometimes, even when we have interesting material for stories, we struggle to tell them because we don't know how to move them forward in a cohesive way inside of narrative space. In this class, we'll look at two famous stories that hang complex material on simple movements. In the first, by John Cheever, one character follows another who does not want to be followed and forces him to confrontation, and in the second, by Sherman Alexie, a protagonist operates under a 24-hour deadline by which he must earn enough money to purchase a stolen family heirloom now on sale at a pawnshop. We'll talk about motion for the sake of motion, and if there's time, do some exercises that create built-in forward motion. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**3:00-4:15 CLASSES:****Xavier 201****Kelli Russell Agodon, *The Poem Inside Poems: Techniques and Ideas for Revising Your Work***

You've written the poem, now what? In this two-part session, we will explore into our personal tastes as poets and take a fresh look at uncovering the poem inside the poem. Revision can often feel overwhelming, especially when you're feeling stuck. However, having a set of strategies and tools at your disposal can bring new energy into a poem that falls flat. We will discuss how to determine when a poem is truly finished (or if it ever is) and you will leave with several innovative—and maybe even surprising—ways to revise—or re-vision—your poem. Bring 3 one-page poems that you feel stuck on and need a little help. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**Scan Center****Renee Simms, *Fiction Fundamentals***

This course will go over the basics of creating compelling fiction by reading and discussing a number of stories and doing in-class exercises. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**UC 133****Justin St. Germain, *Nonfiction Fundamentals***

This class is designed to provide participants with an overview of fundamental elements of nonfiction craft. The first session will focus on craft elements nonfiction shares with fiction and poetry, such as narrative or lyric structures, setting, character, voice, point of view, and imagery. The second will focus more on aspects of craft distinct to nonfiction: use and acknowledgment of sources, approaches to factual truth, and structural considerations specific to truth-based stories. We will read

published examples to illustrate craft concepts, and expand on those through group discussion and writing exercises. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:**

UC 133

**Dallas Atlas, *Repetition & Trauma in Poetry***

In a form that puts weight on every word choice, a poet's decision to repeat a word or phrase is significant. Together we'll look at examples of repetition from John Murillo, Franny Choi, and Patricia Smith. We'll discuss how the choice to repeat, and the way each poet utilizes repetition, allows the poem to embody trauma and convey it to a reader in an impactful way. There will be an exercise to help generate a poem that hinges on repetition. The poems discussed will be focused on how repetition depicts trauma. If you need to leave the room or find another space to take care of yourself, please do.

UC 134

**Elissa Favero, *Beyond Description: Seeking the Self in Ekphrastic Nonfiction***

*Ekphrasis* comes from the Greek word for description, and an ekphrastic poem vividly describes a work of art. Beyond writing *about* visual art, ekphrastic poetry, as scholar W. J. T. Mitchell asserts, may also speak *to* or *for* a work of art, dramatizing a writer's experience of encounter or imaginatively inhabiting a work of art. What other possibilities are available to a writer working in conversation with visual art? In this presentation, I will map out the different modes of ekphrasis five contemporary writers—Patricia Hampl, Jericho Parms, Terry Tempest Williams, Celia Paul, and Tisa Bryant—have used to extend beyond description in book-length works of nonfiction. Combining essay, criticism, and memoir, each book shows a writer inquiring after not only a work or works of visual art but also after her own life or sensibility. The presentation will conclude with an exercise in which you try your own hand at ekphrastic writing in relation to the self. Note: If you can, please bring an image of a work of art you find meaningful in some way. Otherwise, you can choose from an assortment Elissa will provide.

CK

**6:15 DINNER**

Scan Center

**7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Geoffrey Davis, Sequoia Nagamatsu**

**SUNDAY, JULY 14**

**8:30 MORNING TALK:**

Xavier 201

**Rick Barot, *Lavish Syntax***

The problem at the heart of writing a poem is the problem of dramatization. That is, how do we dramatize in language—a very limited means—the dynamics of thought, sensation, mystery, knowledge, and unsayability that often comprise human experience? In this lecture, we'll examine the crucial importance of syntax in vitalizing a poem. We'll look at poems with powerful content and the syntactical correlatives the poets use in dramatizing that content.

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      **Borich/Teare, *Pattern & Its Disruption* [Session 2]**
- UC 133          **de la Paz, *The Ode and the Elegy* [Session 2]**
- Scan Center    **Lawson, *How to Get Moving* [Session 2]**

**3:00-4:15 CLASSES:**

- Xavier 201      **Agodon, *The Poem Inside Poems* [Session 2]**
- Scan Center    **Simms, *Fiction Fundamentals* [Session 2]**
- UC 133          **St. Germain, *Nonfiction Fundamentals* [Session 2]**

**4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:**

- UC 133          **F. Claire Hankenson, *Writing What You Don't Know: Crafting Death Scenes in Literature***  
 Whether sudden and swift or secondary to disease and disaster, the finality of death is confounded by the abstract and unimaginable. How can a physical being, warm to the touch and wholly animated—heart-beating, blood-flowing, breath-taking, laugh-making—simply vanish from existence? And, further, in the world-making of fiction writers, how do authors imaginatively construct the depiction of death on the page such that the reader is impacted emotionally by the fictional loss? Without a firsthand death experience, writers must create a credible and convincing experience when describing the final moments of a particular character's life to their readers. This session will evaluate the use of magical realism across a selection of contemporary literary pieces that transform the universality of death into fantastical realms. Through examples, session attendees will discuss craft techniques of time-twisting, transfiguration, and parallel realms that render the written experience of death both profound and plausible.
- UC 134          **Aleah Romer, *What's Time Got to Do with It?: An Exploration of Time in Fiction***  
 As anyone who has sat with a group of herbal enthusiasts in some party corner will no doubt have heard, Time is a construct. The fun thing about constructs in fiction is that they can be manipulated and put to use however we need them, and time is no different. In this interactive class, (through the use of worksheets and journaling exercises—don't worry introverts, I'm not making anyone do improv with me at 4:30 in the afternoon) we will explore three uses of time in fiction. First, time as an anchor—that is, the way that time as setting and scaffolding can subconsciously cue the reader. Second, time as memory, how nonlinear timelines can be used in fiction to enhance the narrative. Finally, I'm going to indulge my love of time-travel and make a case for why taking a character out of their own time can further enhance the character as a product of their own time. Exercises will be particularly helpful for those with a project already in mind (even if it's in that nebulous pre-drafting phase) but I will provide prompts for those who are not actively working on a project.
- UC Patio        **6:15 DINNER**
- Scan Center    **7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Wendy Call, torrin a. greathouse**
- The Cave       **AFTER HOURS: The Cave**

MONDAY, JULY 15

**8:30 MORNING TALK:**

**Xavier 201**

**Kelli Russell Agodon, April Lawson, Justin St. Germain, Matt Young, *Any Resemblance to Real Life Is Entirely Inevitable***

No matter the genre, most writers at some point run up against the problem of how to write about real people when those people might not love what you're writing about them — may even be against it. Whether it's drawing a thinly fictionalized "character" in a novel, or a known "real person" concealed only by altering the most obvious markers of identity in memoir, writing about someone you know can feel risky not only for legal reasons, but for emotional and spiritual ones. When whatever truth you're telling may expose wrongdoing or challenge those in power, you may find yourself risking your career, or even life. And even when someone gives you permission to write about them, you might struggle with writing about them in a way that's fair to both the individual and the larger narrative. In this panel, writers will share experiences of writing and publishing about real people, and share insights and lessons learned in the process.

**UC Rooms**

**10:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

**Various Rooms**

**10:00 THESIS MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES**

**Commons**

**12:00 LUNCH**

**1:30-2:45 CLASSES:**

**UC 133**

**torrin a. greathouse, *Flip It and Reverse It: Exploring the Anti-Form***

What does it mean to take a form and try to build its opposite? In this session, we will be looking at how poets, from K. Iver and Cameron Awkward-Rich to Benjamin Garcia and Danez Smith, subvert the logic of received forms to create something entirely new. We will discuss how these poems subvert their root forms, including the ode, elegy, aubade, ars poetica, and ekphrastic, as well as how to approach doing this work ourselves. Participants will then work on trying to engage with these traditional forms in reverse and see what this inversion opens up in their process. [Two Sessions; Exercises.]

**Xavier 201**

**Aram Mrjoian, *Developing Tension and Intrigue in Static Settings***

Prose frequently engages readers through movement in time and space, adventure and destination, yet I've noticed student short stories have a tendency to take place in routine locations with little physical movement (the coffeehouse, the bar, homes, etc.). In this class, we'll explore the idea of a "static setting" and how tension and suspense can be developed without characters getting on the road or undertaking a large transition in space. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**Scan Center**

**Scott Nadelson, *Narrative Distance and Intimacy***

In exchanges with mentees, the comment I make most frequently is probably something along the lines of, "can you bring us a little closer to the character here, immerse us in her experience?" But what does it really mean to be "far away" or "close" to our characters? In this class, we'll examine the nuances of narrative distance and the way we can inhabit characters' perceptions and thoughts in order to create more intimacy at the moments when it's most needed. We'll take a look at how distance and intimacy work in a story written in an omniscient third person point of view — Alice

Munro’s “Labor Day Dinner” —and in one written in a retrospective first-person—“Fieldwork” by Manuel Muñoz —and then experiment with distance and intimacy in scenes from our own stories. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**3:00-4:15 CLASSES:**

UC 133

**Wendy Call, (*Library*) *Research for Writers***

Whether it is an essay, novel, play or poem you are creating, at some point you will need to do some old-fashioned research. And whether it’s a new online database, 50-year-old book, 300-year-old manuscript, or 500-year-old map that you need, this workshop will help you find the resources that best inform your writing. Bring your research questions and, together, we will dig up the answers. This session will cover (1) what is available online through PLU’s library, (2) how to work in / with specialized collections, (3) how to get what you need from your own local library and archival resources, and (4) how to know when to *stop* researching and turn to writing. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

Xavier 201

**Geffrey Davis & Jenny Johnson, *Lost & Found Poetics: Writing Discovery***

This class is a study of poems that offer some compelling formal and philosophical arguments for losing control in our writing. To begin, in addition to pulling from our own shared experiences, we will ground our considerations in the concepts and suggestions from a selection of Rebecca Solnit’s *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. We will then apply our collective understanding to a packet of poems that aspire to being “at home in the unknown.” Specifically, we will look at ways to get lost via sound, image, and syntax. Participants will also be given some lost & found exercises to further explore the art of writing for discovery. [Two Sessions; Handout Reading Required.]

Scan Center

**Sequoia Nagamatsu, *World Building 101***

This generative session will explore the elements of fantastical world building in detail, providing small groups/pairs in the session time to discuss, create, and consider the obvious and less obvious stories inherent in their worlds. In session 1, elements of world building will be discussed while highlighting short stories that masterfully weave world with story and character. In session 2, students will create their own worlds and story seeds. [Two Sessions; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**4:30 GRAD PRESENTATIONS:**

UC 133

**Zach Powers, *Myth to Mortal: Character Archetypes for Deceased Relatives in Creative Nonfiction***

If a memoirist writes too lovingly about their late father does that suggest they may be hiding relevant truths from their reader? Is it somehow more literary or honorable to write about deceased grandmothers only in abstract parables? If a writer’s dead cousin gave them some clutch life advice in a dream may the writer quote the cousin verbatim or is it more ethical to paraphrase? As I’ve read more and more creative nonfiction about late family members, I’ve found that narrative flaws can snowball when writers are unclear with the reader, or perhaps unsure themselves, about the perspective, terms, and absolutism of their story and about the family member(s) they are writing about. To better understand this nuanced subject, I’ve developed four common archetypes for writing about deceased family members: myth, saint, transgressor, and mortal. These archetypes are not infallible or absolute, but they have helped crystalize my thinking on this topic. In this presentation, I will summarize each archetype using examples from some of my favorite books that I’ve read during my three years in RWW. I will invite discussion of these archetypes and invite attendees to consider how these character archetypes might be applied in their own nonfiction, poetry, and fiction storytelling.

UC 134

**scott winn, *From Conflict to Connection, From Plot to Proximity: Crafting Short Stories to Transform Dominant Narratives***

What makes a satisfying story? Are conflict driven plotlines that center individuals necessary and fundamental to fiction? We will look at the historical underpinnings of the dominance of these narrative forms and explore alternatives. Is it possible to engage readers not by building tension around what is going to happen, but rather, to keep them engaged with what is happening? We will explore the Japanese narrative form Kishotenketsu about which Ocean Vuong commented: “plot is forgone and conflict is forgone for proximity...when you give up plot what you gain is people.” We will also look at stories that center connection, not conflict, to drive dramatic tension and place individuals and communities within historical and place-based contexts. These examples will demonstrate that it is possible to alter craft expectations of the writer and what satisfies a reader. By crafting short stories to transform dominant narratives it is possible to widen what is possible in stories and therefore widen what is possible in the world.

CK

**6:15 DINNER**

Scan Center

**7:30 ALUMNI READINGS: Barrie Jean Borich, Jen Soriano, Matt Young**

<b><u>TUESDAY, JULY 16</u></b>
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**8:30 MORNING TALK:**

Xavier 201

**Jenny Johnson, *Expanding the Erotic***

In “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” Audre Lorde describes with care a memory of pinching a pellet of margarine in a plastic packet, and how when pinched and released the margarine would color the entire packet with a rich yellow. She says afterward, “I find the erotic such a kernel within myself.” In this talk, we will consider how to expand notions of the erotic through our uses of sensory language. Two aspects of craft that I will argue are crucial when exploring eros in prose and poetry are tension and attention. As I share literary work that arouses (a word that at its root means to be awake!), you’ll be invited to contemplate: What images are at the root of your eros? How might you write about sex or desire in ways that are more surprising, sensory, and life-affirming? How might you bring unexpected eros to writing that isn’t explicitly sexual at all?

UC Rooms

**10:00 PRIMARY-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

Various Rooms

**10:00 THESIS MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES****10:00 GRAD SESSION:**

Xavier 201

**Sequoia Nagamatsu & Justin St. Germain, *Agents and Navigating Small and Large Presses: The Publishing Journey as Self-Advocacy and Community Building***

While writers in workshop should be focused primarily on the task of writing and developing their craft, the question of publication or “what next?” is almost always not far from our minds regardless of where you are on the writing journey. This session will serve as an overview of what comes before, during, and after publication in both fiction and nonfiction. We’ll discuss important steps such as finding an agent, publishing short work in literary journals, and publishing books with small presses or larger publishers. Every writer’s journey is going to be different and not every piece of writing will have a linear path—this session will illuminate some of these nuances while also helping to make

sure that attendees have some baseline knowledge so that they might avoid easy missteps and pursue their journey with informed expectations.

**Commons**      **12:00 LUNCH**

**CK**      **12:00 COHORT 19 LUNCH**

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

**1:30-2:45 CLASSES:**

**UC 133**      ***greathouse, Flip It and Reverse It* [Session 2]**

**Xavier 201**      ***Mrjoian, Developing Tension* [Session 2]**

**Scan Center**      ***Nadelson, Narrative Distance* [Session 2]**

**3:00-4:15 CLASSES:**

**UC 133**      ***Call, (Library) Research* [Session 2]**

**Xavier 201**      ***Davis/Johnson, Lost & Found Poetics* [Session 2]**

**Scan Center**      ***Nagamatsu, World Building 101* [Session 2]**

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

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 17**

**UC Rooms**      **3:30-4:30 BUSINESS MEETINGS FOR 2ND YEAR & 3RD YEAR COHORT GROUPS**

**South Hall**      **5:00 FACULTY MEETING**

**CK**      **6:15 DINNER**

**Scan Center**      **7:30 CELEBRATING THE NEXT DRAFT: Jennifer Foerster, Brenda Miller, Renee Simms**

**Scan Center**      **8:30 BOOK-SIGNINGS & RECEPTION**

**THURSDAY, JULY 18**

**8:30 MORNING TALK:**

**Xavier 201**      ***Aram Mrjoian, Craft as a Spectrum***

The term “craft” has become a popular catchall for a wide range of writing techniques and formulas, often attached to the vague implication of literary quality and commercial appeal. Sometimes raised through axiomatic statements such as “show, don’t tell,” “earn your ending,” and other narrow



advice, traditional definitions of craft risk stripping away or overlooking the writer's central intentions and goals. Yet, if the value of craft is related to process (and practice), what does it mean for a writer to seek beyond communal workshop wisdom and rote solutions? What happens when we consider the elements of craft as a spectrum? In this lecture, we'll navigate creative decision-making through the lens of opportunity and range rather than one of polarized aesthetics.

UC Rooms

**10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

**10:00 GRAD SESSION:**

Xavier 201

**Wendy Call, *Your Post-Master's Writing Life Needs a Master Plan***

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

**10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:**

Scan Center

**Geffrey Davis, *The Pedagogy of Emotions***

To help measure the somewhat arbitrary progression of craft and creative skill, our rubrics for evaluating the performance of creative writing students can diminish if not elide the emotional voyage of their education. Indeed, despite axioms that present compelling payoffs for a literary curriculum—"Learn how language and story shape the world!" "Refine the art of asking the right questions!" "Become a listener on whom nothing is lost!"—the sites and rigors involved (which might include interrogating cultural stereotypes, confessing fraught family histories, admitting partial understandings, confronting the palatability of our own storytelling, so on and so forth) seem necessarily ripe for feelings of deep discomfort. Even the positivity of small breakthroughs (celebration!) and large breakthroughs (sublime!) come with challenging emotional realities. Because learning impacts the lives of students, how might teachers balance their commitments to safety with their obligations to challenge? How do we cultivate a robust and evolving ethics of pedagogical dis/comfort? As teachers, how can we model the emotional-intellectual complexity of engaging the limits of our own knowledge and practice? Let's talk about it!

Commons

**12:00 LUNCH**

CK

**12:00 GRADUATES & FACULTY LUNCH**

**1:30-4:00 CLASSES:**

Xavier 201

**Barrie Jean Borich, *Against Redemption: History and Practice of LGBTQ+ Essays and Hybrid Works***

What are the common elements of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary and genderqueer personal essay and essay hybrids? How might an author of LGBTQ+ themed essays help create worlds queer people want to live in? This session will examine the histories and contemporary forms of essays and essayistic hybrids created by LGBTQ+ authors in relation to: time and location; visibility and representation; activism and intersectionality; and reinvention of self and community. Queer essay forms share a distinct tradition as well as positions on a consistently shifting arc of

LGBTQ+ literary history, always moving toward what theorist José Esteban Muñoz described as queerness on the “horizon of being.” We will start with discussion of the essay itself as a queerish artistic form and then look at the ways form experimentation mimics queer anti-narrative experience of impression, thought, and actual living. [One Session; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**Scan Center**

**Jennifer Foerster & Brian Teare, *Ecopoems of Place***

This class offers place as a thematic entry into ecopoetics, contemporary poetry that reconsiders the relation between human and more-than-human beings in the global context of climate crisis. But why chose place as an entry point to our global situation? “Places are centers of felt value,” Yi-Fu Tuan writes in *Space and Place*, “where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation are satisfied.” In other words: the value of place is *felt* by all creatures connected by life on this Earth. But what are the meanings of place *beyond* the satisfaction of our biological needs? A place can be read and experienced by people in many ways—as watershed, geological formation, ecosystem, site of ancestral memory, site of agricultural or industrial activity, and as both harm and home at once. How might the many meanings of place be invited into our work as poets? Together, we will read and discuss contemporary ecopoems that organize themselves around the critically important, ever-changing ecological and cultural meanings of place. [One Session; Handout Reading Required.]

**UC 133**

**April Ayers Lawson, *Transcending Boundaries: A Study of The Possession by Annie Ernaux***

*The Possession* by Nobel Prize winner Annie Ernaux has been described as “a brief, intense first-person narrative that flares up like a lighted match in the space between memoir and fiction [...]” (Nancy Kline). Through Ernaux’s focus on writing about a state of being, she is able to leave out much of what would usually be included in a more traditional memoir or story, and able to write about the self in response to others while simultaneously leaving out much about those others. We’ll look at how she does this, at how the work spools tension and moves forward, and talk about the possibilities inherent in that liminal space between memoir and fiction. The book must be acquired and read in advance. [One Session; Advance Reading.]

**Admin 205**

**Brenda Miller, “*I Spy with My Little Eye...*”**

Remember playing “I Spy” on long car rides as a kid? In this class, we will return to our childlike, observant selves to rediscover the wealth of material surrounding us every moment. Based on a chapbook by Brenda Miller and Julie Marie Wade, this exercise will give you practice in observation, description, association, and collaboration. [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 GUEST READINGS: Marie Mutsuki Mockett, Stephanie Reents**

**Scan Center**

**SILENT AUCTION BEGINS, ENDS SATURDAY, JULY 20**

**FRIDAY, JULY 19**

**8:30 MORNING TALK:**

**Xavier 201**

**Brian Teare, *Notebook Poetics: The Notebook as Plot and Process***

"I want a literature," Bhanu Kapil writes in *Ban en Banelieu*, "not made from literature." Why would a writer want that? Because "in a literature," she writes, "what would happen to the girl?" For women writers and for the many others of us whose lives and concerns have been historically excluded from and/or violated by the definitions and institutions of literature, it has often been necessary to work adjacent to or outside conventional definitions of the "literary." From Heian Japan to the U.S. today, the notebook has been one such space. As the literal ground of writing, the notebook can be used as a kind of incubator for literature; as a private and informal space, it can also be used to resist the ideological demands of literary form. This lecture will attempt to define a notebook poetics both in terms of how the notebook shows up in fiction—as the driver of plot in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*—and in terms of how a notebook can be used as part of the writing process, offering poet and hybrid genre writer Bhanu Kapil a way to mine her own mind and life for language that resists full assimilation into literary conventions. Ultimately, for many writers the notebook affords a way to be private in public, turning Kapil's question on its head. In a girl, in her notebook, what happens to the literature?

**UC Rooms**

**10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

**10:00 GRAD SESSION:**

**Xavier 201**

**Aram Mrjoian & Scott Nadelson, *The Editor-Writer Relationship***

You never know what to expect working with an editor until you begin the process. Some editors are entirely hands-off; a few are overbearing; the best are collaborative and work closely with their writers to make every sentence sing. But how do you decide when to hold to your vision and when to compromise? How can you navigate the opacity of submitting to literary journals and small presses? And what questions should you ask yourself before agreeing to work with an editor? We'll discuss the intricacies and challenges of the editor-writer relationship from both sides and leave plenty of time for conversation and questions about working with editors and publishers.

**10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:**

**Scan Center**

**Justin St. Germain, *How to Teach Process***

Writing courses tend to focus on product: what the participants actually produce or write during the term. How we write, though—the actual writing process and its endless variations—is often left undiscussed, or reduced to platitudes about writing every day or honing one's craft. As a result, the writing process can often seem mystical, especially to writers early in their careers, who often think that established writers somehow work better, more efficiently, or both. In fact, the process varies wildly between writers. This session will discuss how we can incorporate process as an important part of a writing course, and why we might consider doing so.

**Commons**

**12:00 LUNCH**

**1:30-4:00 CLASSES:****Xavier 201****Wendy Call, *Somatic Writing***

Dancer and choreographer Martha Graham says, "Movement never lies." The body speaks and writing is one way to listen. This workshop will offer an introduction to the world of creative writing inspired by physical movement. We will review the basics of "somatic therapy," which informs the practice of somatic writing. This will be a full-body workshop, trying out some somatic therapy practices. Both your body of work and your physical body will thank you. Note: All our practices will be modified to be accessible to all types of mobility. [One Session; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**Admin 205****Oliver de la Paz, *Prose Hybrids—Periods, Sentences, and Lyric Syntax***

In this class, we'll attempt to understand what is meant by the terms "Lyric Essay," "Flash Fiction," and "Prose Poem." Often, people suggest that writing in these shorter prose forms is liberating, but what exactly does that mean? Does the lack of line breaks serve a purpose or is it arbitrary for some prose poems? Does the shortness put a strain on the possibility of a narrative? Can a subject be fully explored in such short bursts? What is gained or lost with the addition of line breaks? These are some of the aesthetic ideas we will grapple with during this course as we read practitioners of the form as well as write in the "form" ourselves. [One Session; Exercises; Handout Reading Required.]

**UC 133****Miranda Morgan, *Fundamentals of Screenwriting***

Visual in approach, dramatic in nature, and only one element in a much larger artistic process, a well-crafted screenplay conveys narrative and thematic meaning through action, character, structure, and dialogue. This workshop will serve as a jumping-off point for your cinematic projects, encouraging you to think and write specifically for the screen. You will be introduced to the fundamentals of screenwriting such as basic screenplay format, the creation of multidimensional and transformational characters, and the three-act structure. Students of all forms of creative writing—fiction, nonfiction, and poetry—may find the new approach both challenging and illuminating. In fact, the principles, practices, and techniques of screenwriting can greatly enrich prose writing. Emphasizing imagery and behavior over internal emotional and psychological descriptions can inspire more rooted and dynamic character development. Writing for the screen demands the transformation of abstract ideas into concrete stories, scenes, and characters, providing a visceral immediacy that has the potential to enhance work across genres. [One Session; Handout Reading Required.]

**Scan Center****Marjorie Sandor, *Getting Away with Murder: What Very Old Irish and Scots Ballads Offer the Contemporary Fiction Writer***

Ballads—long songs with twisty plots and shifting points of view—have a surprising flexibility in both structure and voice; might they have something to teach the contemporary short-fiction and novella writer? In this course, we'll read/listen to a small selection of Irish and Scottish ballads: a night-visit by a dead lover, a murder ballad, a tale of desire, betrayal, and regret—and then we will play in the mud. What mad liberties might be taken by stealing from these old forms? We'll experiment with channeling the oral storyteller, and play with a flexible point of view, the creation of atmosphere and setting. We'll imitate ballad-form narrative transitions and observe/brainstorm variants of these old plot-twist endings and spooky suspensions. Prepare for ghosts. [One Session; Handout Reading Required.]

**4:00-6:00 MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED****CK****6:15 DINNER**

Scan Center **7:30 GUEST READINGS: Michael Dumanis, Salvatore Scibona**

The Cave **AFTER HOURS: The Cave**

**SATURDAY, JULY 20**

**8:30 MORNING TALK:**

Xavier 201

**Scott Nadelson, *The Vulnerability of Bliss***

Since happy families are all alike, according to Tolstoy, our stories, essays, and poems shouldn't spend much time with them, right? Charles Baxter similarly tells us that while "hell is story-friendly, heaven isn't a story," so we shouldn't bother with paradise, either. Both of them point to conflict as the essential element of narrative, and while I don't necessarily disagree, I also believe our work shouldn't dismiss or ignore happiness or paradise too quickly. In fact, glimpses of possible perfection, of characters' ideal lives, are what often set high stakes in our stories, make us understand just what the characters have to gain or lose. In this talk, we'll examine moments of bliss in a range of post-War American narratives—when ideas of achieving the perfect life pervaded the culture—and consider how allowing glimpses of happiness can provide the writer with a means to probe a character's most tender and vulnerable inner-spaces, with examples from Terrence Malick, Elizabeth Spencer, James Baldwin, Stanley Kunitz, Laurie Colwin, and others.

UC Rooms

**10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

**10:00 GRAD SESSION:**

Xavier 201

**Kelli Russell Agodon & Jennifer Foerster, *Impossible Choreography: Living as a Poet or Writer in the World***

Navigating the dance between your poetic life and your professional life, your creative pursuits and everyday realities, can often feel like mastering an impossible choreography. This session is designed to explore ways of reentering the world post-graduate school and crafting a life outside the traditional academic paths. As poets who have carved out diverse roles beyond academia, we invite you to embrace the ambiguity and uncertainty that come with such journeys. While we don't claim to have all the answers, we are eager to engage with your thoughts, address doubts, and focus on the wonder of this new phase in your life. Together, we will explore how our roles, passions, and identities as writers can be realized in both professional spheres and personal endeavors.

**10:00 PEDAGOGY SESSION:**

Scan Center

**Matt Young, *Designing the Creative Writing Curriculum: Crafting Meaningful Learning Experiences***

In this session we'll talk about how to craft a creative writing curriculum that is both engaging and effective. This session will dive into the critical components of curriculum development, including the formulation of clear learning outcomes, the careful selection of readings that inspire and challenge, the design of assignments that stimulate creativity and foster development, and the implementation of effective assessments. Participants could learn how to integrate these elements into a cohesive curriculum that supports students' growth as writers and thinkers.

Commons

**12:00 LUNCH**

CK

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

**1:30-4:00 THE ART OF THE BOOK:****Xavier 201****[F] *The Sentence*, Louise Erdrich**

Erdrich is a fearless, multi-genre writer whose first novel, *Love Medicine*, was published in 1984. About her work, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington writes, “Throughout a remarkable string of virtuosic novels, Louise Erdrich has portrayed her fellow Native Americans as no contemporary American novelist ever has...connecting a dreamworld of Ojibwe legend to stark realities of the modern-day.” In *The Sentence*, published in 2021, Erdrich makes several choices that we will closely explore in this class. First, she writes a character who feels plucked from a distinct world; one who captures our imagination with actions and an interior life we are willing to follow for 381 pages. Second, she features a high concept that moves the story at a good pace and appeals to readers of fiction across a variety of genres. And, the novel explores intellectual ideas about books, language, and colonial history—themes that appeal to a literary reader. What might we learn about storytelling from the choices Erdrich makes in this book? [Renee Simms]

**UC 134****[F] *Life and Death of Harriett Frean*, May Sinclair**

May Sinclair was one of the most popular and highly esteemed English writers of the early 20th-Century; her more than two dozen novels bridge the Victorian sensibility of George Eliot and the modernism of Virginia Woolf. She was also an important critic, the first to apply the term stream-of-consciousness—coined by the philosopher William James—to literature. Now only one of her many books remains in print, the novella *Life and Death of Harriett Frean*, which was rediscovered in the 1980s by the feminist press Virago and later reissued by the Modern Library with an introduction by Francine Prose, who calls the book “one of the more disturbing novels I have read or can imagine.” In fewer than a hundred pages, Sinclair accomplishes what most writers can’t pull off in four times that number, revealing the small moments, decisions, and failures that lead her titular character from a childhood full of promise to old age consumed by disappointment and regret. A miniature masterpiece and a model of understatement, the novella explores the costs of a life not fully lived, or lived only in the service of pleasing others. In this session, we’ll discuss the possibilities of the novella form, along with questions of selection, compression, and the handling of time. We’ll also talk about how Sinclair uses dialogue, perception, and thought to create and explore complex characters. [Scott Nadelson & Marjorie Sandor]

**UC 213****[NF] *Aftershocks*, Nadia Owusu**

Nadia Owusu’s seismic debut memoir, *Aftershocks*, uses earthquakes as a structural and thematic core. In this class, we’ll explore the plate tectonics of Owusu’s chapter structure and organization, with a particular focus on the author’s ability to anchor, shuffle, and unsettle time. Additionally, we’ll discuss how point of view, narrative distance, and memory further complicate the memoir’s elegant shifts. On the line level, we will examine how Owusu’s syntactic constructions and diction develop the memoir’s central motifs. [Aram Mrjoian]

**Scan Center****[NF] *Dark Days: Fugitive Essays*, Roger Reeves**

In the opening essay of *Dark Days*, poet Roger Reeves’ first prose collection, the author writes “...I am staring at what we have become in our dark days, in this fire. I am listening to our silence....The peace we fight and search for begins and ends with being still.” Within this stillness Reeves’s essays merge ekphrastic, memoiristic, theoretical, and historical attentions on the era we are surviving, with dogged and lyrical rumination on art, time, protest, freedom, and ecstasy. The frameworks of an essayist and a poet will guide this discussion as we collaborate on reading and writing from transformational silence while living in the noisy intersections of language, memory, and history. [Barrie Jean Borich & Geoffrey Davis]

Admin 205

**[P] *Modern Poetry*, Diane Seuss**

In her new collection *Modern Poetry*, Diane Seuss guides us through a seminar that goes beyond a mere poetic survey, escorted by John Keats with the ballad form at her side. This fiery engagement with our poetic legacy from Romantic and Modernist lyric poets—from Keats and Hopkins to Stevens and Plath, the latter whom Seuss regards as “the final modern poet”—challenges idealized notions of beauty and sublimity through forty-one poems. With sharp humor and self-scrutiny, Seuss presents a gritty reality where class, region, race, and gender are embraced rather than transcended. The collection not only interrogates our era’s isolation and divisiveness but also probes the potential of poetry today. Our discussions will question: *What can poetry mean today? Can poems still captivate and inspire?* Additionally, we will examine how Seuss navigates the complex interplay between personal history and identity, demonstrating once again how her personal experiences continue to inform her poetry. The class will also include a Zoom salon and Q&A with Diane Seuss herself. [Kelli Russell Agodon & Jenny Johnson]

UC 133

**[P] *Crush*, Richard Siken**

Now approaching its 20th anniversary, *Crush* is one of the most iconic works of contemporary queer poetry. Equal parts confessional and surrealist, this collection’s formally and lyrically explosive poems explore themes of desire, obsession, and violence, propelled by Siken’s singular poetic voice. In this session we would explore the more idiosyncratic elements of Siken’s work, including his use of complex points-of-view, simple but evocative imagery, and expansive use of the page. [torrin a. greathouse]

**4:00-5:00 MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED**

Xavier 201

**5:00 GRAD READINGS: Dallas Atlas, Claire Hankenson, Winston Lin, Andrea Pierceall, Zach Powers, Will Trembley**

CK

**6:15 DINNER**

Scan Center

**7:30 FACULTY READINGS: Rick Barot, Stan Rubin, Marjorie Sandor**

Scan Center

**SILENT AUCTION ENDS AT 8:30PM**

<b><u>SUNDAY, JULY 21</u></b>
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**8:30 MORNING TALK:**

Xavier 201

**Barrie Jean Borich, Wendy Call, Oliver de la Paz, Sequoia Nagamatsu, *Plate Half Full***

This panel will look at the writing life, publishing, and professional development from a writing practice and community development perspective. While there are many panels at conferences that might interrogate the “how to” aspect of publishing, few pay attention to how publishing influences craft, writing practices, and your identity as writer. How does one navigate the public face of writing and publishing vs. the necessity of privacy at the keyboard? How does publishing influence how you write and perhaps even what you write? And how does community development and being a good literary citizen factor into your writing and writing life? And should you always say yes?

UC Rooms

**10:00 MIXED-GENRE WORKSHOPS**

**10:00 GRAD SESSION:****Xavier 201****Geffrey Davis, *Buoy 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****Jennifer Foerster, *Inviting Deep Listening into the Classroom***

In this session we will explore the various meanings and practices of "Deep Listening" and then how you might incorporate these practices into your pedagogy and also into your lives as writers. We will engage in listening exercises and techniques and also discuss methods of encouraging listening among students in a range of classroom or writing-learning settings, including informal writing groups and community workshops. The Deep Listening I am talking about here is beyond just listening to one another in a shared learning space; it is about teaching your students how listening in/ to/ with/ and through their lives as writers can deepen their creative work.

**CK****12:00 GRADUATION LUNCH****1:00-3:00 MENTORSHIP MEETINGS AS NEEDED****Scan Center****4:00 GRAD READINGS: Elissa Favero, Aleah Romer, scott winn****Scan Center****4:40 GRADUATION CEREMONY & RECEPTION**

<b><u>MONDAY, JULY 22: DEPARTURE DAY</u></b>
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