

2012 KACHEMAK BAY WRITERS' CONFERENCE PROGRAM

(DRAFT)

FRIDAY, June 8

- 3:00-8:00 p.m. REGISTRATION AND CHECK-IN** Hotel Lobby
- 7:00 p.m. OPENING DINNER** Quarterdeck
Introductions and Welcoming Remarks
Carol Swartz, Director, Kachemak Bay Campus-KPC
Greg Kimura, President, Alaska Humanities Forum
- Keynote Address: Barry Lopez**
"The Writer and Social Responsibility"

SATURDAY, June 9

- 8:30 a.m. WELCOME** Quarterdeck
Dan Julius, Vice President of Academic Affairs, University of Alaska
Michael Driscoll, Provost/Vice President, University of Alaska Anchorage
- 8:45-9:45 a.m.**
WRITERS IN THE WORLD: LITERARY CITIZENSHIP
Panelists will discuss what contributions writers and readers can make to civil discourse. How do writers create and nourish their communities? What are a writer's self-assigned responsibilities? What duties should a writer take on? Which should s/he avoid? Writers in all genres will consider the relationship between activism, social issues and creative writing.
- 9:45 a.m. BREAK**
- 10:00-11:30 a.m.**
HOME GROUNDING Quarterdeck A
Elizabeth Dodd
Following the example of conference keynote speaker Barry Lopez, we will consider how language maps human experience and memory across the landscape. In a series of guided exercises, we'll assemble our own entries in the spirit of Lopez's *Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape*.
- THE SURREALIST WORLD OF POETRY** Quarterdeck B
Amber Thomas
This workshop will explore the work of surrealist poets Andre Breton, Arthur Rimbaud, and Federico Garcia Lorca, among others. Writers will have an opportunity to explore the form by attempting to use some of the methods surrealist poets used to generate writing.
- WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING:
DISCUSSING THE PHASES OF CONSIDERATION** Restaurant
Jim Rutman

Gain a sense of the consideration process work goes through, in the hope of demystifying the opaque-seeming process that takes place in shadowy New York. How do agents evaluate the material that comes their way?

PERFORMING YOUR WORDS: OPEN MIC TIPS

Harbor Room

Sherry Simpson and Eva Saulitis

Words on the page are not the same as words in the ear. In this session we'll learn practical techniques for reading before an audience, timing your delivery, and leaving them wanting more. We'll also practice reading aloud at the podium, so bring a page of your work.

11:30 a.m.

BREAK

11:45 a.m.

LUNCHEON

Quarterdeck

12:30-1:30 p.m.

OPEN MIC

Quarterdeck

Readings by conference attendees

(Sign up on-site at Conference Information table)

Facilitator: Sherry Simpson

1:30 p.m.

BREAK

1:45-3:15 p.m.

HEARING VOICES: CONJURING THE UNCONSCIOUS

Quarterdeck A

Ann Pancake

One of the most important stages of creating fiction is often ignored in creative writing classes: conjuring the voices that speak from our unconscious. This class will raise and attempt to answer the following questions: how does one unlock the unconscious when one needs it? How can one pull off that paradoxical feat of generating inspiration at will? How might one deliberately trigger a writer's "trance" or enter a "zone"? What are strategies for getting started on a new piece, and how does one sustain inspiration throughout a long manuscript? The class will be discussion-oriented, with members reflecting on and sharing their own answers to these questions, and it will include writing exercises.

OOPS: FINDING THE MUSE THROUGH MISHAP

Quarterdeck B

Camille Dungy

Didn't mean to do that? Maybe you can be glad you did. Mistakes other people make, mistakes we've made in our own lives, mistakes we make in our writing and can use. We'll read poems that seem to have stemmed from accidents (some more happy than others) and investigate how the poets have used such moments to create moving and viable poems. We'll discover exercises that will help us turn mistakes into gifts.

MEMOIR WRITING

Harbor Room

Debra Gwartney

Participants will discuss as a group two brief previously published memoir models (distributed by facilitator), parsing craft and style elements, and thus becoming more familiar with the conventions of memoir writing. Possible models include "The Fourth State of Matter," by Jo Ann Beard, "Burl's" by Bernard Cooper, "The Button Man," by Nick Flynn, "Moonrise," by Penny Wolfson. The bulk of the time will then be spent writing and then workshopping participants' own prose using the previous discussion of published models as a framework and guide.

**MY APPROACH TO WRITING INVESTIGATIVE
LITERARY NON-FICTION**

Restaurant

Dan O'Neill

While adamant that he does not feel the slightest bit qualified to recommend to anyone how they ought to engage their work, Dan will share some of his own approach to writing literary non-fiction that involves research and controversy, such as: his criteria for launching into controversial topics, research methods, interview technique, evidentiary matters, ethical obligations, aesthetic aims, narrative tactics, book organization, habits of writing.

3:15 p.m. BREAK

3:30-5:00 p.m.

**WRITING VS. PUBLISHING: BEHIND THE URGE AND
EXPECTATIONS OF WRITERS LOOKING TO BECOME AUTHORS**

Quarterdeck A

Jim Rutman, Jeffrey Shotts

We will explore some of the important but often under-examined distinctions between writing and publishing and the core motivations that compel people to seek a transition from one to the other as they professionalize their writing lives.

FORMS OF FICTION

Quarterdeck B

Valerie Miner

A workshop considering microfiction, the short story, the novella, the novel, and cross-genre work. We'll examine how traditional forms of storytelling, such as oral storytelling, the parable, the fairytale, the cultural "myth", etc. have shaped contemporary literary fiction including realist fiction, magical realism and metafiction. Starting with a brief history of oral and written narrative as practiced internationally, we'll look at how a number of writers (including Charles Baxter, Diana Abujaber, Tess Gallagher, Pablo Medina, etc.) decide on form. Exercises will include prompts for microfiction and other forms.

INTERNAL LANDSCAPES: THE IMAGE AS METAPHOR

Harbor Room

Daryl Farmer

As a former student of photography, I've found my writing greatly informed by imagery. In this workshop, we will consider some of the ways in which we can use the photographic image in our writing not just for description, but also as a way of deepening subtext and examining the interior lives of the characters we create.

**COLLECTING OBSESSIONS:
WRITING THE POETRY PROJECT BOOK**

Restaurant

James Engelhardt

Most poetry books capture the concerns and interest of the poet, but other books start out as projects—high concept, tight focus, or simply a deep attention to a subject. Publishers are drawn to these books because of their built-in marketing angles. This workshop will guide students through the issues and strategies in developing—and polishing—a project book.

5:00-6:00 p.m. RECEPTION GATHERING

Quarterdeck

5:15-6:15 p.m.

WRITING CIRCLE

Harbor Room

Join others for an informal hour dedicated to individual writing. A guide will offer a prompt, or you can devote the time to your own ideas. No sign-up necessary; just show up prepared to write.

MASTERING THE MASTER OF FINE ARTS DEGREE

Nobody needs an MFA degree to write well, nor does an MFA guarantee success, yet more people than ever are pursuing graduate studies in creative writing. MFA faculty and a current student will discuss why an MFA can be useful, who makes an ideal student, what to expect, how to find the right program and more,

8:00 p.m. READING: Barry Lopez

Homer High School Mariner Theater

Introduction: *Greg Kimura*, CEO, Alaska Humanities Forum

Open to the public; doors open at 7:30 p.m. Book signing will follow in Commons

SUNDAY, June 10

8:15-10:00 a.m. KACHEMAK BAY BOAT CRUISE

Enjoy beautiful Kachemak Bay and a continental breakfast with visiting faculty and fellow participants. *(Optional. Space limited; sign up and pay fee by Saturday noon.)*

8:30-9:30 a.m.

YOGA

Harbor Room

(Complimentary, limited space; first come, first served)

10:00-11:00 a.m.

WRITING CIRCLE

Harbor Room

Guide: *Eva Saulitis*

Join others for an informal hour dedicated to individual writing. A guide will offer a prompt, or you can devote the time to your own ideas. No sign-up necessary; just show up.

10:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

THE CHANGING PUBLISHING WORLD

Quarterdeck

11:45 a.m.

BREAK

12:00 p.m.

LUNCHEON

Quarterdeck

“Q and A” with Barry Lopez

1:30 p.m.

BREAK

1:45-3:15 p.m.

INSTANT GRATIFICATION: TEN WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR WRITING IMMEDIATELY

Quarterdeck A

Sherry Simpson

Writers like to say that they start over from scratch every time they sit down to write a new short story or essay or book, but that's not exactly true. They develop little techniques for improving their prose that eventually become habits and then instinct, so that eventually they don't waste as much time fixing the same problems over and over. We'll look at ten easy fixes for your prose that you can apply right now.

THE INVISIBLE COLLABORATION: EDITORS AND WRITERS

Quarterdeck B

James Engelhardt, Jeffrey Shotts

There's an editor at the top of the masthead of every journal (in print or online), and writers frequently thank editors on the acknowledgements pages of books. But what happens before the final product is final? Two editors discuss the give and take they have with writers and what makes for a successful relationship.

TRIGGER POINTS

Harbor Room

Eva Saulitis

We'll look at writers' "triggers," seemingly mundane, everyday events that launch essays and poems of depth and breadth. When do we keep the triggering event in the finished writing? When do we leave it out? How do we avoid the pitfalls of pushing too hard to extract the meaning from everyday experience? (In other words, how do we avoid getting trigger-happy?) Finally, how do we keep our senses and hearts open, so that we don't overlook the everyday magic that leads to uncommon writing?

3:15 p.m.

BREAK

3:30-5:00 p.m.

THE END OF THE WORLD: HOW TO SURVIVE THE END-TIMES OF YOUR MANUSCRIPT

Quarterdeck B

Don Rearden

Rejection expert Don Rearden will prepare you for complete and utter rejection of your manuscript and then help you assemble a disaster kit that will ensure you survive the final days of your story. Prepare to join all the other literary greats on the list of rejection and learn to embrace the second coming of a chance to write again before the real end is here.

THE UNDEAD: IRONY

Quarterdeck B

Nancy Lord

In our modern age it's often been said: "irony is dead." Actually, it's very much alive—if sometimes misunderstood—in our literature and other art forms. We'll review the history and types of irony before examining some contemporary examples in both fiction and nonfiction and trying our hands with what can be a very effective (and often humorous!) writing strategy. What could be more fun than (from the word's Greek origin) "ignorance purposely affected?"

A FEW APPROACHES TO REVISION

Harbor Room

Peggy Shumaker

Come enjoy a lively discussion of forty-three ways to look again, forty-three ways to see what else a piece of writing might become. Bring your sense of humor.

5:00-6:00 p.m.

WRITING CIRCLE

Harbor Room

Guide: Erin Coughlin Hollowell

Join others for an informal hour dedicated to individual writing. A guide will offer a prompt, or you can devote the time to your own ideas. No sign-up necessary; just show up prepared to write.

5:00-6:30 p.m.

RECEPTION GATHERING

Restaurant

7:30 p.m. READINGS BY CONFERENCE FACULTY

Alice's Champagne Palace

Open to the public; Book signings will follow.

MONDAY, June 11

7:30-8:30 a.m.

WRITING CIRCLE

Harbor Room

Guide: Nancy Lord

Join others for an informal hour dedicated to individual writing. A guide will offer a prompt, or you can devote the time to your own ideas. No sign-up necessary; just show up.

8:30-9:30 a.m.

THE STORYTELLER AND THE PATTERN

Quarterdeck

Barry Lopez

Explore how the writer combines an ethical obligation to the reader and an artistic vision to create a pattern in language that we call a story

9:30 a.m.

BREAK

9:45-11:15 a.m.

25 DOORS: POEMS FOR GETTING UNBLOCKED

Quarterdeck B

Amber Thomas

This workshop will provide writers with 25 exercises for getting unstuck, broadening their understanding of structure in poetry, and provide the time and space to do some writing.

**WRITING ABOUT ALASKA, AS AN ALASKAN, WHILE
BOOK AND FILM DECISIONS ARE MADE BY NEW
YORKERS AND LOS ANGELOS**

Harbor Room

Dan O'Neill

Writing about Alaska—as an Alaskan, but for a national audience—can pose some difficulties. We are a continent away from agents and editors in New York, and from film people in Hollywood. If our subject is rural Alaska, we are *worlds* away. Dan has managed to land agents, publish three books about Alaska through New York publishers, and sign a movie option deal with Leonardo DiCaprio's production company. He will talk about what he has learned along the way.

WRITING ABOUT TRAUMA

Harbor Room

Debra Gwartney

Many personal narratives, memoir and essay, are focused on an event or series of events that was/were traumatic in the writer's own life. This workshop concentrates on the old adage, "When the action is hot, write cool." That is, helping the participants avoid over-emotive language, self-pity, and sentimentality, and instead revealing methods to present the trauma at the center of their work in a stark and moving way. The goal is to allow the reader to feel for herself, rather than being instructed on how to feel by overstated prose. Participants will write a short piece on a traumatic experience during workshop time, and the group will workshop with the "write cool" parameters in mind.

11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. OPEN MIC

Quarterdeck

Readings by conference attendees

(Sign up on-site at Conference Information table)

Facilitator: Sherry Simpson

12:15 p.m.

LUNCHEON

Quarterdeck

1:00-1:45 p.m.

FIRST PAGES

Quarterdeck

Jeffrey Shotts, Jim Rutman, James Engelhardt

Professionals in the business will analyze the first page from book-length fiction and nonfiction manuscripts written and previously submitted by conference attendees, giving an honest reaction to the first page of a novel, the first page of a proposal for a nonfiction book, or the first page of a nonfiction book. Panelists will explain why the page at hand would encourage them to read more (or not) in the context of their jobs. Selected "first pages" representing a variety of types and qualities will be distributed and publicly evaluated. The writers will be anonymous, and each first page will be discussed for 5-10 minutes.

1:45 p.m.

BREAK

2:00-3:30 p.m.

CASTING SHADOWS; HEARING VOICES

Quarterdeck A

Valerie Miner

This session explores the artistic choices facing a storyteller with regard to point of view. Special attention will be given to distinguishing between the "knowing narrator" and the old-fashioned omniscient narrator. Exercises include taking existing pieces (participants should bring a few pages of their own writing) and switching point of view, voice, etc.

PRESENT TENSE PERFECTLY

Quarterdeck B

Sherry Simpson

The writer sits at her desk and thinks about the choice of tense in her personal essay. Does present tense convey a sense of immediacy and vividness? Yes, she decides. But then she wonders: Isn't present tense, well, a pretense? How will I handle reflection? Won't present tense make it awkward to convey background information naturally? She once believed that it was against the rules to mix tenses, but is that true? In this session, we'll help our confused writer examine and then test how the use of present tense changes writerly choices and alters narratives.

WORKING TITLES

Harbor Room

Peggy Shumaker

We'll look at some truly brilliant titles and talk about how and why they work so well. We'll also savor some complete stinkers, and will congratulate ourselves that we'd never burden our own work with monikers so awful that the writing can't overcome them.

SCREENWRITING 101

Restaurant

Don Rearden

You don't know it, but you're an expert when it comes to screenwriting. In just a few simple steps you will unlock a world of hidden knowledge in your brain and be on the path towards writing your first screenplay.

3:30 p.m.

BREAK

3:45-5:15 p.m.

"TRUTH" IN MEMOIR

Quarterdeck A

An ongoing challenge and dilemma for memoir writers that never seems to reach a conclusion (perhaps because there is no conclusion). When writing about your own life, how can you be sure you've landed on the "truth"? How does factual accuracy relate to emotional veracity? If your sister has an entirely different account than you do about the day of your father's death, whose version is correct? Is it fair to use dialogue if the incident being described occurred thirty, forty, fifty years ago? Is it fair to write scenes about the past? In grappling with these questions, the panelists can help new memoirists discover their own parameters around what's "true," and what is not.

DEPTH PERCEPTION

Quarterdeck B

Ann Pancake

Have a character who won't let you into her head? One who fades into stereotype or formula no matter how often you revise? Do you have an idea for a story, but are uncertain how characters should carry that idea? Or, conversely, have characters, but no discernible plot? This class will explore strategies for creating and deepening characters, with an emphasis on a working writer's approach to supplement those tactics commonly suggested by craft books. We'll be doing some in-class writing, and you'll leave with a few exercises to experiment with at home.

IMPLICATION AND EXPOSITION: GETTING BEYOND "SHOW DON'T TELL."

Quarterdeck A

Elizabeth Dodd

In writing nonfiction, sometimes we need to summarize information or backstory succinctly; at others, we need to suffuse a passage with emotional or thematic significance without ever naming what is fundamentally at stake. In this workshop we'll explore both approaches, relying on several examples from published authors and engaging in some guided exercises.

5:15-6:00 p.m.

RESOURCES FOR WRITERS

Staff from Alaska State Council on the Arts and others will discuss opportunities available for writers, including grants, fellowships and residencies, ways to learn about them, and ways to enhance your chances of earning one.

5:15-6:15 p.m.

WRITING CIRCLE

Harbor Room

Guide: Sherry Simpson

Join others for an informal hour dedicated to individual writing. A guide will offer a prompt, or you can devote the time to your own ideas. No sign-up necessary; just show up prepared to write.

5:15-6:30 p.m.**RECEPTION GATHERING**

Quarterdeck

6:30pm**BREAK****7:30p.m.****READINGS BY CONFERENCE FACULTY**

Quarterdeck

*Open to the public; Book signings will follow.***10:00 p.m.****AFTER-HOURS BEACH GATHERING****TUESDAY, June 12****7:30-8:30 a.m.****WRITING CIRCLE**

Harbor Room

Join others for an informal hour dedicated to individual writing. A guide will offer a prompt, or you can devote the time to your own ideas. No sign-up necessary; just show up prepared to write.

8:30-10:00 a.m.**SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE ANTI-SOCIAL:
USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD AN AUDIENCE**

Quarterdeck A

In the current publishing environment, authors are increasingly being called on to help market their books. Social media and websites give an author the opportunity to develop an audience before a book even hits the bookstore. Panelists will share their social media experiences, with an emphasis on what's worked for them and how to adapt to the ever-changing nature of today's media.

IT'S ONLY NATURAL...

Quarterdeck B

Camille Dungy

Repetition is all over nature, and it's natural in poems, too. How can repetition help your poems? What about working in scales from the enormous to the miniscule? Or enacting a process of destruction and renewal? There is so much nature can teach us, and plenty of ways these lessons can serve our poems. In this workshop we'll learn a few ways that the land, the ocean, animals, and other manifestations of the natural world can provide sources of inspiration and guidance as we write stronger and more exciting poems.

THE COLLAGE ESSAY

Restaurant

Daryl Farmer

A collage is a construction assembled from seemingly disparate parts, but when put together function as a coherent whole. The collage essay relies not on a linear thread, but on a resonant subtext. In this

workshop, we'll look at several examples and consider possibilities of our own. Participants will leave with fresh ideas on how to use those snippets of work kept filed away.

10:00 a.m. BREAK

10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

THE LONG HAUL" OF WRITING A BOOK

Quarterdeck A

Panelists will discuss how they conceptualized single book-length works (as opposed to story or essay collections) and committed to the sustained work of writing from beginning to end. What challenges and joys are part of "big book" writing.

ENDINGS

Quarterdeck B

Nancy Lord

The only thing harder than getting the beginning of a story right is getting the ending right. An ideal ending strikes the reader as being both *surprising* and *inevitable*. We'll look closely at some short stories (emphasizing ones that may be familiar to readers and writing students) to consider why their endings are perfect (or perhaps imperfect) and to think about how each author might have gotten to the particular right ending. The emphasis here is on fiction, but there is general applicability to any narrative work.

THE HIDDEN PLACES

Harbor Room

Eva Saulitis

When we think of places in literary writing, we think often in grand terms. We think of establishing a "sense" of place. We think in terms of landscape. In this workshop, we'll switch from a wide-angle lens to a macro, even to a hidden camera. Participants will be encouraged to explore "hidden" aspects of the places where they live -- the overlooked, the taken-for-granted, the secret, the silenced, the unseen, the insider's perspective. Appropriate for both poets and prose writers.

10:00 a.m. BREAK

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

LUNCHEON AND CLOSING PRESENTATION

Shannon Daut, Executive Director, Alaska State Council on the Arts
Peggy Shumaker, Alaska State Writer