

# MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN WRITING

## Spalding University

### Residency Lecture Descriptions

#### Fall 2010

This document contains the list of lectures to be presented at the Fall 2010 residency. Special-topic lectures, including required plenary sessions, are described first. Lectures by faculty, guests are collected by area of concentration. Graduating student lectures have been removed from this list.

Students attend all plenary sessions. In addition, **students attend and evaluate three lectures in their area of concentration and one lecture in another area.** Students are encouraged to attend more lectures as time permits. The Residency Schedule lists days and times. Please familiarize yourself with this document, as it will not be provided in paper form.

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### PLENARY LECTURES and PANELS

(required for all students)

#### **Form: Structure and Style in the Creative Process and the Creative Product** **Sena Jeter Naslund, Program Director**

Both structuralists and stylists swear allegiance to their own approach to the writing process, whether they work in fiction, film, plays, poetry, nonfiction, or any of these forms with an intended audience of young readers. I'll define the terms *structure* and *style* and talk about them in the contexts of both the creative process and the creative product. Works to be referenced which might be read or viewed in advance include Robert Frost's famous poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening;" Norman Mailer's nonfiction book about protesting the Vietnam war, *Armies of the Night*; the fiction of Laura Ingalls Wilder, Leo Tolstoy, and Virginia Woolf; the film "The Winslow Boy," adapted by David Mamet; the play "The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter," adapted from Carson McCullers's novel.

Two brief follow-up exercises will be based on the lecture.

#### **Being at Two with Nature** **Robert Finch, faculty**

Robert Finch is co-editor with John Elder of the widely-used anthology, *The Norton Book of Nature Writing*. In this lecture, he will discuss eight selections from the anthology—including work by Thoreau, Mark Twain, Virginia Woolf, Mary Hong Kingston, Alice Walker, and Annie Dillard—to illustrate some defining elements of the "nature essay," the literary characteristics of the individual selections, and one of the major themes of nature writing: the divided or ambivalent response of nature writers to natural encounters and experience.

**Required reading:** Before attending this lecture, students should read a selection of essays collected in a PDF file on Blackboard under Semesters>Fall2010>Books in Common and Other Pre-reading Requirements for Fall 2010 residency.

**Fiction: A Deeper Look**  
**Pre-lecture for Spring 2010 Program Book in Common Area**  
**Jody Lisberger, faculty**

Many of us have been reading fiction since early in our lives. But what happens when we start reading fiction with an eye to the craft elements fiction writers concern themselves with? In my own experience, moving from the land of a PhD in English to the land of an MFA in Creative Writing was unexpectedly eye-opening. This lecture will explore how knowing the craft of fiction changes and enriches both our reading of fiction and our writing—no matter which genre we practice. The lecture will also involve trying out some fiction craft.

**Michelangelo and Bernini: Contrasting Approaches to Sculpture**

**Bob Stagg, guest lecturer**

Michelangelo Buonarroti was the most influential sculptor of the 16th century. Gianlorenzo Bernini was the equivalent in the 17th century. Through a comparison of a few examples this lecture will explore the major differences between Michelangelo's approach to sculpture and Bernini's. Each artist created a free standing figure of "David" which reveals characteristic concerns with space, movement and dramatic narrative. Both artists were also architects and designed the context for sculptural groups. A comparison of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel in San Lorenzo, Florence, with Bernini's Coronaro Chapel in Santa Maria Vittoria, Rome, will show individual solutions, but also, demonstrate the contrasting concerns of renaissance and baroque patrons.

**Revision Panel**

**Eleanor Morse, Maureen Morehead, Nancy McCabe, Ellie Bryant, Charlie Schulman**  
Panelists discuss their experience in revising their own work and particular revision problems they have had. They also discuss advice they have given students.

**The Breakthrough Project: A Panel**

**Silas House, Greg Pape, Richard Goodman, Susan Campbell Bartoletti, Kira Obolensky,  
Brad Riddell**

Members of the MFA faculty discuss the publications or productions that launched their careers.

**REQUIRED FOR EN610 STUDENTS**

**Writing about Writing: Introduction to Critical Analysis**

**Kathleen Driskell, faculty and Associate Program Director**

This lecture addresses the MFA student's particular concerns when writing critical analysis, whether in the first semester or third. We will talk about the differences between reviews and summary, but also address the specific kind of critical analysis that this program asks of its students and the relevance that sort of "academic" endeavor has for a writer. Before coming to residency, students are asked to carefully read Raymond Carver's short story "Cathedral," and to complete the worksheet for this lecture (after listening to the audio instructions posted on Blackboard). Please print out both documents, read the story and complete the worksheet and bring both to the lecture. Though this lecture is required of all ENG610 students (or any new student), all are welcome.

**Required reading and assignment:** The story, audio instructions, and worksheet are posted on Blackboard under Semesters > Fall 2010 > Books in Common and Other Pre-reading Requirements for Fall 2010 Residency > All New Students: Pre-reading and Pre-assignments.

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## THE TEACHING OF CREATIVE WRITING

### **Introduction to the Undergraduate Creative Writing Workshop(?)**

**Kathleen Driskell, faculty and associate program director**

*required of teaching workshop students, but applicable to all genres, and all students welcome*

Beginning teachers of introductory creative writing classes are often a bit unnerved when they actually enter the classroom. Methodology that worked well in the graduate workshop frequently brings high frustration when employed with undergraduate students who do not have the same motivations or contexts for enrolling for Intro to Creative Writing. I will provide an overview of what I have found to be the most difficult challenges when teaching an introduction to creative writing course, but I will also share those best practices in teaching undergraduates that I have stumbled upon throughout the years and used with good success. Also, I will begin to address strategies (learning how to talk the talk) for providing strong rationales for the teaching of creative writing at the post-secondary level.

### **Practical Matters for the Undergraduate Creative Writing Classroom**

**Kathleen Driskell, faculty and associate program director**

*required of teaching workshop students, but applicable to all genres and all students welcome*

“Practical Matters” is a companion for the “Introduction to the Undergraduate Creative Writing Workshop(?)” lecture given early in the residency and will focus on some important concerns of teaching creative writing. These include the development of syllabi, lesson plans, exercises, and perhaps most confusing of all, the qualities for developing a useful rubric for assessment. I will continue to address the challenge of providing strong rationales, begun in the first lecture, for the teaching of creative writing at the post-secondary level.

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## FICTION

### **Tales of Migration and Travel: Part I**

**Julie Brickman, faculty**

*fiction, creative nonfiction*

What distinguishes writing set in another place from writing set in the author’s homeland? The pleasures and pitfalls of writing about a foreign setting are the subject of this lecture. An incredible range of great work falls into this rich genre. The lecture will focus on the novel *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie and the memoir *Burmese Lessons* by Karen Connelly but will also touch on *Larabi’s Ox* by Tony Ardizzone, “A Distant Episode” by Paul Bowles, *Cities of Salt* by Abdelrahmin Munif, *Arabian Sands* by Wilfrid Thesiger, *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* by Hilary Mantel, *The Lizard Cage* by Karen Connelly, and *Arctic Dreams* by Barry Lopez; perhaps others.

### **Outlines Matter: Why Planning Your Novel Might Make It Better**

**Rachel Harper, faculty**

Some writers worry that the use of an outline will take the fun and spontaneity out of the writing process, impeding creativity by forcing the writer to stay on course, yet most successful authors swear by them—refusing to put pen to paper until they have a clear roadmap in front of them.

This lecture will identify the key elements of a successful outline and illustrate how utilizing one actually makes the writing (and rewriting) process easier, faster, and better. Types of outlines discussed will include Storyboarding, Spreadsheets, Plot Summary, Character Sketches, Mind-mapping, and Chapter & Scene Worksheets. We will also highlight tips for getting started and common pitfalls to avoid.

**One Big Canvas: The Work of John Berger**  
**Robin Lippincott, faculty**

In a program such as ours, dedicated to the inter-relatedness of the arts, John Berger is a uniquely relevant writer. A renowned art critic (author of the seminal *Ways of Seeing*), essayist, and Booker Prize-winning novelist—not to mention screenwriter, this lecture will focus on the unity of his writings and his life.

*Selected reading list:* *Into Their Labours*, a trilogy (Pig Earth, Once in Europa, Lilac and Flag); *The Sense of Sight*; *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*; *Ways of Seeing*; *The Success and Failure of Picasso*; “Jonah, Who Will Be Twenty-five in the Year 2000;” *To the Wedding*; and *King: A Street Story*

**In Praise of Slow:**  
**How to Put on the Narrative Brakes, and Why You’d Want To**  
**Eleanor Morse, faculty**

Often, galloping narratives are praised for their high-spirited page-turning charms. But what about slower narratives and the spells they can weave? We’ll consider their peculiar, mesmerizing intensity and look at how you can slow down, when a story calls for it. Examples will be drawn from James Agee, Haruki Murukami, William Maxwell, Katherine Anne Porter, Marie Luise Kaschnitz, and others.

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**POETRY**

**“Oh how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved”:**  
**Walt Whitman’s “Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”**  
**Maureen Morehead, faculty**

Walt Whitman did not know Abraham Lincoln personally, but he saw him on the streets of Washington occasionally and had attended his second inauguration just weeks before the assassination: “The president,” he noted in a *Specimen Days* entry, ‘look’d very much worn and tired; the lines, indeed, of vast responsibilities, intricate questions, and demands of life and death, cut deeper than ever upon his dark brown face; yet all the old goodness, tenderness, sadness, and canny shrewdness, underneath the furrows”’ (The Walt Whitman Archive). Whitman loved America and he knew firsthand the devastating effects of the Civil War. Within months, he had composed “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” one of literature’s finest examples of the elegy. In this lecture I’ll discuss the form itself and how Whitman both follows its traditions and breaks them, creating a lament particularly American, a public poem meant to honor a president and assuage a nation’s mortal wounds.

**Required reading:** This is a long poem. Please read “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” before coming to the lecture. The poem is posted on Blackboard.

**The Ode, Past, Present and Future**  
**Greg Pape, faculty**

What is an ode? There are many definitions. Here are two partial ones: 1) “enthusiastic and exalted lyrical verse, directed to a fixed purpose and dealing progressively with one dignified theme” (Gosse) 2) “a celebratory poem in an elevated language on a occasion of public importance or on a lofty universal theme” (Hirsch). The ode, from the greek word aeidein, to sing, as a form and later as a genre, has a long history, which I will sketch lightly, and survives not so much as a form but as a lyric mode with much potential. We will consider examples from the Chinese Shih Ching, The Book of Odes, to Pindar and Horace, to Shelley and Keats, to Pablo Neruda and Joy Harjo.

**Attempting a Villanelle, for Poets and Prose Writers Alike**  
**Molly Peacock, faculty**

How does repetition affect the lyric vision and the lyric moment? This lecture explores the nature of repetition in the French Provencal verse form, the Villanelle. In this lecture and lab, there will be a chance for each participant to attempt a villanelle.

***For Whom and What the Bell Tolls: Crafting the Contemporary Elegy***  
**Jeanie Thompson, faculty**

Since the earliest Greek and Roman poets, the elegiac form has been used to mourn and memorialize loss, and to move through the mourning process to consolation. After a brief historical overview and definitions, we’ll look at examples from early 20<sup>th</sup> century, modern, and contemporary poets who elegize not only people who have passed, but places and landscapes lost. Examples of elegies that follow the traditional pattern but also make use of contemporary poetic voice and style will be included. Please review the definitions of elegy easily accessed on line at [poets.org](http://poets.org), Wikipedia, and other online glossaries of poetic terms. The two texts I will be drawing material from are *The Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* by Jahan Ramazani and *The Art of Losing*, edited by Kevin Young. A handout of elegies for our consideration will be provided on Blackboard.

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**CREATIVE NONFICTION**

**Writing for Change: The Art of Advocacy Literature**  
**Dianne Aprile, faculty**

There is a long literary tradition of writers advocating for social change, using their pens as swords in society’s political and cultural battles. Examples can be found in all the genres we explore in the MFA in Writing program at Spalding, from classic to contemporary literature. For this lecture, I will focus on the genres of nonfiction, fiction and poetry but I will also reference plays, writing for children and screenwriting. I will briefly explore the historical background of this tradition, but focus primarily on practical aspects of the work, including how to choose your battles, what strategies are most successful for writing about social/political issues and where such work is likely to be published. I will discuss, in particular, a Kentucky project organized by a group of concerned writers, to fight the environmentally devastating practice of Mountaintop Removal Mining.

Some titles to be referenced in the lecture: “Thoughts in the Presence of Fear,” an essay by Wendell Berry; *Salvador*, by Joan Didion; Fenton Johnson’s memoir, *Geography of the Heart*; W.S. Merwin’s poetry collection, *Migrations*; *Missing Mountains*, a collection edited by Bobbi Ann Mason and Mary Ann Taylor-Hall; *Lost Mountain*, by Erik Reece, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, by Ann Pancake, and “Brokeback Mountain,” the short story by E. Annie Proulx. I will also note the work of James Baldwin, David Mamet, Harold Pinter, E.B. White, Adrienne Rich, Thoreau, and Ivan Turgenev.

**The Lessons of *Seabiscuit***  
**Richard Goodman, faculty**

Laura Hillenbrand’s book about perhaps the most unlikely national hero we’ve ever had became a surprise national seller as well as the darling of the critics. She spent five years researching and writing this true story of a raggedy, neglected horse that rose from obscurity to incredible fame during the Great Depression. What can we, as writers, learn from the making of her book and from the book itself? This lecture will discuss many aspects of this fine book and how it works: How Hillenbrand was inspired to write it, how she researched it, and the discoveries she made along the way. It will also discuss the three crucial characters in the book, and how she was able to make them come so memorably alive. It will discuss the actual construction of the book—its form, its architecture. It will also discuss the writing—the vocabulary, the pacing, the setting of scenes, the creation of a great sense of drama—in short, what makes this unique, a standout among the hordes of nonfiction books that are being produced month after month. These are lessons readily applicable to your own writing.

**From Hickeys to House Burning: How and Why Leaps in CNF Matter**  
**Jody Lisberger, faculty**

This lecture will look closely at where, why, and how two CNF writers (Andrea Hollander Budy and Joyce Carol Oates) break away from linearity and move readers in surprising and exciting ways by taking leaps. We will look at how the leaps might appear sudden, but in fact how writers establish their prerogative to take sudden leaps and how and why these leaps make an enormous difference in creating deep, original, and dramatic essays and in granting the readers considerable intelligence and provocation (in good ways) as they read. We will look at some of the craft tools one needs to pull off such leaps successfully, tools also applicable to poetry and fiction.

**Creative Nonfiction and Metaphor:**  
**Using Comparisons to Articulate Emotion and Create Voice**  
**Nancy McCabe, faculty**

Metaphor can be a useful tool in all genres for creating a vivid world, shaping structure, and discovering meaning. It can be a particularly helpful device for creative nonfiction writers as they struggle to approach difficult topics and pin down elusive and complex emotional states. This interactive session will explore ways that metaphor can help us build resonance and meaning to push beyond cliché, get at hard truths, and add new dimensions to voice and tone. We will look at examples from writers including Lauren Slater, David Shields, Brenda Miller, Lucy Grealy, Meredith Hall, and Pico Iyer. Participants will also do some exercises designed to help them generate their own metaphors.

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## WRITING FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS

### **Xtreme Research**

**Susan Campbell Bartoletti, faculty**

For me, research is an extreme sport—and probably the closest I’ll come to being an athlete. This lecture will offer a concise, practical guide to mastering the art of research that will help you plan, carry out, and write your narrative, whether it’s fiction or creative nonfiction.

### **The Bildungsroman: Coming of Age Stories**

**Ellie Bryant, faculty**

*fiction, W4CYA and creative nonfiction*

Since the late 18th Century, readers have been drawn to stories about growing up. We’re fascinated and identify with growth from the naiveté of childhood into self-understanding and a sense of social responsibility. The Bildungsroman is a quest story, a story of apprenticeship to life, and also a story of loss that jars the protagonist away from home and family. We like these stories because we’ve all been through that painful stage of growing personal awareness (and I dare say that some of us are still emerging). Usually the character is a sensitive and gifted young man who makes false starts before he finds his way, but in the second half of the 20th Century, women writers have made a case for the Bildungsroman. The Bildungsroman reaches a wide audience, from YA to adult and both male and female readers. You’ve probably read many novels in this genre, including *Great Expectations*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Candide*, *Black Boy*, *House on Mango Street*, and *The Bell Jar*. Many of these stories are based on personal experience. This lecture will lay out a brief history of the Bildungsroman, will touch on well known novels in the genre, and then will focus on the crossover novel *I Am One of You Forever* by Fred Chappell as an example.

### **Juggling Act: Writing a Story from Multiple Points of View**

**Joyce McDonald, faculty**

*fiction and W4CYA*

Telling a story from a single point of view comes naturally to most writers. But what do you do when a first person or third person limited point of view isn’t suitable for your vision of your novel or story? This lecture will look at narrative options that employ multiple perspectives. I will begin with a brief overview of all points of view, followed by a deeper exploration of the possibilities and rewards, as well as the pitfalls and challenges, of telling a story from multiple viewpoints. Texts include Elizabeth Strout’s *Amy and Isabelle*, Ann Patchett’s *Bel Canto*, Robert Cormier’s *Tenderness*, Lynn Rae Perkins’s *Criss Cross*, Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, and Lemony Snicket’s *The Bad Beginning*, among others.

### ***A Little Princess, The Wind in the Willows, and The Golden Age of Children’s Literature***

**Gardner McFall, guest lecturer**

There’s no clear evidence that Kenneth Grahame and Frances Hodgson Burnett knew each other or held an opinion about each other’s work, though they were contemporaries during the Golden Age of Children’s Literature and their respective books were published three years apart. Yet both Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* and Burnett’s *A Little Princess*, like so many of the books published between the years 1865 and 1910, are about ideals, about the way the world should be. Both address the eternal concerns of children: questions of friendship, home versus adventure, struggles with authority, triumph over adversity, and sensitivity to the natural world.

And both, significantly, grow from the preoccupations and needs of their authors. This last fact leads them to be appreciated by young and old alike and may help explain why, in a former time where the categories of adult and children's literature were less bifurcated than now, they have transcended their immediate generation and afforded multiple critical interpretations.

Sources I will mention include other titles by Kenneth Grahame and Frances Hodgson Burnett, along with Humphrey Carpenter's *Secret Gardens*.

**Required reading:** Please read *The Wind in the Willows* and *A Little Princess* before attending this lecture.

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## PLAYWRITING & SCREENWRITING

### **It's Going To Be a Bloodbath**

**Helena Kriel, screenwriting**

There is no time to be tame, considerate or polite. Screenwriting is bold storytelling. It demands vigor, bad behavior and character in revolution with itself. Everything must earn its place in the 100 pages you have to tell your story *visually*. From the dialogue to the arrangement of scenes; from the characters to the images, from silence to sound and fury: we are going to look at what it takes to make everything count. We are going to examine the art of visual storytelling. This lecture is about taking a story, telling it in pictures, being spare, and making it bleed.

### **Beyond Chronology: Considering Narrative, Dramatic and Flexible time**

**Kira Obolensky, faculty**

*playwriting and screenwriting*

How do we as dramatists and writers use time to shape our narratives? Time is one of the primary ways we organize our stories, plays and screenplays—but how do we get beyond chronology? Looking to plays by Adrienne Kennedy, Thornton Wilder, Adam Bock and films by Fellini and Charlie Kaufmann, we'll discuss how we can manipulate and aggravate the ways in which we experience time in a narrative. What does it mean to create a non-linear dramatic narrative? Can time be abstracted across genres, or does the temporal experience of theatre and film insist upon its own kind of chronology?

### **Visual and Visceral: Reprioritizing Scene Description**

**Brad Riddell, faculty**

*screenwriting*

Beginning writers often fall into the trap of emphasizing dialogue, failing to recognize that screenwriting is a "show me, don't tell me" discipline requiring one to think in terms of motion pictures. Through examination of both scripts and clips, this lecture will examine how a visual and visceral scene description style develops character, establishes tone, and builds a clear and distinct world far more efficiently and effectively than does dialogue. Because, as we must remember, cinema was about moving images long before it was about moving mouths.

### **Horton Foote: The Gentle Giant**

**Eric Schmiedl, faculty**

*playwriting and screenwriting*

In a career that spanned over 70 years, Horton Foote created works for the stage, screen, and

television. He won Academy Awards for his adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and his original *Tender Mercies*, an Emmy Award for his adaptation of Faulkner's "Old Man," and a Pulitzer Prize for his 1995 play *The Young Man From Atlanta*. He worked with many of the heralded actors and directors of his time, including Lillian Gish, Robert Duvall, Steve McQueen, and Geraldine Page. However, it was Mr. Foote's amazing ability to quietly fade into the background of his plays and screenplays that truly stands the test of time. In this way he allowed the complex and fascinating characters of his work to take focus, providing a unique and honest view of human hopes and fears, dreams and disappointments. This lecture will study Mr. Foote's acclaimed play, *The Young Man from Atlanta*, with the goal of exploring and better understanding the rich, compelling, and flawed people found within it.

### **What Makes a Dramatic Scene Great**

**Charlie Schulman, faculty**

*playwriting and screenwriting*

Why do some scenes keep us on the edge of our seat and take us on a journey that implores us to think clearly, leaves us somehow altered, outraged and inspired to reconsider who we are, while others only manage to lull us to sleep? In this lecture we will view, analyze and discuss several universally acknowledged great scenes from the stage and screen in an effort to understand what makes these dramatic and comic works both effective and memorable. Scenes from "Almost Famous," "Glengarry Glen Ross" and "The Glass Menagerie" and a couple of other works from film and theater will be screened or read aloud. If time allows we will view and discuss a scene that utterly fails to accomplish any of the things that makes a scene great. If there is any one thing you should take away from your MFA in Playwriting or Screenwriting it should be how to write a compelling, dramatic scene.

### ***Fight Club: A Look at Adaptation***

**Sam Zalutsky, faculty**

*screenwriting*

This lecture will examine the transition of *Fight Club*, a non-linear novel by Chuck Palahniuk, to "Fight Club," a dark but conventionally structured Hollywood film directed by David Fincher. How did the writer adapt and translate this work from one medium to another? What conventions did he incorporate? How does it deviate from traditional Hollywood? This lecture should help anyone who is interested in adapting other literary forms into a more traditional three-act structure.