



Inspiring Craft, Creativity & Community

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2022-23 WORKSHOPS

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October 13, 2022	<u>Vu Tran - What Movies Can Teach Us As Writers</u>
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September, 2022	<u>Fred Shafer - The Paragraph in Fiction Writing 4 Sessions</u>

September 8, 15, 22, 29, 2022

Fred Shafer - The Paragraph in Fiction Writing



An important unit in fiction writing that is often overlooked and taken for granted is the paragraph. When readers notice the paragraphing in a short story or novel, they may feel that it represents casual choices, quick touches of the return key made while the writer was dealing with other issues. Most fiction writers, however, regard the paragraph as a key source of form, movement, depth, and discovery, and they organize their days around building and shaping paragraphs. Using examples from contemporary short stories and novels, he'll look at various writers' preferences as to the length and structure of paragraphs, depending on their sense of the pace, tone, and identity of their work. He'll show methods of arranging sentences to carry out the purposes of paragraphs, as well as the changes in strategy that may become necessary in any story or chapter.

🕒 When October 06, 2022

Rebecca Makkai - Interiority Complex



The great advantage of prose (over theater, film, and life) is that we're privy to characters' interior states. But how can a writer get thoughts and emotions across, other than by stating them flat-out or by updating us constantly on breathing and heart rate?

We'll explore ways to use tangent, gesture, backstory, action, association, and more to give characters a rich internal life without resorting to the old cardiopulmonary check-in. Rebecca Makkai's last novel, *The Great Believers*, was a finalist for both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award; it was the winner of the ALA Carnegie Medal, the Stonewall Book Award, the Clark Prize, and the LA Times Book Prize; and it was one of the New York Times Ten Best Books of 2018.

🕒 When October 13, 2022

Vu Tran - What Movies Can Teach Us As Writers



For better or for worse, movies affect the way we read and write fiction. As writers—whether we approach our work with a cinematographer's eye and a screenwriter's heart or we rarely watch movies and have no desire to see our work adapted for the screen—the language of cinema has already spent over a century seeping into the ways we tell stories on the page. And while a lot can be said about how it has degraded the art of fiction, we should also consider how it has enhanced and expanded the art.

What cinematic impulses do we knowingly and unknowingly bring to our work, and how might we learn from and take advantage of those impulses, the bad as well as the good ones? In this talk, we'll discuss these questions as we also ask the most important one of all: *What can literature do that cinema cannot?*

Vu Tran's first novel, *Dragonfish*, was a New York Times Notable Book and a San Francisco Chronicle Best Books of the Year. His writing has also appeared in the *O. Henry Prize Stories*, *Best American Mystery*, the *Best American Mystery Stories*, *Ploughshares*, and *Virginia Quarterly*. He is the winner of a *Whiting Award* and an *NEA Fellowship*, and has also been a fellow at *Bread Loaf*, *Sewanee*, *Yaddo*, and *MacDowell*. Born in Vietnam and raised in Oklahoma, Vu received his MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and his PhD from the Black Mountain Institute in Las Vegas. He teaches at the University of Chicago, where he is an Associate Professor of Practice in English and Creative Writing.

🕒 When October 20, 2022



Matt Bird - The Secrets of Character

Matt Bird returns to share new tips from his book *The Secrets of Character*, covering things he didn't cover in his last appearance. Learn more tricks to get your reader to believe in the reality of your hero, care about the circumstances of your hero and invest their hopes in your hero to succeed, all in the first ten pages.

Matt Bird lives in Evanston with his wife (the author Betsy Bird) and two adorable children. He is the author of the bestselling writing guide *The Secrets of Story: Innovative Tools for Perfecting Your Fiction and Captivating Readers*, and the brand-new *The Secrets of Character: Writing a Hero Anyone Will Love*.

🕒 When October 27, 2022



Peter Orner - Indelible

Why do certain moments in fiction stick with us for years while others we almost forget the moment we finish reading the sentence? It's a question that has preoccupied Orner for his entire writing life and in this talk Orner will discuss what has stayed with him from works by William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, Eudora Welty, Henry Green, Juan Rulfo, Saul Bellow, Penelope Fitzgerald, John Edgar Wideman, Bette Howland, and others to explore how such indelible moments are created -- and why they seem to stick. Of course, this is personal to the reader but one thing Orner has noticed over the years is that, for him, indelible moments aren't always ones that have a great deal of action -- sometimes it is fiction's quiet detonations that have the most lasting and memorable impact.

LIVE AT WINNETKA COMMUNITY HOUSE: The Book Stall is partnering with OCWW to deliver preordered copies of Orner's new release *Still No Word From You: Notes in the Margin* Have your book personally inscribed after the craft talk.

🕒 When November 03, 2022



Penny Sansevieri - Secrets of a Bestselling Amazon Book

Is your book on Amazon not selling? Your Amazon book page may be the cause. More and more Amazon book page conversion is a big issue, and it can also impact your Amazon relevancy score. What's a "relevancy score"? This class will unpack that as well!

It's one thing to have your book up on Amazon, it's quite another to have a book page that actually sells your book. This session will go over tips and insider information on turning your Amazon book page into a sales machine!

Penny C. Sansevieri, Founder and CEO of Author Marketing Experts, Inc., is bestselling author and internationally recognized book marketing and media relations expert. She is an Adjunct Professor teaching Self-Publishing for NYU. She was named one of the top influencers of 2019 by New York Metropolitan Magazine.

🕒 When November 10, 2022



Goldie Goldbloom - The Roles of Love and Pity in Opening a Story

Writers want their readers to read their work. Readers want to be captivated from the opening sentences. What specific ways of portraying a protagonist make these twin goals possible?

Love seems obvious. Love the character, read the book. But pity? Characters as diverse as Olive Kitteridge, Ma (in *Room*), Winnie the Pooh, Harry Potter, Lennie Small, Frodo Baggins, Jane Eyre, and Katniss Everdeen are all initially presented as pitiable. Why are we drawn to underdog characters? How can we write them realistically and compassionately?

Goldie Goldbloom is an Australian writer living in Chicago with her eight children. Her latest novel is *On Division*, which was launched on September 17, 2019 from Farrar Straus and Giroux.

🕒 When November 17, 2022~



Kate Hannigan - So You've Got an Idea for a Kids' Book, Now What? Getting your middle-grade novel out of your head and onto the page

Join Chicago children's author Kate Hannigan as she talks about understanding the middle-grade genre, how to get started on your project, and how to finish your novel for young readers. We'll put pencil to paper and try out different writing styles and voices.

Chicago author **Kate Hannigan** writes fiction and non fiction for young readers. Her latest middle-grade novels are the three-book historical fantasy series *Cape, Mask, and Boots* (Simon & Schuster) that weave superheroes with real-life heroes from WWII.

Her historical mystery *The Detective's Assistant* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers) features the Pinkerton Detective Agency and America's first woman detective. It won the Golden Kite Award and was optioned for film. Visit her online at KateHannigan.co.

🕒 When December 01, 2022



Christina Clancy - Unputdownable! How to create and sustain momentum throughout your story, essay or novel

We cobble together our manuscripts all by ourselves, one sentence and scene at a time. In the process of creating characters and establishing setting, we can sometimes forget the most basic truth: that we are telling a story. How do you grab a reader's attention and hold it through the messy middle and all the way to the gratifying end? In this session, we'll talk about planting seeds, raising narrative stakes, and maintaining focus on what matters most as you up your readers in the fever dream we've created.

Christina Clancy's debut novel, *The Second Home*, was released June 2 by St. Martin's Press. Her work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, in *The Sun Magazine*, and elsewhere. She has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and lives in Madison, Wisconsin. Her second novel, *Shoulder Season*, was published summer 2021.

When December 15, 2022



Amy Butcher - The Single-Scene Narrative Essay: Standalone Powerhouse or Book-length Framework

Single-scene stories, according to Margaret Bishop in her fantastic anthology *Single Scene Short Stories*, are short literary works that take place in only one physical scene, one geographical coordinate, and/or one window of time; the resulting prose is remarkably tight, trim, and urgent, as the full thrust and momentum of the work—and the resulting emotional resonance—must be achieved without transporting the reader from one place to another and with very little voice-over summary or exposition.

Amy Butcher is an award-winning essayist and author of *Mothertrucker*, (Little A, 2021), a book that interrogates the realities of female fear, abusive relationships, and America's quiet epidemic of intimate partner violence set against the geography of remote northern Alaska. The book earned critical praise from *Publisher's Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Good Morning America*, *CBS News*, *The Chicago Review of Books*, *The Oxford Review of Books*, *Booklist* and others.

When January 05, 2023



Taylor Byas - Making Room for Mess and Magic

Using the prose poem as a formal foundation, this workshop will explore how removing the lyric “I” from the poem can shift the poetic landscape. We will participate in two generative writing exercises, which are designed to help students step out of their comfort zone/writing tics and to lean into strangeness, magic, and the illogical. In the words of Gabrielle Bates, we're shooting for “a larger aperture—more light.”

Taylor Byas is a Black poet and essayist.

Originally from Chicago, she moved to Alabama for six years, where she received both her Bachelor's degree in English and her Master's degree in English (Creative Writing concentration) from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Taylor currently lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she is a third year PhD student and Albert C. Yates Scholar at the University of Cincinnati studying poetry. She is also an Assistant Features Editor for *The Rumpus*.

She has received five Pushcart and six Best of the Net nominations and has won a Best Micro Fiction Award.

Steve Almond - A Wrinkle in Time: How to Embrace Your Chronology and Tell the Story Straight

When January 12, 2023



One of the central struggles in storytelling is that human beings are, in essence, time travelers. We live in the past of our memories and the future of our hopes. Thus, when we tell stories, we often shuttle around in time. This can be exciting, but often it winds up confusing the reader, and (in his case) the writer. In this seminar, we'll unravel the mysteries of chronology by examining the work of Meg Wolitzer, Natasha Trethewey, Cheryl Strayed, and others. And help writers figure out how to tell their story in a way that thrills their readers.

Steve Almond is the author of a dozen books, including the *New York Times* Bestsellers *Candyfreak* and *Against Football*. His new novel, *All the Secrets of the World*, has been optioned for television by 20th Century Fox. He's the recipient of an NEA grant for 2022 and teaches at Harvard and Wesleyan. His stories and essays have been published in venues ranging from the *Best American Short Stories* and the *Best American Mysteries* to the *New York Times Magazine*. He lives outside Boston with his wife, his three children.

When January 19, 2023



Robert Anthony Siegel - Exploring the Power of the Image through Haiku

One of the key elements in successful prose, fiction, or non fiction, is imagery—the word-pictures that directly transmit what the writer sees. But while writing students get a lot of help with things like plot and structure, imagery often goes unmentioned, in part because it is so hard to talk about how to make better images. Therein lies the value of haiku for prose writers. The short, imagistic form of poetry imported from Japan offers a clear (and very fun) way to practice making images. In this craft talk, we will read and write haiku together, using the experience to deepen our understanding of what imagery can do in our own writing.

Robert Anthony Siegel studied Japanese literature at Harvard and the University of Tokyo. He is the author of a memoir, *Criminals*, and two novels, *All the Money in the World* and *All Will Be Revealed*. His short work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Smithsonian*, *The Paris Review*, *The Oxford American*, *Tin House*, and *Ploughshares*, among other magazines. He's been a Fulbright Scholar in Taiwan, and Mombukagakusho Fellow.

When January 26, 2023



Hollie Smurthwaite- The Art of Brainstorming

An inspired writer is an unstuck writer. Hollie will share strategies for digging deeper to spark creation and lead to a richer, more unique story. In this lecture, Hollie will delve into many facets of brainstorming. Author/writer issues, plotting, character, and craft. There will be exercises throughout to apply brainstorming to your own work, and we'll use attendee examples to explore some techniques further.

Hollie Smurthwaite is the paranormal romantic suspense author of *The Color of Trauma* and *The Color of Betrayal*. She lives in Chicago with her husband, son, and too few pets. She is active in the writing community as a member of Off-Campus Writers' Workshop, Sisters in Crime, Romance Writers of America, Alliance of Independent Authors, Chicago Writers Association, and a co-organizer for Just Write Chicago, a Meetup group.

When February 02, 2023



Charles Baxter - We Were Strangers

There's a particular problem that writers encounter when they begin stories or novels that concern a family, a relationship, or an organization with a long history. As readers, we always enter the movie late, after it's started. How do we get the reader the necessary information without digging ourselves into expository potholes? How do we get the reader up-to-speed without being dull and informative? I'm going to talk about visitors in fiction as narrative enablers who serve as ambassadors for the reader—visitors who need to be informed about what's going on, just as the reader does.

Charles Baxter is the author of the novels *The Feast of Love* (nominated for the National Book Award), *First Light*, *Saul and Patsy*, *Shadow Play*, *The Soul Thief*, and *The Sun Collective*, and the story collections *Believers*, *Gryphon*, *Harmony of the World*, *A Relative Stranger*, *There's Something I Want You to Do*, and *Through the Safety Net*. His latest craft book, *Wonderlands: Essays on the Life of Literature* was published in October. His stories have appeared in several anthologies, including *The Best American Short Stories*, *The Pushcart Prize Anthology*, and *The O. Henry Prize Story Anthology*. He has won the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in the Short Story. He lives in Minneapolis.



February 09, 2023

Editor Panel - Which literary magazines and journals are looking for your work?

You'll get a behind-the-scenes look at a variety of different magazines/journals and learn about what you can expect once your work is accepted. There will be plenty of time for Q&A.



Joshua Bohnsack is the managing editor of *TriQuarterly*, faculty advisor for *Oyez Review*, and publisher of Long Day Press, a short-form publishing house. He is the author of the novella, *Two Hands* (Fruit Bat Press) and his work has been published in *The Rumpus*, *AGNI*, *Salt Hill*, and more. He grew up on a farm and moved to Chicago.

Su Cho is the author of the poetry collection *The Symmetry of Fish* (Penguin, 2022) which was a winner of the National Poetry Series. Her work has appeared in places like *The Best American Poetry 2021*, *Best New Poets 2021*, and *They Rise Like a Wave: An Anthology of Asian American Women Poets*.



Hattie Fletcher has been the managing editor of *Creative Nonfiction* magazine since 2005 and the editor of *True Story* since 2016. Essays she has edited have been reprinted in *The Best American Essays*, *The Best American Travel Writing*, and *The Best Women's Travel Writing* and have been awarded the Pushcart Prize. She was a coordinating editor for the *Best Creative Nonfiction* series, published by W.W. Norton, and is co-editor, with Lee Gutkind, of *True Stories*, *Well Told*.

Aram Mrjoian is an editor-at-large at the *Chicago Review of Books*, an associate fiction editor at *Guernica*, and a 2022 Creative Armenia - AGBU Fellow. His writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Guardian*, *Catapult*, *Electric Literature*, *West Branch*, *Longreads*, and many other publications. Find his work at arammrjoian.com



When February 16, 2023

Karen Bender - How to Open a Story? Exploring Strategies

In this generative talk, we'll study openings to stories by several authors. We'll work to identify different types of openings in an effort to understand how writers create urgency that carries the reader through a narrative. We'll practice these different types of openings in class, so that you leave the course with a few different ways to begin your story, novel, or essay. This session's strategies will be helpful to writers of all forms. Come ready to read some great openings and create your own.

Karen E. Bender is the author of two collections: *Refund*, which was a Finalist for the National Book Award, shortlisted for the Frank O'Connor International Story Prize, and longlisted for the *Story* prize, and *The New Order*, which was longlisted for the *Story* prize. Her novels are *Like Normal People* and *A Town of Empty Rooms*. Her fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, *Ploughshares*, *Zoetrope*, *The Yale Review*, *The Harvard Review*, *Guernica*, and others, and her stories have won three Pushcart prizes. She has won grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Micah Fields - Writing vs. Typing: A craft talk on composition and artful prose

🕒 When February 23, 2023



In this talk, we will discuss the challenge of mastering tone, rhythm, and style in our writing by looking closely at the art of composing powerful sentences and scenes in fiction and non fiction. We'll explore samples from masters of the form, learn some new strategies, and discuss the challenge of word choice and sentence variation as they apply to our own work. Writers will leave the session with a bank of examples from writers in all genres, plus a few of their own short exercises to use as stand-alone pieces or seeds for a larger project.

Micah Fields has published essays and photography for the *Oxford American*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Baffler*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Sonora Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *War*, *Literature & the Arts*, and elsewhere. He holds a BA from the University of Montana and an MFA in non fiction from the University of Iowa. He received the *Oxford American's* 2018-19 Jeff Baskin Writers Fellowship, an Iowa Arts Fellowship, and the AWP Intro Journals Award in non fiction.

🕒 When March 02, 2023



Patricia Ann McNair - Alternate Endings: An exercise in discovery and letting go

As writers, it is essential that we trust and explore the many possibilities of our imaginings. This workshop will push us past what we think we know about the narratives we are making and help us to expand the parameters of our stories. With particular attention to endings (of characters, situations, and stories), we will study published models and write our way down alternate roads. During the workshop, it can be helpful to have access to one's own work-in-progress, but we will try new writing as well. Patricia Ann McNair's short story collection, *Responsible Adults*, was named a Distinguished Favorite by the Independent Press Awards. *The Temple of Air* (stories) received Chicago Writers Association's Book of the Year and other honors. Her collection of essays, *And These Are the Good Times*, was a Montaigne Medal Finalist for Most Thought-Provoking Book of the Year. McNair's fiction and creative non fiction have appeared in *Barrelhouse*, *American Fiction: Best Unpublished Short Stories by Emerging Writers*, *Hypertext Review*, and others

🕒 When March 09, 2023



Brian Turner - Doorways into Surprise and Delight

In this generative workshop, we'll focus on the twin engines that move a poem—the sentence and the line. In revision, we'll consider how we might step back from our own intentions so that we might learn more from the poem itself—and in this way discover 'doorways' that open new passageways into the poem.

Brian Turner is the author of a memoir, *My Life as a Foreign Country*, and two collections of poetry, *Here*, *Bullet and Phantom Noise*. Three new collections of poetry will be published by *Alice James Books* in 2023. He's the editor of *The Kiss* and co-edited *The Strangest of Theatres*. He's published work in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *National Geographic*, *Harper's*, and other fine journals. He is a Guggenheim Fellow, and he's received a USA Hillcrest Fellowship in Literature, an NEA Literature Fellowship in Poetry, the Amy Lowell Traveling Fellowship, a US Japan Friendship Commission Fellowship, the Poets' Prize, and a Fellowship from the Lannan Foundation.

🕒 When March 16, 2023



Sandra Scofield - Aboutness

You can write a narrative all the way to the end and still not be able to say what it is about. *Uh oh*. Learn to capture the essence of a story in a few sentences. That analysis becomes your North Star for your character and plot development. It is your way into drafting or revising a story, and it is your way of convincing someone they really should read it. This session is for writers of fiction, especially novels and memoirs.

Recommended reading: *The Last Draft: A Novelist's Guide to Revision*

Sandra Scofield is the author of seven novels, including a National Book Award Finalist, *Beyond Deserving* (1991); a memoir, *Occasions of Sin*; a book of essays about family, *Mysteries of Love and Grief*; and a book of short stories, *Swim: Stories of the Sixties*. She is on the faculty of the Solstice MFA Program at Lasell University, and has been on the faculty of the Iowa Summer Writing Festival for 26 years. She also is an ardent painter.

🕒 When March 23, 2023



Joan Silber - Generosity in Fiction

How can work be generous to its characters but not stupidly innocent, not ignorant of human nature? We'll look at examples by Anton Chekhov, David Malouf, Colm Toibin, Edward P. Jones, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Joan Silber is the author of nine books of fiction. Her most recent is *Secrets of Happiness*, listed as an Editors' Choice by *The New York Times* Book Review and one of the most anticipated books of the year by BuzzFeed, *The Millions*, and LitHub.

Her novel, *Improvement*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award and the PEN/Faulkner Award, and she received the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in the Short Story. Her book *Fools* was longlisted for the National Book Award and a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award; *The Size of the World* was a finalist for the LA Times Fiction Prize; and *Ideas of Heaven* was a finalist for the National Book Award and the Story Prize. She lives in New York, taught for many years at Sarah Lawrence College, and frequently teaches in the Warren Wilson MFA Program.

🕒 When March 30, 2023



Michael Zapata - Last Evenings on Earth: Writing Speculative Fiction

When we write fiction, we create parallel worlds. As such, possibility is not only a question of genre or believability on the page, but also one of language: *What*

if? speculative genres, the relationship between the past and the future, the real and the unreal is often blurred beyond recognition. In this workshop, Michael Zapata (*The Lost Book of Adana Moreau*) will guide writers through these relationships and discuss craft techniques and artful strategies to create speculative and otherworldly works of fiction. The workshop will also include a writing exercise and Q&A.

Michael Zapata is a founding editor of *MAKE Literary Magazine* and the author of the novel *The Lost Book of Adana Moreau*, winner of the 2020 *Chicago Review of Books* Award for Fiction, finalist for the 2020 Heartland Booksellers Award in Fiction, and a Best Book of the Year for NPR, the A.V. Club, Los Angeles Public Library, and *BookPage*, among others. He is on the core faculty of StoryStudio Chicago and the MFA faculty of Northwestern University. As a public-school educator he taught literature and writing in high schools.

When April 13, 2023



John McCarthy - Imagining and Intuitive Perception

How do we use language that calls for our and others' full attention? How do we create, order, and craft words in a way that goes beyond the user-friendly, transactional ways we skim text to gather information or entertain ourselves? In this generative session, we'll explore metaphor-making and other strategies for making our writing sing. The exercises provided in this session will push you toward what Gregory Orr calls your poetic "thresholds—those places where disorder and order meet." We will make our writing more urgent and persuasive. We will write in a way that ensures our readers feel what we felt when we were called to write those words in the first place.

John McCarthy is the author of *Scared Violent Like Horses* (Milkweed Editions, 2019), which won the Jake Adam York Prize. His new manuscript, *This Brutal Vanishing*, was recently a finalist for the Brittingham and Felix Pollak Prize in Poetry from The University of Wisconsin Press and the Lexi Rudnitsky's Editor's Prize from Persea Books.

When April 20, 2023



Kathleen Rooney - Send in the Clowns: Using Humor to Deepen Emotional Impact

Robert Frost famously said "No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader." The corollary, then, must also hold true: "No laughs in the writer, no laughs in the reader." Structurally, a happy surprise can be as impressive as a sad one, and in this session, writers will learn how to use humor and comic timing to make their poetry more emotionally complex, considering how the addition of comedy—even to poems that are ultimately serious—can yield a more pleasing experience for both author and audience.

Kathleen Rooney is a founding editor of Rose Metal Press, as well as a founding member of Poems While You Wait. Her most recent books include the novels *Lillian Box sh Takes a Walk* (St. Martin's Press, 2017) and *Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey* (Penguin, 2020). Her poetry collection *Where Are the Snows* won the 2021 X.J. Kennedy Prize and was published by Texas Review Press in fall of 2022. Her novel *From Dust to Stardust*, based on the life and work of silent movie star Colleen Moore, will be published by Lake Union.

When April 27, 2023




Rachel Swearingen - Cultivating Mystery and Delight in Fiction

No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader, or so the adage goes. Easier said than done. The process of drafting is filled with uncertainty that can cause us to reach for easy solutions that later ring false.

In this course we will explore what it means to give our work our courageous attention, and how to open our creations to more risk and delight. By turning toward the mysteries inherent in our early ideas and drafts, we can strike our best material sooner, and write our most original, authentic stories.

Rachel Swearingen is the author of the story collection *How to Walk on Water and Other Stories*, which received the New American Press Fiction Prize, and was named the 2021 Chicago Writers Association Book of the Year, and a New York Times Book Review "New and Noteworthy Selection."

 When May 04, 2023

Marcy Posner and Joanna MacKenzie - Publishing Today: What's working in today's ever-changing publishing market



Marcy Posner of Folio Literary Management and Joanna MacKenzie from Nelson Literary Agency will take you through the projects that are getting editors' and readers' attention and discuss why certain genres are working particularly well in today's demanding and dynamic publishing landscape. They will break down the hooks and ideas that have garnered attention and offer advice on how to take your projects to the next level.



Joanna MacKenzie joined Nelson Literary Agency in 2017 and is building a list of adult titles in the areas of mystery, thriller, and commercial women's fiction as well as select projects for kids in the areas of young adult and chapter books. She loves creepy islands, mysteries set in close-knit communities (if those communities happen to be in the Midwest, all the better), and fierce female heroines. Joanna is looking for smart and timely women's fiction where the personal intersects with the world at large, think Emily Giffin's *All We Ever Wanted* or Camille Perri's *The Assistants*; stories about the immigrant experience like Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*; and narratives dealing with the relationships that make us who we are for all ages like *I'll Give You The Sun* by Andy Nelson. Joanna MacKenzie will accept one-page query letters for critique.

Marcy Posner has spent a lifetime in books. After a brief stint as a librarian and fifteen years in publishing, Marcy made the transition to agenting and spent twelve years at the William Morris Agency as an agent and as Vice President and Director of Foreign Rights; five years as president of her own agency; five years at Sterling Lord Literistic as an agent and Director of Foreign Rights. Marcy is currently very happy at Folio. Her editorial skill and a deep knowledge of the publishing industry set her apart from many of her colleagues. When she works with her authors, she focuses editorially on how to make their books as strong as possible. Her extensive experience and connections are invaluable. Marcy knows the editors and publishing houses that are looking for a certain subject, or a different voice, or a particular kind of author. Her clients include Newberry Honor winner and New York Times bestseller Jacqueline Kelly, New York Times bestseller Sheri Reynolds, literary writer Christine Sneed, along with debut authors Lexie Elliott and Christi Clancy. She is seeking women's fiction, thrillers, historical fiction, history, psychology, narrative non-fiction, YA and middle grade, fiction and non-fiction. She is not interested in genre fiction for any age especially sci-fi and fantasy.

 When May 11, 2023

Joseph Scapellato - Narrative Density



In this class, we'll explore "narrative density"—the interconnectedness, layered-ness, and weight of a work of fiction. We'll walk through a sequence of specific, practical exercises in which we look to use the everyday complexity of ordinary life to enrich our fiction—we'll consider the beautiful messiness of what our characters are "in the middle of" (in a big-picture sense and in a small-picture sense), "linger" on fertile elements of a draft, and bring lively narrative through-lines to the surface.

The goal will be for you to walk out of this class with a new tool for composition and revision, fresh ideas that you can immediately use, and revised/brand-new passages.

Joseph Scapellato is the author of the novel, *The Made-Up Man*, and the story collection, *Big Lonesome*. He was born in the western suburbs of Chicago and earned his MFA in Fiction at New Mexico State University. His fiction and non fiction appear in *Literary Hub*, *Electric Literature*, *North American Review*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *No Tokens*, and other places. Joseph teaches in the creative writing program at Bucknell University and lives in Lewisburg, PA, with his wife, daughter, and dog.

When May 18, 2023



Jennifer Solheim - Let's Make Trouble: Characters, Conscience

Character and action might be the drivers of compelling fiction, but in drafting and revision, how do we decide what kind of development makes sense? How do fear and desire shape the logic—and illogic—of our characters' choices? And how can we avoid the pitfalls of event that lacks character agency, which can show the hand of the author in the work? This is a generative class that includes examples from Julia Otsuka, Brandon Taylor, and Lydia Davis. Participants will come away from this class with a character profile that includes motivations and a bank of images, obsessions, and actions, as well as tools and understanding for how to move from character to plot and action to emotion in fiction.

Jennifer Solheim's stories and essays have appeared in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Pinch*, and *Poets & Writers*. As a writer and literary scholar, she has taught at University of Michigan, Université de Paris VII, and University of Illinois—Chicago, in addition to creative writing workshops at the Northwestern Summer Writers' Conference and StoryStudio Chicago. A Contributing Editor at *Fiction Writers Review*, she serves as the Associate Director of the BookEnds novel revision fellowship at Stony Brook University.

Jennifer will accept manuscripts for critique. Please visit [Manuscripts](#) at [ocww.info](#) for more details.

When May 25, 2023



Abby Geni - The Science of Story

In this class, we will take a unique approach to the study of fiction, exploring stories through the lens of science. We will draw from biology, physics, psychology, sociology, and more, using each discipline as a window into a deeper understanding of craft. What can a study of people's living spaces reveal about how to create a strong setting and vivid characters? What can an examination of physics teach us about the propulsive force of tension on the page? Students do not need to have a background in science to take this class; we'll be using these studies and concepts as a jumping-off point to think differently and, perhaps, more deeply about our own writing. Science has a great deal to teach us about how to create stronger, clearer, more immersive stories.

Abby Geni is the author of *The Wildlands*, *The Lightkeepers*, and *The Last Animal*. Her books have been translated into seven languages and have won the Barnes & Noble Discover Award and the *Chicago Review of Books* Awards, among other honors. Her latest novel, *The Wildlands*, was named one of the best books of 2018 by Kirkus and BuzzFeed and was a finalist for the L.A. Times Book Prize. Geni is a faculty member at StoryStudio Chicago and recently served as Visiting Associate Professor of Fiction at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. [Visit her website](#) to learn more.

When June 01, 2023



Kelly McMasters - The Landscape of the Personal

Memoir is a strange animal, living somewhere between fiction and autobiography. Life doesn't unfold in neat little plot packages, and a novelist's toolbox is required to bring our stories to life. Through short readings, generative exercises, and observation, we'll work together to stretch toward the universal by illuminating the particular.

Kelly McMasters is an essayist, professor, and former bookshop owner. She is the author of the forthcoming *The Leaving Season: A Memoir* (W.W. Norton, 2023) and co-editor of the forthcoming *Wanting: Women Writing About Desire* (Catapult, 2023). Her first book, *Welcome to Shirley: A Memoir from an Atomic Town*, was listed as one of Oprah's top 5 summer memoirs and is the basis for the documentary film "The Atomic States of America," a 2012 Sundance selection.