

# Fall Residency 2025

DECEMBER 5-14



## The Bold Type

### KEY

**F:** Fiction

**NF:** Nonfiction

**P:** Poetry

**PL:** Playwriting

**S:** Screenwriting

**All:** Everything ever created using the written word

### FOOD

**Breakfast & Lunch** will be served in the White Sands Foyer and Patio.

**Dinner** will be fend for yourself between grad lectures and evening programming.

**Snacks** will include popcorn in the office all day and the return of Snack Town devoted to our elevated snack game.

### LECTURES

**Lectures** are held in Grand Ballroom (GB) I, II, IV

All **Graduate Lectures** are in GB I

All **Evening Programs** are in GB I

### WIFI

In the ballrooms & classrooms:

Name: **UCR2025**

Password: **coachella**

### CLOTHES

T-Shirts & Sweatshirts & Hats Available for Sale in GB III. Debit/Credit Only

### EMERGENCY CONTACT

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## WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

### MAIN GENRE

#### FICTION

Essbaum: Palm Foyer

Pochoda: Citrus

Iglesias: Date Palm

Crane: White Sands I (*Dec. 12 class will be held in GB I*)

Roberge: White Sands II (*Dec. 12 class will be held in GB II*)

#### NONFICTION

Ulin: Sunset Terrace (*Dec. 12 class will be held in GB IV*)

#### PLAYWRITING

Birnbaum: Palm 1

#### SCREENWRITING

Malkin/Schimmel: Marlin I

Rabkin: Marlin II

### CROSS-GENRE

#### FICTION

Iglesias: Date Palm

Pochoda: Citrus

Roberge: White Sands II

#### NONFICTION

Crane: White Sands I

Ulin: Sunset Terrace

#### PLAYWRITING

Birnbaum: Palm 1 (*Dec. 9 class will be held in Palm III*)

#### POETRY

Essbaum: Palm Foyer (*Dec. 9 class will be held in GB II*)

#### SCREENWRITING

Malkin: Marlin I

Rabkin: Marlin II

Schimmel: GB IV

## FRIDAY - DEC 5

3:00 | Check In

4:00 | Faculty & Staff meeting in Citrus

5:00 | New Student Orientation in Date Palm

**\*Required for New Students**

6:00 | Opening celebration on White Sands Foyer & Sunset Terrace

## SATURDAY - DEC 6

8:00 | Breakfast

9:00 | All Student/Faculty/Staff Orientation in GB I

**\*Required for ALL students & faculty & staff**

10:30-12:00 | **What I Hear When I Hear You Pitching (S)** GB I

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Robert Mitas*

A big part of the process of getting anything made is the pitch. In this talk, we'll examine what a producer or studio is looking for when you're pitching, plus how to avoid messing it all up.

10:30-12:00 | **Getting the Creative into Creative Non-Fiction (NF)** GB II

*Faculty Lecture: Elizabeth Crane*

Coming at non-fiction as a fiction writer can be a challenge when the task is 'not making stuff up'. So how can we approach the work with a fresh mindset, borrow from across genres and still tell the truth in our stories? In this discussion we will look at different examples of creative nonfiction with extra creative, and see how we can apply this to our own work.

12:00-1:00 | Lunch

1:15 | Main Genre Workshops

## GRADUATE LECTURES

### 4:30 | Best Fiends (S)

*Oliver Young*

Growing up, villains were always my favorite characters. Then I found out, they were also other people's favorite characters. Like, the majority of people. What makes villains so interesting? And what makes the faces, names and deeds of these awful people so treasured in media?

Through five celebrated evil characters you should feel bad about loving, we will discuss the origins of the public's obsession with villainy and 5 major attributes they all share in common.

### 5:10 | "You're Using Coconuts" – How Humor Works and Why You Should Care (F)

*Shannon Presby*

Humor is a trick, a Three-Card Monte of reversal. Humor reinforces the reader's field of expectations then punctures that field using techniques like deviant coupling, exaggeration, unexpected word choice and narrative tone. Humor is also the sugar in your tea, the cake that holds the medicine. It provides emotional relief to the reader and allows them to imbibe difficult truths without gagging on all that virtue. Levity takes you higher; It lights your fire; T'was not prevalent on The Wire.

### 8:00 | Tod Goldberg Release Party for *Only Way Out*

Tod will be interviewed by his editor, Gracie Doyle from Amazon, on his new novel, the instant bestseller *Only Way Out*. Books will be for sale, followed by a signing.

## SUNDAY - DEC 7

8:00 | Breakfast

### 9:00-10:30 | Publicity 101 (ALL) GB I

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Megan Beatie*

How can you get your work noticed in this crowded, busy, algorithmic world? Top publicist Megan Beatie will help you start planning your strategy for world domination.

### 9:00-10:30 | The Poet's Pivot: Mastering the Leap and the Turn (P) GB IV

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Andrew Navarro*

This seminar explores the art of the "turn" in poetry. We will analyze how poets successfully "leap"

(as Robert Bly termed it) from one subject or image to another. Through our time together we will identify and collect a functional toolbox of transitional devices—the "elbow pipe fittings" of verse. Participants are encouraged to bring a current poem, or poems, they feel have reached dead ends. You will learn practical methods to navigate complex shifts in your own writing, allowing you to get unstuck, push your language, and drive your poems toward unexpected destinations.

### **9:00-10:30 | Character, Engine of Plot (F) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Arlon Jay Staggs*

Before you can have any kind of story, you need to have a person worth following. In this talk we'll examine how character is the foremost engine of plot, how a great character can drive your story or novel to a satisfying end.

### **10:30-12:00 | Gracie Doyle & Daphne Durham in conversation with Gabino Iglesias (F) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Gracie Doyle & Daphne Durham*

We'll sit down with two of the biggest names in publishing to discuss the status of the business. Where we are, where we're going, and what they're looking for in 2026.

### **10:30-12:00 | The One Sentence That Can Make Your Script – Or Kill It (S) GB II**

*Faculty Lecture: Bill Rabkin*

For many writers, coming up with a logline is last thing to do before sending the script off to a prospective manager or the next contest. It's a tedious chore to be put off as long as possible and then gotten over with quickly – like doing taxes or going to the dentist. But the logline is actually the most important element of your entire project. Done correctly, it's a tool that can save you months of work and hundreds of pages of wasted effort. And it can be the difference between a script that readers can't wait to tell people about... and one they can't bear to keep reading.

### **10:30-12:00 | How to Kickstart Your Career as a Playwright (Against Impossible Odds) (PL) GB IV**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Amy Mueller*

Have you ever hiked into a dense forest and found yourself off the groomed and beaten trail, climbing over tree roots, and ducking under fallen logs in search of that hidden path forward? Sometimes you discover the most delightful hidden lake or an auspicious overlook, and sometimes the trails are impossible to follow: grown over, filled with potholes, loop trails, dead ends, and locked gates. I feel these are apt metaphors for the pathways to a playwright's career. So, how do you forge a career pathway for yourself? By developing a short-term individual strategic plan aimed at achieving your unique artistic and career goals in the coming year or two, building your networks, and increasing your visibility, you can begin to envision your pathways forward in the field. This seminar - part lecture, part interactive workshop - will introduce an approach I have developed over the years that has proven to be successful. I will provide tools and templates for each student, prompts to get your plan started, and some coaching to help you think about how to shape your

plan. Ultimately, this seminar aims to empower contemporary playwrights to exercise agency over their opportunities and embolden their unique creativity.

**12:00-1:00** | Lunch

**1:15-4:15** | Cross-Genre Workshops

## GRADUATE LECTURES

### **4:30 | Why Do We Fall?: A Cinematic Exploration of Growth Past Grief (S)**

*Kyle Murphy*

Like a heavy cloud that casts darkness, grief looms over and touches us all. So, is it possible to break free from this suffering? I've discovered that the craft of screenwriting combined with that special art called cinema say yes. In this lecture, I'll introduce and provide examples of the Cinema Protagonist's Five Stages of Grief along with my personal experience, having lived through these steps myself. (Content advisory warning: this lecture includes brief, non-graphic discussion of a suicide attempt.)

### **5:10 | Sex Sells And So Does Holding Hands! (S)**

*Yana Bille-Chung*

Humans are biologically wired to desire sex, as our very survival depends on it. However, we are just as profoundly programmed to seek connection, witness love unfold, and believe in its lasting nature. For many years, Hollywood capitalized on that first impulse to draw audiences to theaters. Yet, as the era of romantic comedies fades, and more productions migrate to streaming platforms, a quieter revolution is underway: the rise of non-sexual romances. This form is particularly well-developed in Korea, where K-dramas excel at creating emotional connections without on-screen sexual intercourse. While taking into account history and today's social and political climate, this lecture will explore how K-drama writers craft stories that feel profoundly romantic and satisfying through themes of yearning, restraint, and unwavering devotion between lead characters.

### **8:00 | Evening Programming: *You're Not There* a film written and produced by Justy Kosek**

Justy's screenwriting debut, *You're Not There*, unfolds the story of Maggie Donovan, a young woman trying to rebuild her life after surviving a tragic childhood trauma. Part psychological thriller, part romance, the film explores what it costs to seek love in light of a haunted past.

## MONDAY - DEC 8

**8:00** | Breakfast

### **9:00-10:30 | Submission Strategies for Literary Journals (ALL) GB IV**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo*

Using knowledge and experience acquired as cofounder and director Women Who Submit, an organization empowering women and non-binary writers to submit work for publication, Bermejo will walk participants through the submission process one step at a time. Students will gain strategies for choosing a piece to submit, where to submit, and how to write a cover letter.

This seminar will include group activities, writing prompts, and discussions. By the end of the seminar, each writer will walk away with personalized submission goals and resources for attaining those goals.

**9:00-10:30 | Tired, Alone, Hurting, and Afraid: Ten Tricks for Only Somewhat Painful Self-Editing (F) GB I**

*Faculty Lecture: Gabino Iglesias*

Sure, your future editor—and in some cases your agent—will help you get your book into its best shape, but before that happens, you have to send it places, share it with your peers, workshop it, and show it to agents. This means it should be polished, and to do that, the first (and usually the most critical) editor is always you. Atmosphere, dialogue, continuity, pacing, grammar, flow, plot holes, voice, economy of language, character development; the list of elements you need to keep an eye on is endless, and that makes self-editing a tedious and often painful process. That said, there are things you can do to make that process easier and ensure your narrative is in the best shape possible before you share it with those who might be in charge of editing your career.

**9:00-10:00 | Managing Your Management (S) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Matt Hornitz*

Finding, working with, and grooming long-term success with a manager in the screenwriting business.

**10:30-12:00 | The Rhythms of Memory (NF) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: David Martinez*

Memories are tricky. They ebb and flow. They spiral. Sometimes they falter. Sometimes they come on so strong all we can do is our best to breathe through them in the middle of the night when what we need more than anything is sleep. Sometimes they make us grin so wide we can't help but fall into them, to linger on that kind word or touch or just that one time we sat side by side with the person who changed or even became our life as we drove into a desert sunset. Sometimes we remember wrong. Some of our memories are flat out lies. In other words, they're messy, seemingly unmanageable, mutable depending on the when and mood in which we remember them, and fluid. As writers, this is a problem. A pile of memories does not make a memoir, strong or sweet as they may be. To make them palatable, enjoyable, potent to others, we need containers, structures to hold and make sense of them. But how do we create structures that do justice to our memories? How do we discover what we have to say and then build a form that delivers what we have yet to comprehend ourselves? Let's look at other writers who use structure and form to cultivate and



enhance those memories we are constantly trying to express or just understand.

**10:30-12:00 | Engaging an Audience (PL) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Larry Biederman*

Applying principles of stage directing to all forms of storytelling, we will explore the criteria of engagement—artful inefficiency; rhythm and contrast; maintaining conflict; tension and resistance; personal investment and discomfort; authenticity and believability; ambiguity; and the insufficiency of words. We will define these criteria and discuss how they cumulatively establish a code to your audience that instructs them how to receive your work.

**10:30-12:00 | How to Think With Your Ears: A Short Course in Practical Acoustics for Writers (P) GB IV**

*Faculty Lecture: Jill Alexander Essbaum*

A lecture on sound. How to engineer it to your advantage in your work. How to exploit the sonic resonance of individual words. How to generate ideas from subtle aural cues. Why an imposition of verbal rhythms may be just the thing to rev that flagging narrative. How sound can shift temporal perception. How calculated silences can echo and attune. All this and more.

**12:00-1:00 | Lunch**

**1:15-4:15 | Main Genre Workshops**

**GRADUATE LECTURES**

**4:30 | Intersectionality in Storytelling: The Future is Intersectional (F)**

*Andy Cao*

Readers want to see themselves in the stories they consume, but how can they do that if factors of their identities have been neglected in the literary world? Intersectionality is the concept that overlapping factors of identity such as race, gender, class, and sexuality create unique experiences. In storytelling, these factors of identity are not just character descriptions, but catalysts to plot and character development. We, the younger generations, want to see ourselves accurately represented in the media and I will be analyzing how to do exactly that.

**8:00 | Evening Program: The Student Reading hosted by the Coachella Review – Palm Foyer**

**TUESDAY - DEC 9**

**8:00** | Breakfast

**9:00-10:30 | Benjamin Brooks in conversation with David Martinez: Hands On (F) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Benjamin Brooks & David Martinez*

Editing is an act of devotion. It means living inside a writer's work. It means trying to help them become what they're meant to be. And it requires immersion to do it well. But what happens when working with authors is your daily work, and you're also a writer yourself? How do you keep up while pursuing your own personal projects? Editor and writer Ben Brooks (MCD / Farrar, Straus and Giroux; translator of *Solitária* by Eliana Alves Cruz) joins David Martinez to talk about the creative labor of editing and how the demands of acquiring, translating, editing, and championing writers (especially those from Latin America and the Black diaspora) affect personal work.

**9:00-10:30 | Nonfiction Writers & Their Rights (NF) GB IV**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Julie Mackinen*

These are dicey times for writers of nonfiction and journalism. And if you want to be successful, you need to know your rights. This talk will cover legal rights and risks that reporters and editors should be mindful of.

Highlights of topics typically covered:

Shield law overview: protecting journalist-source communications and other newsgathering materials

Overview of the right to record in public and important limits.

California law on press access to restricted areas.

Referrals to legal resources for specialized needs, including pre-publication review, defamation defense, and general media law.

**9:00-10:30 | Brainstorming Your Horror Screenplay (S) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Duncan Birmingham*

Are you horror-curious? As a comedy writer who started working in horror features a few years ago, I'll talk about my own journey into the genre. We'll break down why horror has proved so resilient while many other film genres have lost relevance in the movie-going landscaping. Using recent indie and studio films as examples, we'll discuss staples of the genre and different ways horror writers are taking their projects to market (spec scripts, short stories, proof of concept short films).

Having discussed the genre, we'll do generative exercises to help you brainstorm ideas for your own horror screenplay. I'll teach a method to use the classic two or three sentence Hollywood logline as a way to brainstorm, refine and organize the idea for your script. This working logline will act as your road map as you embark on your journey into the dark heart of your horror project!

**10:30-12:00 | Breaking And Entering: Outlines and Beginnings (F) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Francesca Lia Block*

Stephen Graham Jones, my mentor at UCR, told his students, “Stories are like horses. You have to break each one differently.” By understanding structure, many people believe that writers can achieve a sense of control over their wild and beautiful projects and deepen their connection to the healing aspects of storytelling. And when you know your basic structure, you can write your opening! In this seminar, select students (we’ll try to get to as many as possible) will answer questions about their books, stories, poetry cycles, plays or screenplays, and we will use my 12 Questions and a three-act structure to create or revise outlines. We will also take a look at some famous openings, including some of your own.

#### **10:30-12:00 | Structuring the Sequence of Your Script (S) GB IV**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Robin Russin*

The fact is that the three act structure offers little help in organizing the scene by scene narrative, what should go where, and why, other than maybe what belongs at the very beginning and at the very end. But the long stretch in between is often a wilderness of conflicting and confusing potential pathways. In this class, using examples from classic movies, we’ll look at how using sequences can help organize material, identify how each segment of the script acts a microcosm of the overall screenplay, and helps see how to build meaning and forward momentum from beginning to end.

#### **10:30-12:00 | Workshop: Disrupting Your Practice (PL) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Liz Duffy Adams*

We all can get into ruts, habitual ways of working that render habitual outcomes. Sometimes we even become entirely paralyzed in the face of the work. In this workshop we’ll do a lightning-fast experiment to shake that up, to surprise ourselves, to make something unexpected, using an approach I often find helpful when I’m stuck. With time for questions, so feel free to bring some.

#### **12:00-1:00 | Lunch**

#### **1:15-4:15 | Cross-Genre Workshops**

### **GRADUATE LECTURES**

#### **4:30 | The Virtues of Being Broken: Anti-Redemptive Characters in Narrative (S)**

*Eric Escañuelas*

Some characters are born without a moral compass. They don’t need one. They don’t want one. Frankly, they’re fine just the way they are, nerd, so back off. These heroes succeed without the need for moral growth or change. What you call flaw? They call strength. And while you might detest them, they reflect society’s cynical appreciation for confidence over character, and demonstrate that genuine change is rarely sudden. So get in, loser. We’re going to find out why even sinners can be winners.

#### **5:10 | Disturb, Disrupt, and Agitate: How Afrohorror Commands Your Attention! (S)**

*Taj Harvey*

Horror is inherently disruptive. It is the total opposite of every other genre by, often, leaving its viewers more unsettled coming out of the theater than when we first walked in. Combined with an anti-racist lens, the medium provides a unique space for Black and Brown storytelling that captures our fears, traumas, and humanity better than anything else. If you liked *Get Out* and *Sinners*, then you're gonna love this! Join me as we discuss the evolution of Afrohorror and its continuous importance for the Black Diaspora.

**8:00 | Evening Programming: *Best American Night***

An Evening with the *Best American Mystery & Suspense* featuring Tod Goldberg, Stefanie Leder, and Ivy Pochoda in conversation with David Ulin on writing the stories that have been hailed as three of the very best of the year.

## WEDNESDAY - DEC 10

**8:00 | Breakfast**

**9:00-10:30 | Susan Straight in Conversation with Ivy Pochoda (F) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Susan Straight*

Susan Straight is one of the most acclaimed writers in California history, her novels often shining a light on those people left behind by the world. In her new novel *Sacrament*, Susan returns to the world of her stunning novel *Mecca*, this time focusing on the visiting nurses who came to care for those dying from Covid in the early days of the pandemic, as well as the cast of unforgettable *Inland Empire* and desert dwellers trying to eke out a life in a place that is trying to kill them. The Los Angeles Times has called *Sacrament* the best book of Susan's long career and in this candid talk, she and Ivy will dig in deep. A book signing will follow. [*Conversation 9:00-10:00, signing 10-10:30*]

**10:00-11:00 | The Symbiotic Relationship between the Casting Director and the Screenwriter: An A-Z Discussion of How Their Collaboration Shapes the Transformation of a Story from Script to Screen (S) GB IV**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Gayle Pillsbury*

Acclaimed casting director Gayle Pillsbury will talk about how your choices affect hers...how what you put on the page guides her toward the actors who will eventually embody your work. Plus, she'll do a deep dive into the actual process of casting your show or movie.

**10:00-11:00 | Mariah Stovall & Jud Laghi in Conversation with Tod Goldberg (F) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Mariah Stovall & Jud Laghi*

Trends, Mistakes, and Successes – two agents discuss the books they’re selling the book they’re being queried, and the wins and losses of the last few years.

**11:00-12:00 | Cara Shine Ballarini in conversation with Joshua Malkin: From Development to Production (S) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Cara Shine Ballarini*

In this conversation, we’ll go through the steps from development to the craft services table being pulled out and cameras rolling...and when, exactly, the writers get involved.

**12:00-1:00 | Lunch**

**1:15-4:15 | Main Genre Workshops**

## GRADUATE LECTURES

**4:30 | The Curious Case of Mr. Ripley: Why Screenwriters Should (Sometimes) Write More Like Novelists (S)**

*Toby LaPlant*

One critique that screenwriters often hear of their work is that their screenplay is “too novelistic”. But while screenplays and novels are importantly different forms, they share many of the same tools and techniques. In this lecture we’ll look at the opening sequences of Anthony Minghella’s feature *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and Steven Zaillian’s miniseries *Ripley*, comparing both to the novel by Patricia Highsmith which they adapt. We’ll see that, far from needing to write less like a novelist, sometimes screenwriters might be better off writing more like one.

**5:10 | The Art of the Reboot (S)**

*Sullivan Long*

In the last few years well known TV series and classic film franchises have resurfaced to varying levels of success. Rebooting is a great idea for any writer because the relationship between the audience and the beloved characters already exists. The grand challenge in it is that it must generate a fresh story perspective. In this lecture we’ll define the factors that create a successful reboot by taking a look at the ones that pulled it off, as well as the ones that attempted and failed.

**Dark Night**

## THURSDAY - DEC 11

**8:00** | Breakfast

**9:00-10:30 | Writing the 30 Minute...Comedy? Drama? What Even IS a 30 Minute Any More? (S) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Stefanie Leder*

It used to be that a 30 minute show was always a sitcom...and always, uh, 30 minutes. Streaming has changed all that. In this talk, we'll examine the nature of today's 30 minute with a showrunner out there making them.

**9:00-10:30 | Writing for Magazines, Newspapers, and New Media While Building Your Platform (NF) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Emily St. Martin*

There's still a vibrant freelance world out there, but it's tricky to know just how to access it...and if it's right for you. Emily St. Martin navigated this world for a long time before landing two straight dream jobs...all while trying to write her own book. She's going to break down the how-to and the why-can and the why-not of it all.

**10:30-12:00 | Using Setting to Intensify Your Story (F) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Sara Sligar*

Good setting is more than a backdrop. In this craft lecture, we'll discuss how to use setting to enhance character, advance plot, and heighten your story's emotional effects, pulling your reader deeper into your fictional world.

**10:30-12:00 | The Film & TV Marketplace (S) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Ali Lefkowitz*

We talk about the status of the industry, the TV vs. film marketplace, IP and adaptations, and how to differentiate yourself in the slush pile and the room.

**12:00-1:00** | Lunch

**1:15-2:30 | Fix it in Pre: Break in With an Indie-Friendly Screenplay (S) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Ivo Raza*

Been birthing epic tales set in galaxies far, far away? Massive action flicks with explosive set pieces that would drive Mad Max mad? Yet, no bites? Perhaps it's not your words but your budget. Join me for a dig into indie-friendly screenwriting – the kind that is more likely to get funded. We'll check out budget-friendly story ideas, how to use constraints to your advantage, what to steer clear of (hint: puppies and pyrotechnics), plus a few production hacks if you're planning to film it yourself. Writing a one-of-a-kind story for a tiny budget is not just doable; it might be the very screenplay that turns

you into a produced writer.

**1:15-2:30 | Rebecca Lucas in conversation with Emily St. Martin: The Sound of Books (ALL) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Rebecca Lucas & Emily St. Martin*

Audiobooks are the biggest growth industry in all of books – sales rose ~15% last year, pushing receipts to \$2.2 Billion and advances on audiobooks are often outpacing the advances on the books themselves – but do you have any concept on what goes into them? We'll sit down with a top book narrator to find out how what you write becomes the grist of audio drama.

**1:15-2:30 | The Art of the Interview (NF/F) GB IV**

*Faculty Lecture: David Ulin & Ivy Pochoda*

In this interactive workshop/seminar, we will both model and discuss the art of the interview, from both sides of the conversation. To begin, David will interview Ivy about her most recent novel, *Ecstasy*, before moving into the full sweep of her career. Then, we will stop the interview and discuss how it worked, from both the point of view of the interviewer and the interviewee. For the former role: What questions does one ask? How much preparation is required? When do you stick to the script and when do you go off book? For the latter; How do you answer a question honestly but also with an eye toward how it will be received? How do you have agency in a conversation driven by someone else? Do you have a goal in the conversation and how do you achieve it? We will consider these and other questions in a wide ranging conversation about the interview itself.

## GRADUATE LECTURES

**2:30 | Deconstructing Craft Blackwards: A Survey of Blockbusters Featuring African-American and Multi-racial Protagonists (S)**

*Solomon Moore*

Mad Black Guy? Stereotypical trope or more? Hollywood imagery not only entertains but also plays a part in shaping sentiment related to race.

This talk will explore films featuring Black superheroes and alike, to glean insights from when writers got it right.

**3:15 | Generating the future: How literary futurists have influenced civilization - and how you can too (F)**

*Cheyann Benedict*

From Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to *Star Trek*, literary futurists have predicted and influenced society in dramatic and exacting ways. Jules Verne imagined submarines before they patrolled the oceans; Arthur C. Clarke described satellites before they orbited Earth. Time and again, tomorrow's reality has been

sketched in today's fiction. Discover how literary futurists dream up the future, how their visions catalyze real-world creation, and how you can harness your own predictive imagination to write stories that matter... all while having a blast in the process.

**4:00 | Revenge Seekers: an honest glimpse into the human psyche (F)**

*Dante Gonzalez*

Revenge is one of the most common motifs in fiction because we all understand it. Every single one of us has been wronged by someone else and thought about ways we can get even, but we almost never do. We write stories about it instead, we create 'revenge seekers' characters who will stop at nothing until they find retribution. In this lecture, we will delve into what makes these sorts of characters compelling, and what it takes to craft our own stories of vengeance.

**7:30 | Evening Programming: Play Night – GB I**

An Evening Of Short Plays, Featuring New Work from Sullivan Long, Eric Martin, and Oliver Young, directed by Katie Gilligan.

## FRIDAY - DEC 12

**8:00 | Breakfast**

**9:00-10:30 | How to Think About Time (NF) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Karen Palmer*

Writers build stories around character and event, setting, imagery, dialogue, reflection. We make decisions about diction and syntax, chapter length, and paragraphing. But it is time that provides connective tissue, binding the work into a creative whole. Decisions here affect every aspect of the narrative. Where will you begin and end? Will you move around chronologically or otherwise? How will you connect things across time without losing the reader?

**9:00-10:30 | OuLiPo for Playwrights (PL) GB II**

*Faculty Lecture: Mickey Birnbaum*

Since its inception in Paris in 1960, the OuLiPo literary movement—*ouvroir de littérature potentielle*, or workshop for potential literature—has continually expanded our sense of what writing can do. It's produced, among many other marvels, a detective novel without the letter e; an epic poem



structured by the Parisian métro system; a story in the form of a tarot reading; and a suite of sonnets that would take almost 200 million years to read completely. Now, we'll explore the relevance of OuLiPo to playwriting. Through discussion of key OuLiPo texts and games, we'll discover new ways to approach dramatic structure, and we'll try out OuLiPo exercises too, a fun and effective way to jumpstart the writing process.

#### **9:00-10:30 | The Rule of the Break: Translating Action into Emotion (F) GB IV**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Liska Jacobs*

This craft lecture will focus on the Story Break as a valuable tool for achieving emotional clarity in narrative and avoiding the feeling of simply moving characters around on the page. We'll analyze how you can leverage this transition—the pause between action—to pivot the narrative focus inward, ensuring the reader understands why events matter to the protagonist's deeper conflict. For the workshop, please bring a short scene (500 words or less) that includes one of the following: a scene transition, a literal line break, or a moment where you move immediately from a major confrontation or decision directly into the next action.

#### **10:30-12:00 | Your Sources are Your Book (NF) GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Kevin Smokler*

Writing contemporary nonfiction often means you need to go out and shoe leather the topic – interviewing experts, interviewing witnesses, talking to people who were there, if only for fact checking – and there is an art to doing this well. In this talk, writer and documentary filmmaker Kevin Smokler will talk about how to find and interrogate the people who will build out your project.

#### **10:30-12:00 | Does every single line REALLY have a job in a story? (F) GB IV**

*Faculty Lecture: Rob Roberge*

Yup. Every single line is working toward a whole greater than the sum of its parts and, using Denis Johnson's story "Dundun," we will look at how that works. Please read and/or print up the story. And we'll break down what everything is doing under the hood here.

#### **10:30-12:00 | Barbie Versus Snow White (S) GB I**

*Faculty Lecture: Joshua Malkin & John Schimmel*

It is no secret that the movie business is topsy-turvy. In that environment you can bet that studio executives, agents, and producers the world over are trying to figure out why Barbie and Snow White, which in theory play to similar demographics and rely to a considerable extent on similar nostalgia, performed so differently. Fortunately for you, Joshua and John already have the answer which they would love to share with all interested in this lecture.

#### **12:00-1:00 | Lunch**

## GRADUATE LECTURES

### 4:30 | The Hero / Villain Hiding Inside Your Story: Their Name is Setting (F)

*David Oei*

For many reasons, setting is as integral to story as is plot or characterization. However, outside from grounding the characters and helping stretch the reader's imagination, setting may also assume unconventional characteristics, such as motivation and desire. It can have needs, it can set stakes, and it can even take action. Learn how your setting can be a hero, a villain, a victim. Challenge your setting to enhance your characters' conflicts and supercharge your plot.

### 5:10 | Language of the Unheard: Uprisings and Under-Fives (S)

*Laura Nuckols*

So you've written your characters perfect, down to the supporting cast. What about those at the margins, your smallest parts — those with five or fewer lines — do they serve the story? Does the story serve them? In this lecture, we'll look at under-fives in drama features set during historical uprisings, raising questions about representation and revolution.

### 8:00 | Film Screening: *Till Death*

*Till Death*, a new short from Yana Bille-Chung, followed by a Q&A with Cambria Matlow.

### 7:30 | Alumni Party

## SATURDAY - DEC 13

### 8:00 | Breakfast

### 9:00-9:30 | Spring Graduates Meeting GB IV

If you're planning to graduate in June...you need to come to this meeting.

### 9:30-10:30 | Cultivating Voice (F) GB II

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Jaime Parker Stickle*

Every writer has a sound—a rhythm, a beat, a personality on the page. In this discussion we will talk about how to listen for it, trust it, and let it guide your work. I'll share what I learned about voice while writing my book, and how style becomes a kind of signature. We will talk about the authenticity, performance, and storytelling of voice in the narrative. Together, we'll think about how cultivating voice isn't just a matter of technique, but a way of thinking and being as an artist.

**9:30-10:30 | The Heartbeat of Your Story: Uncovering Your Thematic Pulse & Turning It Into a Compelling Pitch Deck (S) GB I**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Keri Picolla*

Let's dive into the essential role of theme in shaping the tone, mood, and overall impact of your creative work. We'll explore how a personal thematic, rooted in the writer's unique perspective, serves as the emotional core of a story, driving character development, plot progression, and audience engagement. By identifying and harnessing this thematic pulse, writers can infuse their work with a distinctive voice and create a profound connection with readers. Additionally, we'll discuss how to utilize thematic insights to craft compelling visual pitch decks that effectively communicate the essence of a project.

**10:30-11:30 | The ultimate, comprehensive, unimpeachable, one-size-fits-all, step-by-step guide to revision (PL) GB IV**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Jack Novak*

You've got your draft. You've got a bunch of feedback. Now what the hell do you do? How do you work your way back in and excavate, renovate, rebuild it into a strong second draft? I'll tell you how, step by step, page by page, in this lecture that certainly doesn't promise more than it can deliver.

**10:30-11:30 | The Coachella Review: Getting to know our literary magazine GB II**

*Guest Faculty Lecture: Yennie Cheung*

Come learn all about how you can work on the Coachella Review, the acclaimed literary magazine of the program!

**11:30 | Private Graduate Lunch (GB IV)**

**11:30 | Lunch**

**1:15-4:15 | Cross-Genre Workshops**

**7:30 | Graduation & Farewell Party in Grand Ballroom**

Presentation of Graduates

Desserts, drinks, and dancing!

## **SUNDAY - DEC 14**

**8:00 | Breakfast**

**9:00-12:00 | Main Genre Workshops & Final Meetings**

**12:00** | Sad Lunch....and then why don't you come back in June.

## GUEST FACULTY

**Liz Duffy Adams'** *Born With Teeth* had its UK premiere with the Royal Shakespeare Company, co-produced by Playful Productions and Elizabeth Williams, at Wyndham's Theatre in the West End, directed by RSC co-Artistic Director Daniel Evans and starring Ncuti Gatwa and Edward Bluemel. *Born With Teeth* was an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award recipient and a Steinberg-ATCA New Play Award Finalist, and had its world premiere at the Alley Theater in 2022, a production that won Best Play/Production, 2022 Houston Press Awards, and that moved to the Guthrie Theatre, Asolo Rep, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Adams' neo-Restoration comedy *Or*, premiered Off Broadway at WP Theater and has been produced more than 80 times since, including at the Magic Theater, Seattle Rep, and Roundhouse Theatre. She's a New Dramatists alumna and has received a Women of Achievement Award, Lillian Hellman Award, New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, Weston Playhouse Music-Theater Award, Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship, and the Will Glickman Award for Best New Play (*Dog Act*, a post-apocalyptic vaudeville). Her Artistic Stamp virtual play in letters, *Wild Thyme*, was nominated for a 2021 Drama League Award for Outstanding Interactive or Socially-Distanced Theater. Publications include *Or*, in Smith & Kraus' "Best Plays Of 2010;" *Dog Act* in "Geek Theater," Underwords Press 2014; *Poodle With Guitar And Dark Glasses* in Applause's "Best American Short Plays 2000-2001;" and acting editions by TRW Plays, Playscripts, Inc. and Dramatists Play Service. The UK trade edition of *Born With Teeth* is coming soon from Nick Hern Books. Adams began her theatrical life as a performer, receiving her BFA in acting at New York University where she trained first at the Stella Adler Academy and then at the Experimental Theater Wing. She went on to write, devise, and perform a series of experimental theater pieces at various downtown venues, and act in Off Off Broadway productions of *Macbeth*, *Tartuffe*, and *Love for Love*. Eventually she wrote her first play, *A Fabulous Beast*, which was produced by the late One Dream Theater in Tribeca starring Edie Falco, and got her MFA in playwriting from the Yale School of Drama. Adams has dual Irish and American citizenship, and lives in New York City on Lanape land, and in Western Massachusetts on unceded Pocumtuc and Nipmuc territory.

**Cara Shine Ballarini:** In 2020 friends and former colleagues Rebecca Miller and Cara Shine teamed to launch production company GOOD PALS. Their first foray together, *THE FALLOUT* written and directed by Megan Park starring Jenna Ortega, Shailene Woodley, John Ortiz & Maddie Zeigler debuted at the 2020 SXSW Film Festival and won all the top prizes in the Narrative Feature category including the Grand Jury Award, The Brightcove Directing Award and Audience Award. It was sold in a lucrative deal to HBO Max and debuted Jan 27th 2022.

GOOD PALS has continued to expand its slate with a range of international features. Recent completed projects include *It's Christmas*, a Welsh-set holiday comedy starring Brittany Snow and Lucas Bravo, which aired on Peacock in the United States, and *Turn Up the Sun*, starring James McAvoy, which premiered at the Black Nights Tallinn Film Festival in Estonia. Both films were directed by Jamie Adams.

The company is also developing Simon Pegg's directorial debut, an adaptation of a novel by Michelle Paver, currently slated to begin production in 2026. Additionally, GOOD PALS has partnered with Architect Global in London on *Joint Custody*, a romantic comedy written by Justin Isbell and set to be directed by Australian filmmaker Daniel Reisinger.

**Megan Beatie** a veteran publicist with more than 25 years of experience in publishing, is President and CEO of Megan Beatie Communications (MBC), a book publicity and marketing agency. Megan has forged publicity campaigns for numerous bestselling authors including Linda Ronstadt, Robert Dugoni, Soman Chainani, Tess Gerritsen, Jenny Mollen, Ian K. Smith, Lee Goldberg, Becky Albertalli, Maureen Johnson, Marcia Clark, Melissa de la Cruz, Attica Locke, Tembi Locke, and Neil Gaiman and launched the debuts of many novelists

such as Deborah Falaye, Victoria Lee, Robinne Lee, Sandhya Menon, and Amber Smith. She has represented authors in nearly every conceivable genre including literary and commercial fiction, mysteries and thrillers, science fiction, fantasy, and graphic novels, as well as nonfiction books covering pop culture, film, entertainment, health, lifestyle, parenting, and relationships. Representing the fifth generation of a farming family from Southern California's Ventura County, Megan was valedictorian of her high school and graduated from Middlebury College, Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude, with a degree in English literature. Afterwards, she joined Goldberg McDuffie Communications as a publicist where she spent nearly two decades, rising to the level of Vice President, Director of Publicity. While there she cultivated strong, long-standing relationships with editors, journalists, and producers at the most influential television shows, radio programs, magazines, newspapers, websites, and blogs around the world. In 2015, she formed her own namesake agency so she would be able to focus on more personalized strategies and outreach opportunities for authors and books about which she's truly passionate. Since then, her company has grown to include a talented and hard-working support staff. All told, MBC has delivered dramatic results for its chosen authors and has promoted dozens of bestsellers.

**Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo** is the daughter of Mexican immigrants raised in San Gabriel, California. Her debut collection, *Posada: Offerings of Witness and Refuge* (Sundress Publications 2016), was written while living in a house in the shadows of Dodger Stadium in historic Solano Canyon. Bermejo's second collection, *Incantation: Love Poems for Battle Sites* (Mouthfeel Press 2023), explores US monuments, memorializes Black and brown bodies murdered by state sanctioned violence, and shares love poems to family, friends, and dalliances in rituals of resistance and resilience. Most recently, Bermejo was honored with a 2023 "Distinguished Service Award" by Beyond Baroque for her work with Women Who Submit. In 2017, she was named the first "Poet in the Parks" resident at Gettysburg National Military Park in partnership with the Poetry Foundation and the National Parks Arts Foundation. During her residency she wrote first drafts of poems that would become the *Locating The Dead* chapbook published by the Los Angeles Print Shop and featured in the 2019 A-B Project's "The Stacks" exhibition. The poem "Battlegrounds" was featured at Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day, On Being's Poetry Unbound, and Poetry Unbound: 50 Poems to Open Your World (W.W. Norton). Her poems and essays can be found at The Offing, American Poetry Review, Acentos Review, [PANK] Magazine, VIBE, Huizache, About Place Journal, Calyx, Santa Fe Writers Project, and many other publications. She is a former Steinbeck fellow, Poets & Writers California Writers Exchange poetry winner, Barbara Deming Memorial Fund/Money for Women grantee, Los Angeles Central Library ALOUD newer poet, Macondo Scholar at Community of Writers, and her poetry received 3rd place in the 2015 Tucson Festival of Books literary awards. She has received residencies with Hedgebrook, Ragdale, Dorland Arts, Yefe Nof, and is a proud member of the Macondo Writers' Workshop. Bermejo is a cofounder of Women Who Submit, a literary organization using social media and community events to empower women and non-binary authors to submit work for publication. She received a BA in Theatre Arts from California State University, Long Beach and an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University Los Angeles. She teaches creative writing with Antioch University, MFA and UCLA Extension and facilitates online and in-person workshops in poetry and submission strategies across the nation. Bermejo's writing, teaching, and organizing are inspired by her family, her Chicana experience, and her passion for creating love and comfort in chaotic times.

**Larry Biederman's** acclaimed productions include *DARK RAPTURE* (Evidence Room), *BACKYARD* (Echo), *WE ARE NOT THESE HANDS* (Rogue Machine), *BIG DEATH AND LITTLE DEATH* (Road Theatre) and *CRUMBLE* (Moving Arts) among many others. He is a Professor of Directing and Acting at CSUN, and teaches annually at JMC Academy in Sydney, Australia. Previous to L.A., he was an Associate

Artist at the American Conservatory Theater and has taught and directed from the Williamstown Theater Festival to the Old Globe.

**Duncan Birmingham** is a writer and filmmaker based in Los Angeles. His short films have premiered at various festivals including Sundance and his feature directorial debut "Who Invited Them" was named one of the best horror films of the year by The Hollywood Reporter. His screenplay *Swingles* was bought by Paramount and appeared on The Black List. He was the writer and executive producer of the Marc Maron IFC comedy "Maron" and has worked as a writer-producer on various shows including the Starz comedy "Blunt Talk" starring Patrick Stewart and David Fincher's "Videosyncrazy" for HBO. The title story of his short story collection, "The Cult in My Garage" (Maudlin House, 2021), was chosen for the Selected Shorts radio show.

**Francesca Lia Block**, M.F.A., is the author of more than twenty-five books of fiction, non-fiction, short stories and poetry, and has written screenplay adaptations of her work. She received the Spectrum Award, the Phoenix Award, the ALA Rainbow Award and the 2005 Margaret A. Edwards Lifetime Achievement Award, as well as other citations from the American Library Association and from the New York Times Book Review, School Library Journal and Publisher's Weekly. Her work has been translated into Italian, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Portuguese. Francesca has also published stories, poems, essays and interviews in The Los Angeles Times, The L.A. Review of Books, Spin, Nylon, Black Clock, The Fairy Tale Review and Rattle among others. In addition to writing, Francesca is a beloved and devoted teacher. She was named Writer-in-Residence at Pasadena City College in 2014 and in 2018-19 became a Visiting Assistant Professor in Creative Writing at the University of Redlands where she was a finalist for Professor of the Year award. Currently she teaches fiction at UCLA Extension, Antioch University, and privately in Los Angeles where she was born and raised.

**Benjamin Brooks** is an editor at MCD/FSG. He joined MCD after serving for two years as a Fulbright Scholar in Brazil, where he published his own fiction and translations. As he looks towards building his list, Ben is excited to read transgressive literary fiction with heart, and non-fiction that critiques or aims to dismantle oppressive systems. He's especially interested in translated work from Latin America, and projects centering the black experience here and abroad. He reads in Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian.

**Gracie Doyle** is the Associate Publisher of Amazon, overseeing commercial fiction imprints, including Thomas & Mercer, 47 North, Amazon Original Stories, and Amazon Crossing. She has edited acclaimed and bestselling titles from Robert Dugoni, Tess Gerritsen, Patricia Cornwell, Dean Koontz, Barry Eisler, Lee Goldberg, Alma Katsu, Ivy Pochoda, Ace Atkins, Christa Carmen, and Tod Goldberg. A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, she began her publishing career as a publicist at Houghton Mifflin, where she worked on the *Best American* series and the works of Buzz Bissinger, and Tony LaRussa.

**Daphne Ming Durham** joined Putnam in 2023 from MCD / Farrar, Straus & Giroux and publishes genre-blurring fiction with sharp edges, diverse perspectives, and spiky protagonists. She loves voice-driven, surprising novels that readers might devour in one sitting, but come away having learned something—vivid, gripping stories that upend familiar tropes and push boundaries in crime, mystery/thriller, suspense, speculative fiction, and horror. Daphne edits Megan Abbott, C. J. Box, Ivy Pochoda, Ron Currie, Robert Crais, Alma Katsu, Rob Hart, Mason Coile, Johnny Compton, and Rachel Eve Moulton. She acquired and published the Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir *Feeding Ghosts* by Tessa Hulls, New York Times bestseller *Two Nights in Lisbon* by Chris Pavone, winner of the LA Times Book Prize *Sing Her Down* by Ivy Pochoda, cult-favorite

horror novel *This Thing Between Us* by Gus Moreno, and Edgar-nominated novel *Rough Trade* by Katrina Carrasco, among others. Prior to Putnam, Daphne was the founding Executive Editor of MCD / FSG. She also spent nearly sixteen years at Amazon.com in all manner of book-related roles, from Editorial Director of the bookstore to Editor-in-Chief and then Publisher for Amazon Publishing.

**Matt Horwitz** got his start at Sleeping Giant Entertainment before joining Echo Lake in 2013 focusing on writers and directors in all aspects of TV and film. His clients have worked on such hit shows as *AMERICAN DAD*, *CALL YOUR MOTHER*, *TACOMA FD*, *MAGNUM PI*, *THE YOUNG ROCK*, *ARROW*, *THE FLASH*, *STRANGER THINGS*, and *THE CONNERS* just to name a few. He has set up client projects at just about every network or streamer that you can think of, (and several that you probably didn't even know existed). Originally from the Washington DC area, he attended Indiana University and has had a passion for TV and Film since a young age when he discovered that people actually made the things he was watching every day, and that passion has helped him guide and build the careers of creative people from the lowest levels all the way to the top!

**Liska Jacobs** is the critically acclaimed author of the novels *Catalina*, *The Worst Kind of Want*, and *The Pink Hotel*. A native of Los Angeles, her work explores desire, alienation, and the beautiful, messy landscapes of modern life. Her writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Literary Hub*, *Joyland*, *The Millions*, and *Alta*, among others. She holds an MFA from the University of California, Riverside's low-residency program in Palm Desert.

**Jud Laghi**. Launched in 2010, The Jud Laghi Agency is a full-service literary agency that represents fiction and non-fiction at every stage of the publishing process. Jud's hands-on style includes significant editorial guidance on proposals and manuscripts for the strongest possible publisher submission, and an exploration of all potential opportunities for boosting the marketing and publicity of his clients' books once they have been published, as well as licensing foreign and translation, audio, serial, film, television, and other digital and online rights. His clients include Jaime Lowe, Peter Zeihan, Dakin Campbell, Davy Rothbart, Brian Raftery, Tim Layden, Jason Turbow, Farah Pandith, Sally Hogshead, Justin and Sydnee McElroy, Portlandia star and Sleater-Kinney guitarist and vocalist Carrie Brownstein, all-time Jeopardy! champion Ken Jennings, and rock legends Gene Simmons and Kenny Loggins. Jud has represented, developed and launched a broad spectrum of trendsetting and bestselling books throughout his career, by authors of narrative nonfiction, journalism, cultural criticism, memoir, popular culture, prescriptive nonfiction and business, as well as select fiction, middle grade and YA. Before forming JLA, Jud worked as a literary agent at LJK Literary Management and at ICM, where he began his agenting career. He is a graduate of Trinity College with a B.A. in English and creative writing.

**Stefanie Leder** is a TV showrunner and writer whose credits include the MTV teen dramedy *Faking It*, TBS comedy *Men at Work*, Netflix's *Boo, Bitch*, and the long-running ABC Family comedy *Melissa & Joey*. She is also the author of the novel *Love, Coffee, and Revolution*, a Barnes & Noble top indie pick and a *Los Angeles Times* best book of the summer. is her first novel. Her short fiction has previously appeared in the anthology *Eight Very Bad Nights*, was selected for *Best American Mystery & Suspense*, and was a finalist for the International Thriller Award for Short Fiction.

**Ali Lefkowitz** is an LA native and graduate of Northwestern University, works at Kaplan Perrone, a literary management company with offices in both LA and NYC. She represents a distinguished roster of authors, journalists, and screenwriters including Adam White, author of *The Midcoast*, Allie Rowbottom, author of *Aesthetica*, Ling Ling Huang, author of *Natural Beauty*, Edan Lepucki, whose novel *Time's Mouth* was



nominated for a Joyce Carol Oates prize, and Peter Bognanni, whose debut novel *The House Of Tomorrow* was turned into a movie by the same name. She also reps debut novelists Lior Torenberg, Lavanya Lakshmi, Will Damron, among others. She was previously at Anonymous Content for 7 years.

**Rebecca Lucas** is an L.A.-based audiobook narrator who has narrated a wide range of genres, including romance, non-fiction and horror. She's a trained actress and has a master's in theater from the University of Delaware.

**Julie Makinen** is the former editor-in-chief of *The San Francisco Standard*. Julie has more than two decades of experience as a writer, editor and foreign correspondent for publications including the *L.A. Times*, *Washington Post* and *International New York Times*. She served as executive editor of *The Desert Sun* in Palm Springs and California editor for the *USA Today Network*. She was a JSK Journalism Fellow at Stanford University and a staff member of the Stanford Graduate School of Business' Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. Julie has a B.A. in Human Biology from Stanford and an M.A. in East Asian Studies from UCLA.

**David Martinez** earned his MFA from UC Riverside Palm Desert and teaches English, Mythology, and Creative Writing at Paradise Valley Community College. He is a dual citizen of the United States and Brazil and has lived all over both countries as well as in Puerto Rico. His memoir, *Bones Worth Breaking*, is listed as a one of the best memoirs of 2024 by *Esquire*. *Library Journal's* starred review calls it "a powerfully honest memoir...visceral and emotionally aware..." and *Publisher's Weekly* termed Martinez "a writer to watch." He lives in Glendale, Arizona.

**Robert Mitas** is a film producer and screenwriter. Robert ran Furthur Films, the production company of Academy Award-winning actor/producer Michael Douglas. During his tenure at Furthur, Robert was responsible for development, production and delivery of all film and television projects. His producing credits include *FLATLINERS* (2017), *BEYOND THE REACH* (2015), *WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE CASTLE* (2019), *LOOKING THROUGH WATER* (2025). Previously, Robert served as Creative Executive for the company, managing the development slate and serving as the senior Story Analyst. Robert Mitas is also the executive producer of the hit Netflix series *RATCHED* (2020), based on the iconic film *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUKOO'S NEST*, and over three dozen hit podcasts in his current role as Producer and Head of Original Programming at Voyage Media.

**Amy Mueller** has been recognized throughout the U.S. as a leader in the new play development sector. She is currently building a small micro business as an independent playwright advocate and consultant, focusing on developing career building strategies for playwrights, film and TV writers, and theater makers. During her 20-year tenure as Artistic Director of Playwrights Foundation in San Francisco, she transformed the legendary organization's scope from an annual summer festival into a year-round national center for playwrights focused on developing new work for the American stage- working with hundreds of contemporary playwrights. Throughout her four-decade career, Mueller has played a key role in accelerating the artistic and career growth of multitudes of playwrights, many of whom are now prominent in the field. Additionally, Mueller has won many prestigious awards for directing and producing new work, was awarded and nominated for numerous Critics Circle Awards and TCG Fellowships, and received the supreme honor of a San Francisco Bay Area Legacy Award from Theatre Bay Area for her contribution to the community.

**Andrew Navarro** is a poet from Southern California. His work has appeared in *Poet Lore*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Zyzzyva*, *Air/Light*, *Shenandoah*, and several anthologies. His poem "Heroes, Villains,

Clouds” was chosen by Anders Carlson-Wee for inclusion in Best New Poets 2024. He received his MFA from the University of California, Riverside, and works as a history teacher.

**Jack Novak** is a playwright, actor, improviser, teacher, and dad based in Pasadena, CA. His works include *The Great Lt. Sprinkle Didn't Save Me*, a ghost play about cops (Production: Field Trip Theater); *Transferal*, a play about love, death, and *Tekken* (Workshop: Rorschach Theater & Spooky Action Theater); *Dr. Automaton's Android*, a play about a robot learning how to be human (Commissioned by Only Make Believe and performed virtually for children in hospitals across the country) and numerous others. He's currently working on *X-Out*, a ghost farce about cheerleaders getting possessed by ghosts--a commission for CSU Fullerton that will be produced in April, then toured to New York in May. He is a part-time lecturer at CSU Fullerton, teaching playwriting and physical comedy. He has an MFA in Playwriting and Screenwriting from the UC Riverside Palm Desert Low-Residency MFA program, and studied theater at Northwestern University. [www.jackjacknovak.com](http://www.jackjacknovak.com)

**Karen Palmer** is a Pushcart Prize winner and has received grants from the NEA and the Colorado Council on the Arts. She's *Under Here* grew out of her award-winning essay *The Reader Is the Protagonist*, first published in *Virginia Quarterly Review* and selected by Leslie Jamison for inclusion in *Best American Essays* 2017. She is the author of the novels *All Saints* and *Border Dogs*. More recently her short story *Birds of Paradise* won the 2022 Emily Clark Balch Prize for Fiction. Her writing has appeared in *The Rumpus*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Arts & Letters*, and *Kalliope*, among others. A native of Los Angeles, Karen spent twelve years in Catholic schools, plus seven more off-and-on years in college, but her education largely took place at the Cahuenga Branch of the L.A. Public Library. She trained as a classical pianist and has worked jobs of all kinds; the most useful of these taught her graphic design and typography, which came in handy in 1989 when she changed her identity. She currently teaches at Lighthouse Writers Workshop in Denver, CO, and lives with her husband in California.

**Gayle Pillsbury** is an LA-based Casting Director, 4th-generation Long Beach, California native, and received a BA in English and Film from USC. During her 30+ year career, she has worked in all areas of casting, starting as an assistant in the casting department at NBC. She has been a talent executive and an independent Casting Director, with extensive experience across all genres, including comedy, drama, animation, independent film, commercials, and theatre works for Circle X and the Bootleg Theater. As the Head of Talent and Casting at Imagine Television, she was fortunate to work with visionary storytellers, including JJ Abrams, Aaron Sorkin, Noah Baumbach, David Lynch, and Peter Berg. She oversaw the casting of many projects, including “Felicity”, “Sports Night”, “24”, and “Mulholland Drive”. In 2000, Gayle partnered with Bonnie Zane to form Zane/Pillsbury Casting and enjoyed a successful 20-year partnership casting such shows as “Pretty Little Liars”, *One of Us is Lying*, “White Collar”, “Burn Notice”, “Sneaky Pete”, and “The Purge”, to name a few. For the past few years, she has been focused on supporting independent film and filmmakers, having cast several shorts as well as feature-length films for first-time feature directors. She served as both casting director and co-producer on the indie films “Reminisce,” directed by “Riverdale’s” Madchen Amick, and “A Desert,” directed by Joshua Erkman, which made its premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival and is now streaming on Amazon. Gayle also proudly serves as the VP of Membership on the CSA Board of Directors. Gayle lives in Echo Park with her husband of 30 years, their three children, and beloved street rescue Frenchie, Quasi.

**Ivo Raza** is a filmmaker, writer, and all-around story hustler who proves you don't need blockbuster budgets to make killer films. His feature film *Reboot Camp*, a wild mockumentary about cults starring David Koechner and Ed Begley Jr., snagged Best Comedy at the Austin Film Festival and various others, showing that sharp

writing and tight production can go a long way—even without a pile of cash. Besides feature films and shorts, he’s also directed music videos for various artists — most notably the last two for Ozzy Osbourne (RIP Ozzy). Beyond the entertainment world, Ivo’s shot content and spots for brands like Disney, Colgate, Sephora, the Harlem Globetrotters, and many others. When he’s not on set or buried in a rewrite, he’s running Scriptdive—a blog which one day may become a podcast—and tinkering with his long-in-the-works screenwriting book (here’s looking at you, 2026). Now an empty nester, Ivo lives in Los Angeles with his wife and their dog, splitting his time between writing the next feature and editing the recently shot *The Subscriber*, a gritty indie flick starring Spencer Garrett and Eddie McClintock. The film was dreamed up and co-written with fellow graduate Fran DiMeo while at UCR Palm Desert —proof that homework does pay off.

**Robin Uriel Russin** is a professor and Chair of the Department of Theatre, Film & Digital Production at UC Riverside, where he has served as graduate advisor and as director of the MFA in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts. Robin has degrees from Harvard, Oxford, the Rhode Island School of Design, and UCLA. He is a Rhodes Scholar and member of Phi Beta Kappa and the Writers Guild of America. Robin has written, produced and directed for film, TV and the theater, including Warner Bros.’ *On Deadly Ground*; America’s *Most Wanted* on Fox; and *Vital Signs* on ABC. His original one-hour series about King David, *Beloved*, was adapted by ABC as *Of Kings and Prophets*. He directed the independent feature film, *When I Sing*, co-starring Chris Mulkey, and an independent feature about the humor and challenges of disability, *The Anxiety of Laughing*. Another feature he co-wrote, *2 Hearts*, starring Jacob Elordi and Radha Mitchell, had a wide theatrical release in 2020, and streams on Netflix. He is currently working on *The Rescuers: The Mystery of Goodness*, a documentary series about the “Righteous Among The Nations,” the diplomats recognized by Yad Vashem in Israel for saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Robin has won or been a finalist for numerous awards for screenwriting and directing. In theatre, his play, *Painted Eggs*, was reviewed by *The Los Angeles Times* as “ambitious, heart-felt and hypnotic” and his play, *The Face in the Reeds*, had an extended four-month run at the Ruskin Group Theatre in LA. He has also written dozens of short plays, and directed numerous stage productions. Robin is co-author with William Missouri Downs of the books *Naked Playwriting* and *Screenplay: Writing the Picture*, both in their second editions.

**Emily St. Martin** is the Digital Features Editor at Southern California News Group, where she helps lead entertainment, dining, and events coverage across 11 publications and contributes Books features. In this role, she shapes editorial strategy, manages contributors, and guides digital storytelling that resonates across a large, diverse audience. Before that, she was an entertainment and books reporter at *The Los Angeles Times* and a longtime freelance journalist focused on stories that sit at the intersection of culture, entertainment and identity. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, BBC, *Los Angeles Magazine*, VICE, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *InStyle*, *Cosmopolitan*, and more. She’s also contributed to audio and documentary projects, including the Tubi documentary, “Gone Before Her Time: Brittany Murphy.” Emily holds a BA in Journalism and an MFA in Creative Nonfiction, and has won five LA Press Club awards and a California Journalism Award.

**Sara Sligar** is an assistant professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Southern California. Her first novel, *Take Me Apart*, was a Kirkus Best Book of the Year and a finalist for the Ned Kelly Award for Best International Crime Fiction. She holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.Phil. in history from the University of Cambridge. Her second novel, *Vantage Point*, was published by MCD/Farrar, Straus & Giroux in January 2025.

**Kevin Smokler** is a writer, documentary filmmaker and event host focused on our relationship as human beings with pop culture. His most recent book **BREAK THE FRAME: CONVERSATIONS WITH WOMEN FILMMAKERS** contains 24 career-retrospective conversations with directors behind box office phenomenon like Captain Marvel, Oscar winners like Free Solo and the filmmakers who launched actors such as America Ferrera, Paul Rudd, Ryan Gosling and Jennifer Lawrence. His previous books, **BRAT PACK AMERICA** is a love letter to teen movies of the 1980s. His 2013 essay collection **PRACTICAL CLASSICS** is a 50 book attempt to reread one's high school reading list as an adult. His feature length documentary film **VINYL NATION** on the American renaissance of the vinyl record, won ten awards and screened at 50 film festivals worldwide. His new documentary **MIDDLE GROUNDS**, about coffee shops and civic dialogue will be released this year. Onstage he has interviewed comedians, filmmakers, musicians architects, actors and authors, He sits on the board of *Zyzzyyva Magazine* and lives with his wife in San Francisco.

**Arlon Jay Staggs** is a native of Florence, Alabama, and a Southern storyteller with deep roots, a sharp sense of humor, and a heart for connection. His essays and stories have appeared in *The New York Times* and *December Magazine*, and his debut novel *Leta Pearl's Love Biscuits* is his debut work of fiction. He holds an MFA in creative writing/fiction from the University of California, Riverside, a JD from the Mississippi College School of Law, and teaches English at Northwest Florida State College. Arlon and his husband divide their time between Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, and San Diego, California.

**Keri Picolla Stanbra** is a writer, filmmaker, and talent manager. Her recent work includes adapting Kiana Davenport's best-selling novel *The Shark Dialogues*, which explores the tumultuous history and landscape of contemporary Hawaii. In 2023, Keri was selected as a NAPALI Fellow by the Pacific American Leadership Institute, which cultivates emerging Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander leaders. She also consults on projects that authentically represent Native Hawaiians in media, ensuring cultural protocols are understood and respected. Keri is currently a Talent Manager at Pop Art Management. She holds a BA in Cinema and Television Arts from California State University, Northridge, and an MFA in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts from the University of California, Riverside. Keri is also pursuing a second master's degree in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Studies at the University of Hawai'i.

**Jaime Parker Stickle** is a writer, podcaster, and professor of film and television at Montclair State University. She is the author of the gripping thriller, "Vicious Cycle: A Corey in Los Angeles Mystery," and is the creator and host of the true crime investigative podcast, *The Girl with the Same Name* as well as the hilarious podcast about side-hustles, *Make That Paper*. Jaime lives in Los Angeles with her husband, son, and fur babies.

**Mariah Stovall** joined Trellis Literary Management after agenting at Howland Literary and Writers House. Prior to that, she worked on the other side of things, at Farrar, Straus and Giroux and at Gallery Books. She represents adult literary and upmarket fiction, narrative nonfiction and essay collections, all by writers with strong voices and interdisciplinary perspectives. She is also the author of the novel *I Love You So Much It's Killing Us Both*, an NPR and ELLE best book of the year, and her work has previously appeared in the anthology *Black Punk Now*, and for *Ninth Letter*, Vol 1. Brooklyn, Hobart, the *Minola Review*, and *Joyland*; and nonfiction for *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Full Stop*, Hanif Abdurraqib's *68to05*, *The Paris Review*, *Poets & Writers*, and *LitHub*.

**Susan Straight's** latest book, *Sacrament*, was released in October and has already received rave reviews in the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*, which hailed the novel as her best to date. Her previous novel *Mecca*, was published March 2022 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, and released in paperback March 2023. *Mecca* was a national bestseller, a finalist for The Kirkus Prize, and named a best novel of the year by The

Washington Post and NPR, as well as a Top Ten California Book by the New York Times, and winner of the Southwest Book of the Year for Fiction. Her memoir *In the Country of Women: A Memoir* (Catapult Books, paperback edition September 2020), was longlisted for the Carnegie Medal for Excellence, as well as a Finalist for the Clara Johnson Prize for Women's Literature, named a best book of 2019 by NPR, Code Switch, Real Simple, and others. It was a Barnes & Noble September National Choice for Memoir. The book has gone into four printings. She has published eight previous novels: *Aquaboogie* (Milkweed Editions, 1990, 2006, fourth printing; Open Road Media, 2013; Counterpoint Books, 2020); *I Been In Sorrow's Kitchen and Licked Out All The Pots* (Hyperion, 1992; Anchor, 1993; Open Road Media, 2013; Counterpoint Books, 2020), named one of the best novels of 1992 by both USA Today and Publisher's Weekly, as well as named a Notable Book by the New York Times, is in its 14th printing; *Blacker Than a Thousand Midnights* (Hyperion, 1994, Anchor paperback 1995; Open Road Media, 2013; Counterpoint Books, 2020); *The Gettin Place* (Hyperion 1996, Anchor paperback 1997; Counterpoint Books, 2020); *Highwire Moon* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001; Anchor, 2002; Open Road Media, 2013, Counterpoint Books, 2019), which was a finalist for the National Book Award and won the Commonwealth of California Gold Medal for Fiction. *Highwire Moon* was a San Francisco Chronicle bestseller and Los Angeles Times bestseller, and was named one of the year's best novels by The San Francisco Chronicle and The Washington Post. It is taught in college and high school classrooms around the nation. *A Million Nightingales* (Pantheon Books, 2006, two printings; Anchor Books, 2007) was a San Francisco Chronicle bestseller. It was a Finalist for the 2006 Los Angeles Times Book Prize and published in a new Spanish translation in 2014. *Take One Candle Light a Room* (Pantheon, 2010; Anchor, 2011) was named a best novel of 2010 by the Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, and Kirkus. Her novel *Between Heaven and Here* (McSweeney's, 2012) was featured on NPR's All Things Considered, and named a Best Book of 2012 by The Los Angeles Times and The Daily Beast. Her middle grade reader, *The Friskative Dog*, was published by Knopf in 2007. Her picture book *Bear E. Bear* was published in 1995 by Hyperion Books. In 2021, she was named Woman of the Year for the 61 st Assembly District, by Assemblyman Jose Medina, for her thirty years of writing stories of African- American, Mexican-American, Asian-American, and immigrant life in southern California, bringing little-known histories, especially of women, into American books, museums, magazines and libraries. In 2014, Straight received the Kirsch Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. In 2011, she received the Gina Berriault Award for Fiction from San Francisco State University. In 2007, Straight received The Lannan Prize for Fiction, for her body of work. In 1998, she received a Guggenheim Fellowship for Fiction. She has published hundreds of essays and articles in numerous magazines and journals, including The New Yorker, The New York Times, O Magazine, Salon, Harpers, Reader's Digest, The Believer, Orion, and The Sun. Her fiction has appeared in Granta, Alta, Ploughshares, Zoetrope All-Story, McSweeney's, Black Clock, TriQuarterly, and The Ontario Review, among other magazines. Her short story "The Golden Gopher," published in Los Angeles Noir, won the 2008 Edgar Award. Her short story "El Ojo De Agua" won a 2007 O Henry Prize, and was a finalist for a National Magazine Award in 2007.

Her novels and stories have been translated into French, Italian, German, Polish, Arabic, Russian, Turkish, Japanese, and Spanish. She was born in Riverside, California in 1960, and still lives there with her family. She is Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside, where she has taught since 1988.

## MFA FACULTY

**Mickey Birnbaum's** play *Big Death & Little Death* inaugurated Woolly Mammoth's new Washington D.C. theatre in 2005. It has been produced subsequently at Perishable Theatre in Providence, Rhode Island; Crowded Fire in San Francisco; the Road Theatre in Los Angeles; and the Catastrophic Theater in Houston. The play was nominated for a 2006 Helen Hayes/Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play, and was a 2006 PEN USA Literary Awards Finalist. His play *Bleed Rail* premiered at the Theatre@Boston Court in Los Angeles in 2007, and won a 2008 Garland Award for Playwriting. Mickey spent two months living in playwright William Inge's boyhood home in Independence, Kansas as the recipient of a 2006 Inge Fellowship. He has written numerous children's plays for L.A.'s celebrated non-profit organization, Virginia Avenue Project. He is a founding member of Dog Ear, a Los Angeles collective of nationally-renowned playwrights (visit [www.dogear.org](http://www.dogear.org)), as well as 'The Playwrights' Union, and was a member of the 2008-2009 Center Theatre Group Writer's Workshop. Over a thirty year career, Mickey has written screenplays for Universal, Paramount, Columbia/Sony, Interscope, Warner Brothers, and Leonardo di Caprio's Appian Way Productions. He collaborated with director Steven Shainberg (*Secretary*, *Fur*) on the screenplay for *The Big Shoe* and recently adapted the John Irving novel *The Fourth Hand* in collaboration with Shainberg. He wrote *The Tie that Binds* (1995), starring Keith Carradine and Darryl Hannah, for Interscope/Hollywood Pictures. Mickey received his MFA in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts from the University of Riverside, Palm Desert in 2013. He teaches screenwriting at Santa Monica College as well. Mickey plays bass accordion for the Accordionaires, an accordion orchestra. His most recent play, *Backyard*, was a finalist for the 2015 PEN Center USA Award for Drama.

**Yennie Cheung** is the Executive Editor of the Coachella Review and co-author of *DTLA/37: Downtown Los Angeles in Thirty-seven Stories*. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from UC Riverside-Palm Desert, and her writing has been published in such places as *The Los Angeles Times*, *Writers Resist*, *Angels Flight • Literary West*, *The Rattling Wall*, and *The Best Small Fictions*.

**Elizabeth Crane** is the author of four collections of short stories, *When the Messenger is Hot*, *All this Heavenly Glory*, *You Must Be This Happy to Enter*, and *Turf*, and the novels *The History of Great Things* and *We Only Know So Much*. Her work has been translated into several languages and has been featured in numerous publications including *Other Voices*, *Ecotone*, *Guernica*, *Catapult*, *Electric Literature*, *Coachella Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Florida Review*, *Bat City Review*, *Hobart*, *Rookie*, *Fairy Tale Review*, *The Huffington Post*, *Eating Well*, *Chicago Magazine*, the *Chicago Reader* and *The Believer*, and anthologies including *Altared*, *The Show I'll Never Forget*, *The Best Underground Fiction*, *Who Can Save Us Now?*, *Brute Neighbors* and *Dzanc's Best of the Web*. Her stories have been featured on NPR's *Selected Shorts*. She is a recipient of the Chicago Public Library 21st Century Award, and her work has been adapted for the stage by Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater company. A feature film adaptation of her debut novel, *We Only Know So Much*, won Best Feature at the Big Apple Film Festival in 2018. Her debut memoir, *This Story Will Change* (Counterpoint), was released in 2022 and was a New York Times Editor's Choice. Her next book *This May Not Mean What Think* will be released in 2026.

**Jill Alexander Essbaum** is the New York Times bestselling author the novel *Hausfrau*, which was translated into 26 languages, and several prize-winning collections of poetry, including *Heaven* (winner of the Katherine Bakeless Nason prize), *Necropolis*, *Harlot*, and most recently, *Would-Land*. Her work has appeared in dozens of journals including *Poetry*, *The Christian Century*, *Image*, and *The Rumpus*, and has been included in textbooks and anthologies including *The Best American Erotic Poems* and two editions of the annual *Best American Poetry* anthology. A two-time NEA fellow, Jill lives and writes in Austin, Tx.

**Tod Goldberg** is the *New York Times*-bestselling author of sixteen prize-winning books, including the acclaimed *Gangsterland* trilogy – *Gangsterland*, a finalist the Hammett Prize, *Gangster Nation*, a *Times of London* Best Book of the Year, and *Gangsters Don't Die*, named both an Amazon Best Book of the Year and Southwest Book of the Year – the novels *The House of Secrets*, which he co-authored with Brad Meltzer, and *Living Dead Girl*, a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, and three acclaimed collections of short fiction, most recently *The Low Desert*, named a Southwest Book of the Year and the finalist for numerous literary awards. His short fiction has been widely anthologized, including in *Palm Springs Noir*, *Las Vegas Noir*, and *Best American Mystery & Suspense*, where he has also twice received Distinguished Story of the Year citations. His nonfiction appears regularly in the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, and *Alta* and has been widely anthologized as well, including in *Best American Essays*, and has won five Nevada Press Association Awards for excellence. For his body of work, Tod was honored with the Silver Pen Award from the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame. Tod Goldberg holds an MFA in Creative Writing & Literature from Bennington College and is a Professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside where he founded and directs the Low Residency MFA Program in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts. His most recent book, *Eight Very Bad Nights*, an anthology of Hanukkah noir, is a finalist for the Anthony Award. His next book, *Only Way Out*, will be released this fall.

**Gabino Iglesias** is a writer, journalist, professor, and book critic living in Austin, Texas. He is the author of *Zero Saints*, *Coyote Songs*, *The Devil Takes You Home*, and *House of Bone and Rain*, currently a finalist for the Locus Award. His work has won the Bram Stoker Award, the Shirley Jackson Award, and the Wonderland Book Award, among others. His reviews appear regularly in places like NPR, Locus Magazine, and the Boston Globe and he is the horror fiction columnist for the New York Times. Iglesias teaches creative writing at the UC Riverside Palm Desert Low-Residency MFA program. You can find him online talking books on X at @gabino\_iglesias.

**Joshua Malkin** has written feature projects for Sony, Fox, Universal Pictures among more than a dozen other companies. He also wrote and produced three documentaries: two about the art of puppetry, and the other about underground comics. In 2008 he wrote *Cabin Fever 2: Spring Fever* for Lionsgate. Joshua co-authored top-selling fantasy comic book series *The Source* (Scout Comics, Publisher – top title, 2018) and the YA graphic novel, *Unikorn*. The book and screenplay for *Unikorn* have been acquired by Armory Films and is slated to be the directorial debut of Marvel editor Debbie Berman (Black Panther, Captain Marvel, Spiderman Homecoming.) Joshua is a professor of screenwriting at the University of California Riverside, an occasional story architect for the video game industry, and the proud – if bewildered - father of twins.

**Kathryn E. McGee** is the Program Manager for and a graduate of the UC Riverside Palm Desert MFA Program in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts. Her horror stories have appeared in *Kelp Journal*, *Ladies of the Fright*, *Scoundrel Time*, *Gamut Magazine*, and the Bram Stoker Award-nominated *Chromophobia* anthology. Her story, “Mondays Are for Meat,” was recently optioned for film. “The Creek Keepers’ Lodge” (*Horror Library Vol. 6*) was an honorable mention in Ellen Datlow’s *Best Horror of the Year Vol. 10*. She writes about horror books and film for The Lineup. She also co-authored a book about downtown Los Angeles, *DTLA37: Downtown Los Angeles in Thirty-seven Stories* (Enville Publishing). Kathryn is an Active Member of the Horror Writers Association and represented by Dara Hyde at Hill Nadell Literary Agency. For more information, visit [www.kathrynemcgee.com](http://www.kathrynemcgee.com).

**Ivy Pochoda** holds a BA in Classics and Literature, with a focus on Dramatic Literature, from Harvard, where she graduated cum laude, and an MFA in fiction from Bennington College. She is the New York Times bestselling author of the novels *These Women*, *Wonder Valley*, *Visitation Street*, and *The Art of Disappearing*, and has won or been a finalist for the Edgar Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize (twice!), the California Book Award, the International Thriller Award, the Strand Critics Award, the Southern California Independent Booksellers Award, the Macavity Award, and others too numerous to list. Ivy is also the author of the YA/fantasy series created by the late Kobe Bryant, *Epoca: The Tree of Ecrof*, an immediate New York Times bestseller, and *Epoca: The River of Sand*, and is an in-demand ghost writer as well. Her nonfiction and criticism appears regularly in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Review of Books, and Wall Street Journal, among



others. Her most recent novel, *Sing Her Down*, was released last summer and won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize while her short story “Jackrabbit Skin” was selected for *Best American Mystery & Suspense*. Her next novel, *Ecstasy*, will be released this June.

**William Rabkin**, creator and writer of HBOAsia’s science fiction series *Dream Raider*, has written and/or produced hundreds of hours of dramatic television. He served as show runner on the long-running Dick Van Dyke mystery series “Diagnosis Murder” and on the action-adventure spectacle “*Martial Law*” and is currently creating series in Asia and Europe. He has also written a dozen network TV pilots. His work has twice been nominated for the Edgar Award for Best Television Episode from the Mystery Writers of America. He has written four books on writing for television, “*Writing the Pilot*”(2011), “*Writing the Pilot: Creating the Series*”(2017), *Writing the Pilot: Streaming* and, with Lee Goldberg, “*Successful Television Writing*” (2003) and seven novels. He is the co-creator and co-editor of “*The Dead Man*,” a 28-book series of supernatural action thrillers published by Amazon’s 47 North imprint. Rabkin is part of the core faculty of UCR-Palm Desert’s M.F.A. in Creative Writing & Writing for the Performing Arts. He recently wrote the miniseries *Estonia: The Last Wave* for the Nordic Entertainment Group and has just finished a pilot for them. He is currently consulting on a new series in South Africa.

**Rob Roberge** is the acclaimed author of several books, including the memoir *Liar*, named a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers pick and best of the year selection by Powell’s and *Entropy*, the novels *The Cost of Living*, *More Than They Could Chew*, and *Drive*, and the short story collection *Working Backwards from the Worst Moment of My Life*. His short fiction and essays have been widely published and anthologized, most recently in *Palm Springs Noir* and *Silver Waves of Summer*, and acclaimed by media outlets such as the *New York Times* Book Review, NPR, and the *LA Times*. In addition to writing and teaching, he is a guitarist and singer/songwriter in *The Hitchcock Brunettes* and the seminal LA art punk band, *The Urinals*, who’ve shared bills with *Mudhoney*, *Sonic Youth*, *Yo La Tengo*, *The Dream Syndicate*, and the *Go-Go’s*, and whose songs have been covered by *Yo La Tengo*, *The Minutemen*, *The Gun Club*, *No Age*, and many others. He also wrote and directed the short film *This Regrettable Event*. He holds an MFA from Vermont College and is an assistant professor and core faculty member of the Low Residency MFA at UC Riverside. He is at work on a new novel and several music projects and lives with his wife and fellow Hitchcock Brunette, the writer Gina Frangello, in Wonder Valley.

**Heather Scheeler** is the Administrative Assistant for the UC Riverside Performing Arts Admin department and the UC Riverside Palm Desert Low-Residency MFA program, where she received her MFA in Fiction in 2018. She is the Swiss Army Knife of Circe Consulting, run by Gina Frangello and Emily Rapp, and has worked as an event producer and freelance script writer for the *Los Angeles Times*. In her free time, she tends to the maximum number of houseplants she can fit into her tiny apartment in Long Beach and the menagerie of cats, reptiles, tarantulas, and bugs that truly make her jungle a home.

**John Schimmel** is in the middle of an extraordinarily diverse career as a writer/producer. He's been the President of Michael Douglas's Furthur Films and President of Production at Ascendant Pictures, an executive at Douglas-Reuther Productions, Belair Entertainment, and Warner Bros, co-penned the Tony-nominated musical "Pump Boys And Dinettes," published fiction and nonfiction, including his first book, *Screenwriting Behind Enemy Lines: Lessons from Inside the Studio Gates*. He currently works as Executive Producer for Cloud Imperium Games and most recently executive produced or produced the films *Shaquille O'Neal Presents Foster Boy* with Matthew Modine and Lou Gossett Jr., written and produced by his student Jay Paul Deratany; the documentary *The Great 14th: Tenzin Gyatso, The 14th Dalai Lama, In His Own Words*; and *AM I*, the first generative AI feature film, created and directed by conceptual artist Kevin Abosch and premiering at the Helsinki Art and Film Festivals. John is part of the core screenwriting faculty at the University of California at Riverside's Low Residency MFA Program in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts, providing not just an insight into how to write screenplays, but how to write screenplays that sell.

**David L. Ulin** is the author or editor of more than a dozen books, including *Sidewalking: Coming to Terms with Los Angeles*, shortlisted for the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay, and *Writing Los Angeles: A Literary Anthology*, which won a California Book Award. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Lannan Foundation, and Black Mountain Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The former book editor and book critic of the Los Angeles Times, he has written for Harper's, The Atlantic, The New York Times, The Paris Review, and Virginia Quarterly Review; his essay "Bed" was selected for The Best American Essays 2020. He is a professor of English at the University of Southern California, where he edits the literary journal *Air/Light*. Most recently, he has edited *Didion: The 1960s and 70s* and *Didion: The 1980s and 90s* for Library of America. His most recent book, *Thirteen Question Method*, was released last fall.

## TA

**Michelle Poveda** is an accomplished freelance writer and copy editor, with work featured in the L.A. Times, PBS SoCal, OC Register, Time Out, San Diego Magazine, and more. She earned a BA in Communication from San Diego State University, and an MFA in Creative Writing from UC Riverside's Low-Residency program. She works full-time as an Administrative Assistant at Pasadena City College, but hopes to become a creative writing professor anywhere she can find the gig! She is

the proud daughter of Ecuadorian immigrants, and is currently working on her first novel in her home of Los Angeles.

**Kasey Carlton** is, for better or for worse, committed to the bit. A bit of a wild card, she spent her college days in Manhattan as an overworked personal assistant to an executive headhunter and her nights as an overbooked armchair therapist via sugar daddy dating app. She doesn't recommend either career arc. Since then she's worked in influencer management, subtitle translation and closed captioning quality control, a children's museum, and the indie music touring scene.

She's a screenwriter based in Honolulu, Hawai'i whose comedy features explore the magic, trials, and tribulations of female friendships, and what happens when they violently explode. That's mostly because of all of her female friendships, their magic, trials, and tribulations, and what happened all the times they violently exploded. She holds a BA in English from Fordham University, an MFA in Screenwriting from UC Riverside Palm Desert, and the staunch belief that if people would just de-plane from front to back instead of leaping up the second the plane touches land and clogging the aisle like a bunch of self-important kindergarteners, the entire experience would be seventy times more efficient for all parties involved.