

Workshop Descriptions

Novel as Discovery

Presenter: Jac Jemc

Think you need a solid outline before you take on the task of writing a novel? In this workshop, we'll explore alternative methods of generating material and sussing out narrative. Follow the tangents! Explore your characters! Find the intersection of multiple storylines! Let the language lead you! By freeing yourself from your own preconceptions of how to sustain a story for the length of a novel, you'll be able to more quickly and organically reach the goal of a solid first draft.

Time is on Your Side: Structuring Your Book-Length Memoir

Presenter: Kelly Daniels

You've got a great story, but where to start? Where to end? What to put in the middle? The art of memoir is the art of choosing, arranging, amplifying, summarizing, and cutting... in short, it's the art of manipulating time. In this workshop, we will practice basic strategies for structuring your memoir. The courses will consist of discussion and writing exercises. In these exercises, we will:

- Evaluate your real-life material to decide whether any given moment should be presented as a vivid scene, a passage of narrative summary, or be cut entirely.
- Dissect time and reorder it. We may start in media-res, or start at the end. We may tell the story backwards, forward, chronologically, thematically, or in shattered fragments.
- Practice pacing: from hurtling at light speed to slowing to the speed of a slug. Some stories encompass generations; others take place in a single day. If you don't learn to master time, time will master your book.

Come to the workshop with a story idea, an entire draft, or something in between. Leave with a detailed outline for how to write or rewrite your story, from beginning to end.

The Art of the Confessional Poem: Come On, Baby, Make It Hurt So Good

Presenter: Adam Fell

Works of art that shape us, that forever alter our bodies and minds, that force us into closely examining the depths of our own souls and existences on earth, are both extremely rare and one of the most transcendent forms of human communication. Our bodies know when a work of art speaks to us before our minds know why or our mouths can form the words to explain. In this poetry workshop, we will try to find the words to dissect and discuss several poems where the author is clearly attempting to exorcise the demons that have come to roost inside them. We will discuss form, content, biography, and the poetic and musical tools the poets use to translate these vast, amazing emotions into language (an impossible task we somehow so often pull off). We will read work by Sylvia Plath, James Wright, Etheridge Knight, Guillaume Apollinaire, Mina Loy, Yusef Komunyakaa, and more. We'll also dive head first into some confessional writing of our own, working our way through writing exercises meant to nudge us into writing about the feelings and experiences that mean the most to us.

The Ecstatic Essay

Presenter: Rachel Yoder

In 1999 Austrian documentarian and essayist Werner Herzog outlined his aesthetic philosophy in a document called The Minnesota Declaration. In the twelve points of this declaration, he renounced Cinema Verite—a style of documentary filmmaking characterized by its so-called “objective,” observational truth—by stating that “it reaches a merely superficial truth, the truth of accountants.” He defines his own work and aesthetic by explaining “...there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization.” In this three-day course, we'll examine essays that invoke, dream, revel, pray, sing, and babble in service to this Herzogian notion of “ecstatic truth.” In these ecstatic essays by authors such as Annie Dillard, Walt Whitman, Mary Ruefle, Samuel Beckett, Marguerite Duras, and Antonin Artaud we'll parse how each author uses fabrication, imagination, and stylization—among other techniques and approaches—to communicate real experience, telegraph emotional states of being, and begin to explore truths that are largely unspeakable. In this class we'll read, and write, and try, and share, and fail, and try again. Writing exercises may involve anything and everything, including but not limited to visits from psychics, feats of strength, alchemic experimentation, and years of silent meditation. How can we possibly write this insane, gorgeous, transcendent experience we call life? The gauntlet is hereby thrown down.

Flash Fiction: A Liminal Genre

Presenter: Chad Simpson

While it might be argued that flash fiction is merely a story told briefly, in fewer than 750 or 1000 words, the more I read and write in this genre, the more I've come to believe it navigates its own terrain, located somewhere between poetry and fiction. In this workshop, we will read flash fictions and attempt to ascertain which elements of story the pieces contain, and which ones are absent. In doing so, we will begin to answer questions relevant to what makes a story a story, a flash a flash. Participants will also be given prompts to write their own flash fictions, which they will share with the group.



Book Pitches

Steve Semken (Friday, June 27)

Steve is looking for “writing that better explains how we can best live in the Midwest. I have no preference for genre. I'm not looking for fantasy, or science-fiction.”

Jen Karsbaek (Saturday, June 28)

Jen is interested in women's fiction, upmarket commercial fiction, historical fiction, and literary fiction. She looks for books with particularly well-developed characters and strong authorial voice. In historical in particular she is interested in books that bring the setting to life and maintain balance between historical accuracy and strong plot choices. She is also interested in mystery, fantasy, and occasionally romance approaches to any of the genres listed above. She is not looking for YA or anything that is primarily fantasy, romance, or science fiction.

Conference Faculty

Kelly Daniels

Author and teacher Kelly Daniels was raised on the road by free-spirited parents, living for a stint in a commune in Hawaii, and later in a converted step van, in which he and his family roamed the coasts, mountains and deserts of California. When he was old enough, he set off on his own, traveling extensively in Europe, Mexico and Central America. Along the way, he picked up odd jobs when he could find them, jobs such as production manager of a furniture factory (Guatemala), newspaper reporter (Mexico), and bartender (all over).

His short fiction and nonfiction has appeared in such literary journals as *Puerto del Sol*, *Cimarron Review*, *Third Coast*, *Fifth Wednesday*, *Sonora Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Santa Clara Review*, *GSU Review*, *Orange Coast Review*, *Eyeshot* and other journals. His many awards include first prize for Personal Essay at the Agnes Scott College Writers Conference (judged by John Updike), and a two-month fellowship at the MacDowell Colony. In 2012, he won the Creative Nonfiction contest at the San Miguel de Allende Writers Conference, for what turned out to be the opening chapter of his debut memoir, *Cloudbreak, California*, published in 2013 by Owl Canyon Press. As associate professor of literature and creative writing at Augustana College, he holds a BA from San Francisco State University, an MFA from Georgia State University, and a PhD from Western Michigan University. He lives in Rock Island, Illinois with his wife and young son.



Adam Fell

Adam Fell is the author of *Dear Corporation*, (H_NGM_N Books 2014) and *I Am Not A Pioneer* (H_NGM_N Books 2011), which won the 2011 Posner Poetry Book Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers. He lives in Madison, WI, where he teaches at Edgewood College and co-curates the Monsters of Poetry.



Jac Jemc

Jac Jemc's novel, *My Only Wife* was a finalist for the 2013 PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize and winner of the Paula Anderson Book Award. Her collection of stories, *A Different Bed Every Time*, is due out from Dzanc in October 2014. She's the poetry editor for *decomP* and web fiction editor for *Hobart*.



Chad Simpson

Chad Simpson is the author of *Tell Everyone I Said Hi*, which won the 2012 John Simmons Short Fiction Award and was published by the University of Iowa Press. His work has appeared in many print and online publications, including *McSweeney's Quarterly*, *Esquire*, *American Short Fiction*, and *The Sun*, and he has received awards from the Illinois Arts Council, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and the Sewanee Writers' Conference. He lives in Monmouth, Illinois, and is an Associate Professor of English at Knox College.



Rebecca Wee

Friday Lunch Keynote Speaker

Rebecca Wee lives in Davenport, Iowa, with her daughter and son, and teaches writing across the river at Augustana College, where she has been a member of the English department since 1994. Her first book, *Uncertain Grace*, won the Hayden Carruth Award for New and Emerging Poets in 2000 and was published in 2001 by Copper Canyon Press.

Wee was awarded a Witter Bynner Fellowship in 2002 from the Library of Congress, and served as the second poet laureate of the Quad Cities from 2003-2005. Her second book, *Instead*, is nearly finished.



Rachel Yoder

Rachel Yoder is a founding editor of *draft: the journal of process* which publishes first and final drafts of short stories, essays, and poetry along with author interviews about the creative process (draftjournal.com). She holds an MFA in Fiction from the University of Arizona and an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from the University of Iowa where she was an Iowa Arts Fellow. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review Online*, *The Kenyon Review Online*, and *The Sun Magazine* in addition to many other print and online publications. She was awarded the 2013 Editors' Prize in Fiction from *The Missouri Review* and has also received notable distinction in *Best American Short Stories* and *Best American Nonrequired Reading*. Her work has most recently been anthologized in *Writing That Risks: New Work from Beyond the Mainstream* (Red Bridge Press) and *YOU: An Anthology of Essays Devoted to the Second Person* (Welcome Table Press). She's taught creative writing at the University of Arizona, Prescott College, the University of Iowa, the Lifetime Enrichment Adult Program at the University of Iowa, and currently teaches writing classes in the Iowa City community. More info at racheljyoder.com.



Steve Semken

Steve Semken founded the Ice Cube Press twenty-one years ago as a way to use the literary arts to learn about how to best live in the Midwest. Over the last two decades he has helped publish nearly one hundred books. He is often asked to speak to writing groups throughout the Midwest on issues of creativity, entrepreneurship, writing, and publishing.



Jen Karsbaek

Jen Karsbaek joined first Larsen Pomada Literary Agency, then Foreword Literary Agency in 2013, but has been immersed in the book world since 2008, when she founded the influential blog *Devourer of Books*. In addition to book reviews, during her time blogging Jen has hosted a literary podcast, an online book club, and a popular annual event celebrating audiobooks. Jen is also a freelance writer and reviewer.

