



SUMMER WRITERS SYMPOSIUM 2024



Jennifer Sinor is the author of several books of literary nonfiction. Her most recent book, *The Yogic Writer: Uniting Breath, Body, and Page*, joins the practice of writing and the practice of yoga. Her essay collections include *Sky Songs: Meditations on Loving a Broken World* and *Letters Like the Day: On Reading Georgia O’Keeffe*. She has also written the memoir *Ordinary Trauma*. The recipient of the Stipend in American Modernism as well as a nomination for the National Magazine Award, Jennifer teaches creative writing at Utah State University where she is a professor of English.

Scene, Summary, and Musing: Controlling Pace and Develop Depth in Prose

In this conversation, we will consider the relationship between scene and summary and how they are used to control pace in fiction and creative nonfiction. In addition, some time will be given to the element of musing or reflection that is one of the hallmarks of memoir writing. By looking at examples, we will see how three elements work together and also consider what makes them hard to balance well.



A.M. Luzzader is a full-time children’s author. She resides in Northern Utah and has written and published over 40 books. More than 225,000 copies of her books have been sold in the US and internationally—both in English and in translations. She is a former president of the League of Utah Writers and has received many writing awards, including Best in Show in the LUW Creative Writing Contest, second place in the Utah Arts and Museums Original Writing Contest, and many others. She was the LUW Writer of the Year for 2019–2020.

Amazon Ad Theory: Supercharge Your Amazon Ads

Are you familiar with the process of creating Amazon Ads, but you’re struggling to get traction and sell books? Do your ads fail to get impressions? Have you yet to realize success with your ads? Have you been unable to scale them effectively?

The Amazon Ad Theory class is designed for KDP self-published authors who are familiar with Amazon ads but need assistance to make them effective. No instruction about creating ads will be provided; instead, you’ll learn the Amazon Ad Theory developed by A.M. Luzzader, which has helped her sell thousands of books. This is an advanced-level class.

Manifesting for Authors: From Dream to Reality

Do you dream of being a successful, working author but can't seem to transform this dream into a reality? Have you ever thought, "It shouldn't be this hard" or "This is never going to work"? Are you wondering why other authors are enjoying success, but you can't seem to make it happen? This class is focused on using the principles of manifestation and the law of attraction to achieve your writing and publishing aspirations.



Shanan Ballam is the Poet Laureate for Logan City, Utah. She is the author of the poetry chapbook *The Red Riding Hood Papers* and two full-length poetry collections *Pretty Marrow* and *Inside the Animal: The Collected Red Riding Hood Poems*. She is a senior lecturer at Utah State University where she teaches poetry, writing, and composition. Her work has recently appeared in *Crab Creek Review*, *North American Review*, *Quarter(ly)*, *Sugar House Review*, *I-70 Review*, *Wordgathering*, and *Kaleidoscope*. She survived a massive stroke in January 2022 that paralyzed the entire right side of her body. It also robbed her of her language.

Through a lot of difficult work, she has regained the ability to speak. She also has regained the use of her right hand and arm, but she is still struggling to walk. She never quit writing poetry, though, and she has written a new chapbook about her experience, *First Poems after the Stroke*. It should be published in June 2024.

Poetry of Memory

Flannery O' Connor said "anyone who survived childhood has enough material to write for the rest of his life." In this workshop, reading poems about childhood memories will inspire us, and I'll provide prompts to propel us to write about our own.

Seeing the Extraordinary in the Ordinary

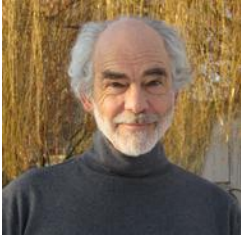
Poet William Blake could "see a world in a grain of sand," and with the right attitude and practice, anyone can discover the extraordinary in the world around them. We will read a few examples of poets fascinated with the beauty of the ordinary, practice tuning our senses and our brains to be aware as well as to verbalize what we sense, and write short poems about something "extraordinary." This session should be fun both for people who want to write poetry and for those interested in another kind of mindfulness.



Chadd VanZanten is an outdoor writer and environmental policy editor. He is the author of three collections of essays: *On Fly-Fishing the Bear River Watershed*, *On Fly-Fishing the Wind River Range*, and (with Russ Beck) *On Fly-Fishing the Northern Rockies*. His work appears regularly in the print journal, *Fly Culture Magazine*.

Fact vs. Nonfiction: Reductive Techniques for Constructing True Stories Well Told

Creative nonfiction is often described as "true stories well told." In this discussion-style class, we will explore ways to distill facts, reality, and truth to find well-told true stories. (Includes a writing exercise.)



Brock Dethier, professor emeritus at Utah State University, taught writing for 43 years and has published five books for writers and writing teachers, the most recent being *21 Genres and How to Write Them*.

Predicting: The Key to Reading and Writing?

We'll learn how we can create/build/reveal/find/craft/develop/modify our voices. Relax and have fun as we free-associate through a poem, learn an amazing amount about reading and writing, and perhaps surprise ourselves with our predictions.

What Is Voice in Writing?

We will explore the general concept of voice as well as our own writing voices. If you plan to participate, please bring at least a paragraph of your own writing that you're willing to share with one other person.



John Engler has been teaching courses in the English department at Utah State since 2003, primarily in research writing and creative nonfiction writing. Raised in small-town Wisconsin, he has graduate degrees from Utah State University (MA, American studies) and Pacific Lutheran University (MFA, nonfiction writing). He volunteers with the international nonprofit, Their Story Is Our Story, which aims to address the global migration crisis by gathering and sharing refugee stories. He also coaches the Sky View boys tennis team. Over the last twenty years, he and his wife have raised their six children in an 1899 farmhouse, which they have gutted and remodeled themselves. They are now looking forward to their second grandchild.

Stories Worth Telling: Writing Memoir that People Want to Read

This ain't your grandma's keep-a-diary class. This is a hands-on, straight-talk conversation about crafting gripping, compelling, page-turning stories out of the experiences you have lived. We'll dispel the perennial qualms not having a story worth telling, and we'll use some flash writing exercises to help you mine the nuggets of your life and talk about how to shape them into a secret-sauce narrative people won't be able to put down.



Shaun Anderson is a graduate from the USU English department. His work has appeared in *The Rectangle*, *The 45th Parallel*, and *Mud Season Review*, among other magazines. He currently runs a handful of writing groups including the SAAVI Writing Studio during the school year.

The Dark Arts, Creating Unforgettable Villains

It's no secret that villains can be some of the most compelling and most fun characters that we meet in our fiction. We all have that villain we love to hate, and we all have that villain we wish we could redeem. In this session we will discuss the traits that combine to create the villains who we love the most.

The Structural Shell: Crafting a Hermit Crab Essay

One of the delights of creative nonfiction is watching our lived experience take on new shapes as we allow it to settle onto the page. The hermit crab essay, sometimes known as a structural metaphor, is a genre where our essay assumes the shape and genre conventions of some other kind of text: a scale, a handbook of instructions, a police report, an addiction recovery workbook, in order to reach deeper layers of truth. In this session, we'll look over an example of a hermit crab essay, discuss the benefits and risks of this genre, and we'll remind ourselves that writing is meant to be fun.



Russ Beck co-authored the book *On Fly-Fishing the Northern Rockies: Essays and Dubious Advice*. He received the Frederick Manfred Award for creative writing from the Western Literature Association and the Silver Quill from The League of Utah Writers. His essays have appeared in *Eat Sleep Fish*, *Fly Culture*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Utah Public Radio* (among other places). He is a native Utahn who can often be found fishing the local streams, or riding a bike with his kid, or teaching writing at Utah State University.

Nurture Your Darlings

One of the more famous quotes that Hemingway didn't say about writing is "murder your darlings." In this class we will work to identify our own writing darlings and transform them from flabby and overwritten into effective, svelte sentences and paragraphs.



John D. Brown writes action-packed thrillers and epic fantasies with characters you want to cheer for. He currently lives with his wife and four daughters in the hinterlands of Utah where one encounters much fresh air, many good-hearted ranchers, and the occasional wolf.

Make 'Em Beg for More

How do you keep your readers begging for one more page? The answer is probably not what you think. Come to this session to learn the surprising secret—along with plenty of examples and how-tos. When you're done, you'll know exactly what you need to do to write stories that are devilishly hard for readers to put down.



Rachael Bush published her fourth book, *Love on Location*, with The Wild Rose Press in 2018 under her pen name, September Roberts. As September, she writes romance that's smoking hot and always happy ever after. As Rachael, she writes the *Botany for Everyone* series, because everyone should know the basics of botany. When she's not writing, she volunteers as the president of the League of Utah Writers, serves as the Blue Quill chapter president, and serves on the League's Conference Committee.

How to Work with an Editor

Working with an editor is a long and slow process. Whether you've just signed with a publisher or you're submitting to an anthology, this presentation will show you what to expect from your editor, the differences between the types of editors, and will remind you to be patient and professional through it all.



Heather Frost is a #1 Amazon bestselling author who writes YA/NA fantasy romance and paranormal romance. She is the author of the Seers trilogy, the Fate of Eyrinthia series, and the Esperance trilogy. Her books have been finalists and nominees for a variety of awards, including the Whitney and Swoony Awards. She has a BS in creative writing and a minor in folklore, which means she got to read fairy tales and call it homework.

When she's not writing, Heather likes to read, travel, and re-watch *Lord of the Rings*. She lives in a beautiful valley surrounded by mountains in Northern Utah.

Level Up Your Social Media

Many authors view social media and newsletters as a necessary evil—but what if they could be your superpower? You don't need a degree in social media, design, or marketing to sell your books—and you don't need 10k followers. You just need a plan, and some practical tips! In this class, we'll discuss simple ways to create and manage content for your social media and newsletters—while utilizing your strengths, targeting your ideal audience, and avoiding burnout. It's time to simplify this aspect of online marketing so you can—GASP—focus on actually writing!



Jessica Harrison-Hahn believes in the power of creating narratives that elicit emotion and insight into our human experiences. She writes fiction and historical fiction, primarily, which coincide with her undergraduate degree in English and history from Utah State University and her master's degree in history from Eastern Washington University. Jessie has a love for storytelling and teaching. As a teacher at Clearfield High School, she is able to do both.

The Elements of Romance

As difficult as fine romance can be to create in real life, it's even more challenging to craft in our writing! Come learn and discuss the building blocks and tropes that make romance enduring and timeless. How do we build a slow-burn love? How do we craft red-hot passion? How do we capture the tiny details that show our characters are meant for one another?

The Intersection Between Character and Setting

Every story requires two essential elements: character and setting. The best stories let these two elements shape and change one another. In this session we'll discuss how to create a memorable connection between our character and the settings they exist within.



Lisa Mangum has worked in publishing since 1997. She has been the managing editor for Shadow Mountain Publishing since 2014 and has worked with several *New York Times* best-selling authors. While fiction is her first love, she also has experience working with nonfiction projects.

Lisa is also the author of four national best-selling YA novels (The Hourglass Door trilogy and *After Hello*), several short stories and novellas, and a nonfiction book about the craft of writing based on the TV show *Supernatural*. Her most recent book, *Write Fearless. Edit Smart. Get Published.*, will be published January 2025. She has edited several anthologies and regularly teaches at writing conferences. She lives in Taylorsville, Utah, with her husband, Tracy.

Query Letters: The Hook, the Book, and the Cook

A good query letter can be the difference between enticing an editor to read your manuscript or having them send you a rejection letter. But how do you sum up your entire book in just a couple of paragraphs? Managing Editor Lisa Mangum shares some easy tips and tricks that you can use to help make your story stand out from the other manuscripts in the slush pile and make sure that you are presenting your story in the most memorable way you can.



Jay Paine earned his BA in English from Utah State University and is now taking some time off to have a little fun, exploring local coffee shops, bookstores, and bars. You can find his work in *The Road Runner Review*, *Deep Wild Journal*, *Constellations*, and others.

Speculative Nonfiction: Writing What Didn't Happen to Understand What Did:

Come learn about the subgenre that welcomes our what-might-have-beens and our what-ifs. Together we'll discuss how to navigate the uncharted space between our lived experiences and what we wish would have happened. Join us and discover the benefits and boundaries of this up-and-coming genre.



David Rodeback has published two collections of short fiction, with POV characters ranging in age from 5 to 87. In the previous century he taught writing, Russian language, and Russian literature at Cornell University and Brigham Young University. One of his undergraduate majors was political science; his MA minor was political thought. While studying in Moscow in 1987, he learned Marxism-Leninism from card-carrying Soviet communists (but did not adopt it). He has worked as a campaign manager and strategist in New York and Utah, briefly staffed a US Senator in Washington, has filled various unelected roles in local government, and has blogged about local and national politics for 20 years. He is CMTO of a West Valley City manufacturing firm. He, his wife, and their youngest son live in American Fork, Utah. Regrettably, the grandchildren live about 350 miles away, as the crow flies.

Writing Young Voices

Age-appropriate character voices engage and delight, but if your ordinary 15-year-olds have the vocabulary of graduate philosophy students (Dawson's Creek, anyone?), you'll lose readers. Writing young voices is more than which words you use and how many of them you stuff into a sentence. In this session we'll explore words and sentence structure, but also thought processes, speaking styles, timing, emotions, context, and a voice's evolution over time. We'll consider dialogue—speech by major and minor characters of various ages—and a larger challenge, the age-appropriate first-person narrator, where several different approaches can be effective.

World Building? You'll Need a Government

Whether you're creating a world or a village, you'll probably need a government—and unless you're being overtly allegorical, you may not want to imitate anything from the real world too closely. This session will ask the basic questions you'll need to answer, highlight the range of possibilities, and point out the rich potential for writing tension and conflict into your stories along the way.



Brittney Skye (she/her) received her MA from Utah State University in 2020. Cache Valley born and raised, she has been writing ever since she could pick up crayons. Her first chapbook, *Harvest*, was published in 2021 by Finishing Line Press. Her work has been published in *Narrative Magazine*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and *Sugar House Review*. She currently works at Utah State University as an alumni outreach coordinator for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Exploring Eroticism in Poetry: Unleashing Creativity and Sensuality

Indulge your senses and dive into the art of erotic poetry in this immersive workshop led by Brittney Skye. Discover how to weave passion, sensuality, and emotion into your verses while exploring the power of language to evoke desire and intimacy. Through guided exercises and discussions, participants will learn techniques for crafting vivid imagery, employing metaphor and symbolism, and navigating the delicate balance between subtlety and explicitness. Whether you're a seasoned poet or a newcomer to the genre, this workshop offers a safe and supportive space to explore the nuances of erotic expression.



TJ Tarbet enjoys bending the reader's mind in terrifying ways, weaving elements of horror, dark fantasy, and speculative fiction. His work can be found in various anthologies, including *The Unraveling*, *Emergence*, and the titular story for *Volatile When Mixed*.

The Art of Emotional Alchemy

Discover the transformative art of emotional alchemy. Learn to breathe life into your characters and craft narratives with vivid, sensory rich detail. Make every joy, sorrow or heart-pounding moment feel intensely real. This isn't just a course; it's your gateway to ensuring your characters stay with readers long after the final page.



Bryan Young (he/they) works across many different media. His work as a writer and producer has been called "filmmaking gold" by *The New York Times*. He's also published comic books with Slave Labor Graphics and Image Comics. He's been a regular contributor for the *Huffington Post*, *StarWars.com*, *Star Wars Insider* magazine, SYFY, */Film*, and was the founder and editor-in-chief of the geek news and review site *Big Shiny Robot!* In 2014, he wrote the critically acclaimed history book, *A Children's Illustrated History of Presidential Assassination*. He co-authored *Robotech: The Macross Saga RPG* and has written five books in the BattleTech universe: *Honor's Gauntlet*, *A Question of Survival*, *Fox Tales*, *Without Question*, and the forthcoming *VoidBreaker*. His

latest non-fiction tie-in book, *The Big Bang Theory Book of Lists* is a #1 bestseller on Amazon. His work has won two Diamond Quill awards and in 2023 he was named Writer of the Year by the League of Utah Writers. He teaches writing for *Writer's Digest*, *Script Magazine*, and at the University of Utah.

Setups, Payoffs, and Endings

There's a delicate balance in the symbiotic relationship between the setups you offer in your story and the promises you make as a writer and the payoffs you provide. This class will show you examples of good payoffs and endings and get you thinking about how you can better connect the beginning of your work to the end, to make a more impactful finale for your story.

Captivating Character Creation

The most important part of almost every story are the characters. How do you build the right character for your story? How do you pick between different sorts of characters? How do you layer in depth to your characters and make them real and believable for your readers?



E.B. Wheeler is the author of over a dozen books of history, historical fiction, and historical fantasy, including Whitney Award winner *Cruel Magic*, as well as several award-winning short stories and essays. She earned a BA in history with an English minor from BYU in 1999 and graduate degrees in history and landscape architecture from Utah State University. In addition to writing, she sometimes consults about historic preservation and teaches history. She loves gardening, folk music, reading, and traveling with her husband and kids.

Becoming Your Own Boss, Starting Your Indie Publishing Journey

Indie publishing is in a golden age, with financial and creative opportunities for indie authors. The good news is, you get to be your own boss. But that can also be the bad news. So, how do you get started in indie publishing? This step-by-step class will walk you through how to prepare and publish your books on the major publishing platforms or your own website.

You Can Judge a Book by Its Cover

We're not supposed to, but everybody does it. Your cover is your book's first impression, and it can make or break your book's success. That makes it one of your most important investments and marketing tools. Come and learn what makes a great cover that will entice readers to pick up your book.