

## **The MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College Public Schedule – January 2015**

The public is welcome to attend the morning lectures and evening readings in fiction and poetry offered during the Master of Fine Arts Program winter residency. Events last approximately one hour. Admission is free. The schedule is subject to change.

**For more information, call the MFA Office: (828) 771-3715.**

Readings will begin at 8:15 PM in the Ransom Fellowship Hall  
behind the Chapel, unless indicated otherwise.

### **READINGS by FACULTY**

**Saturday, January 3—8:00 PM, Gladfelter, Canon Lounge**

Jane Hamilton, Roger Reeves, Nina McConigley, Martha Rhodes

**Sunday, January 4—Gladfelter, Canon Lounge**

Dean Bakopoulos, Marianne Boruch, Michael Parker, Stephen Dobyns

**Monday, January 5**

Ellen Bryant Voigt, Jeremy Gavron, Alan Williamson, Megan Staffel

**Tuesday, January 6**

Gabrielle Calvocoressi, Dominic Smith, Connie Voisine, Antonya Nelson

**Wednesday, January 7**

Karen Brennan, Liam Callanan, James Longenbach, Robin Romm

**Thursday, January 8—no readings**

**Friday, January 9**

Debra Allbery, David Haynes, Eleanor Wilner, C.J. Hribal

### **READINGS by GRADUATING STUDENTS**

**Saturday, January 10**

Abby Horowitz, Kimberly Kruge, Adam Jernigan, Ann Lovett, Marta Rose

**Sunday, January 11—Gladfelter, Canon Lounge**

David Cherry, Laura Moretz, Jennifer Givhan, Michael Sharick, Paul Howe

**Monday, January 12—4:30 PM, followed by Graduation Ceremony**

Fay Dillof, Avra Elliott, Jennifer Steinorth, Kevin Wheeler

**The schedule of lectures by Warren Wilson MFA faculty follows →**

## **Faculty Lectures – January 2015**

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**Sunday, January 4**

**11: 30 AM,**  
*Gladfelter, Canon Lounge*

**LIAM CALLANAN: Distraction, Displacement, and Discourse:  
On Dialogue in Poetry and Fiction**

When writers talk about talking we often focus on how: how do we get voices to converse effectively on the page? The talk then often turns to paradoxes: how natural dialogue often requires great artifice; how, in narrative, dialogue should advance the story without telling the story; how, above all, dialogue-related adverbs should be used sparingly. But what about the what? What does dialogue do to, or for, a text? We'll talk mechanics but then delve deeper to sort out what happens when authors allow characters to speak: what's conveyed, what's concealed, and what, in the end, does effective dialogue sound like—and look like—on the page? For answers, we'll listen to a diverse array of voices, ranging from Theocritus—the ancient Greek poet who, it's been argued, invented fiction—to Robert Frost and Louise Glück, as well Toni Morrison, Alice McDermott, and Jenny Offill. And because (as I'll argue) mystery is essential to good dialogue, we may take a look at a mystery author or two as well. Handouts (with bibliography) provided; no prior reading necessary.

**Monday, January 5**  
**9:30 AM**

**DOMINIC SMITH: The Year without a Summer:  
On the Uses of Weather and Atmosphere in Fiction**

Historically, 1816 was known as the year without a summer. A volcanic eruption in Indonesia affected the global climate and also had widespread cultural impact. It spawned the intense, chromatic sunsets captured by the young British landscape painter J.M.W. Turner and it kept Mary Wollstonecraft and her party indoors during their rainy, cold season in Switzerland. The English tourists turned to ghost stories to pass the time and, not long after, Frankenstein was born, rife with motifs of cold, wet, unyielding weather. Lord Byron also wrote his poem "Darkness" as a direct result of the unusual weather.

Weather is often taken for granted in fiction, or it's treated as a simplistic, overly-determined extension of our characters' moods. As our own climate changes, it's worth re-examining the role of weather in our storytelling.

In this lecture I hope to examine the legacy of weather as it's been passed down from Gothic and Victorian literatures, moving beyond "the pathetic fallacy." We will look specifically at uses of weather in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Hardy's *Tess of the D'urbervilles* before moving onto contemporary examples in Rick Bass's "The Hermit's Story" and Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*. Familiarity with these texts would be useful, though not required.

**Monday, January 5**  
**10:45 AM**

**JAMES LONGENBACH: Lyric Knowledge**

Poems exist not so much to give us the news as to allow us to experience viscerally how it feels to get the news; people who read Keats's ode "To Autumn" again and again don't do so because they need to be reminded that in the temperate zones of the northern hemisphere leaves begin to turn colors and fall off the trees in September. This lecture will look at poems by Stevens, Frost, Shakespeare, and Bishop; that it will also discuss passages of prose by Hemingway and Joyce suggests that what it means by lyric knowledge—the thrilling rediscovery of what we already know—is not something acquired necessarily from poems. Poems exist to foreground the event of their language over the event they happen to narrate or describe, but any good piece of writing might, through the rigorous work of its syntax, create a temporal experience that feels infinitely repeatable on the page, asking us to return again and again for what we already know. Another word for that experience is structure, which is the opposite of a static thing.

Handouts provided. Texts will include: Stevens's "No Possum, No Sop, No Taters" and "The Auroras of Autumn"; Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"; Shakespeare's 94th sonnet; Bishop's "At the Fishhouses"; passages of prose from Hemingway's *In Our Time* and Joyce's *Ulysses*.

**Tuesday, January 6**  
**9:30 AM**

**C.J. HRIBAL: You Are Not Who You Think You Are: Meditations on the Second Person Voice**

Stories, novels, and poems written in the second person are sometimes (often) seen as the red-headed, left-handed, ungainly second cousin of writing prose and poetry. A recent column in the *NY Times* recently argued, essentially, "Don't!" But sometimes that voice, that persona, works marvelously. I'd like to examine when and how to use the voice for its best effects. I'm particularly interested in when it's used occasionally within a story—such as Susan Minot's "Lust"—as part of a story's "republic of voices." (I'm borrowing that phrase from the best line in Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*: "You are a republic of voices tonight. Unfortunately, the republic is Italy.") Other writers likely to be discussed include Lorrie Moore, Italo Calvino, Margaret Atwood, William Faulkner, and a number of poets TBD. Handouts will be provided.

**Tuesday, January 6**  
**10:45 AM, Jensen Lecture Hall**

**ELEANOR WILNER: The Long Approach: An Appreciation of the Life and Work of Maxine Kumin**

Fifteen books of poetry, fifty-seven years of a writing life, of a life-long marriage, of wresting pasture from rocks, poetry from the hard facts of the actual--touching on all this, what can be said in an hour.

Suggested reading: *Maxine Kumin; Selected Poems 1960-1990* (Norton, 1997) or *Where I Live: New & Selected Poems 1990-2010* (Norton, 2010). Handouts provided.

**Sunday, January 11**  
**9:30 AM**

**MICHAEL PARKER: The Parenthetical**

"Punctuation," said the essayist Pico Iyer, "gives us the human voice, and all the meanings that lie between the words." My talk will focus on the parenthesis, specifically the ways in which it epitomizes various (and crucial) aspects of narrative: dissemination of information, development of character, the establishment of tension, rhythm and pattern, the handling of time and—most importantly—the creation of consciousness. Texts discussed include Conrad Aiken's "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and examples from Nabokov, Faulkner, Joyce, Elizabeth Bishop, and Henry James (of course).

**Sunday, January 11**  
**10:45 AM**

**STEPHEN DOBYNS: Aspects of the Lyric**

The lecture tries to define the lyric and how the modern lyric rose out of Romanticism. It discusses what is necessary to the lyric, how it can differ from a narrative poem and how narrative can be used within it. The lecture also looks at early and continuing tropes found in the lyric, and discusses the nature of the lyric or affective element in form as well as content. Handouts will be provided.

**Monday, January 12**  
**10:00 AM**

**JANE HAMILTON: Turning Gold into More Gold:  
How the Master Guides the Student**

This lecture takes a look at the student/master dynamic in the stories “White Angel”, by Michael Cunningham, and Cheever’s “Goodbye, My Brother.” I aim to explore the matter of being the student in the glare of, or with the guidance of the master. What do we hope for when we speak to an avowed masterpiece? Are we propelled by courage or idiocy or both? How do these particular stories vary in their judgment, their vision? (What exactly did Flannery O’Connor mean when she talked about “the testing point of the eye”?) I’ll also touch upon *Persuasion* and *Gone Girl*, and, not least, *Harriet the Spy*.

**Monday, January 12**  
**11:00 AM**

**MARIANNE BORUCH: Charm**

Which is not quite a matter of tone, not a gymnast’s trick or even a legit ambition probably, but what? Is it crucial to memorable writing? That’s the triggering question and concern of this lecture. Charm as scary dark or sudden light, charm as willed or simply wished for, or outright rejected, distained; charm as accident, a thing haunted in the side vision, a delight or semi-toxic in poems and beyond; charm as *not* a complete sentence. Perhaps cast also into this net will be metaphor (what *is* it really?), heavy-handed thuds, unforeseen turns, flying babies, distant views, choral thinking, centuries of brain-washed bedazzled snakes, the first person to write poems in English (that would be the dreaming Caedmon), an insect in an ear, a cello lesson and other mysteries. Along the way, we might put an eyeglass to poems by James Tate, Charles Simic, Kathleen Peirce, Russell Edson, Louis MacNiece and possibly others. And what about the making and remaking, process and progression having something to with charm? If there’s time and the right segue (plus the machine-gods willing), you might hear part of a recorded interview about this last idea, zeroing in on The Doors and their method (and if not, I will give you the web address for a close listen although charm--not exactly the first quality one considers when that wily, unnerving and visionary 60s band is mentioned).

Handouts provided. Meanwhile, be thinking about charm and the graceful, sometimes dysfunctional angels who dance on the head of that pin--and how such spirits aid and derail your own writing.