



The Pre-Quill Conference

March 29, 2025

Utah Cultural Celebration Center

1355 W 3100 S,

West Valley City, UT 84119

The Pre-Quill Conference is an affordable educational opportunity for beginning writers, priced at only 10% of the cost of our premium conference. The Pre-Quill Conference is hosted every spring by the League of Utah Writers, a 501c3 nonprofit founded in 1935.

The League of Utah Writers empowers the writing and publishing goals of members through community interaction and dynamic educational opportunities, from novice to professional levels.

Guest of Honor

2024 League's Writer of the Year

Cassidy Ward



Author and journalist

Keynote - What We Imagine

Registration

The League of Utah Writers is a non-profit organization.

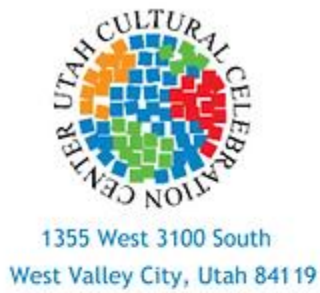
We keep the price deliberately low so that as many attendees can come as possible.

Tickets are only \$40 for all attendees and include admission to all classes, workshops, networking opportunities, and keynote address by the League of Utah Writers' Writer of the Year.

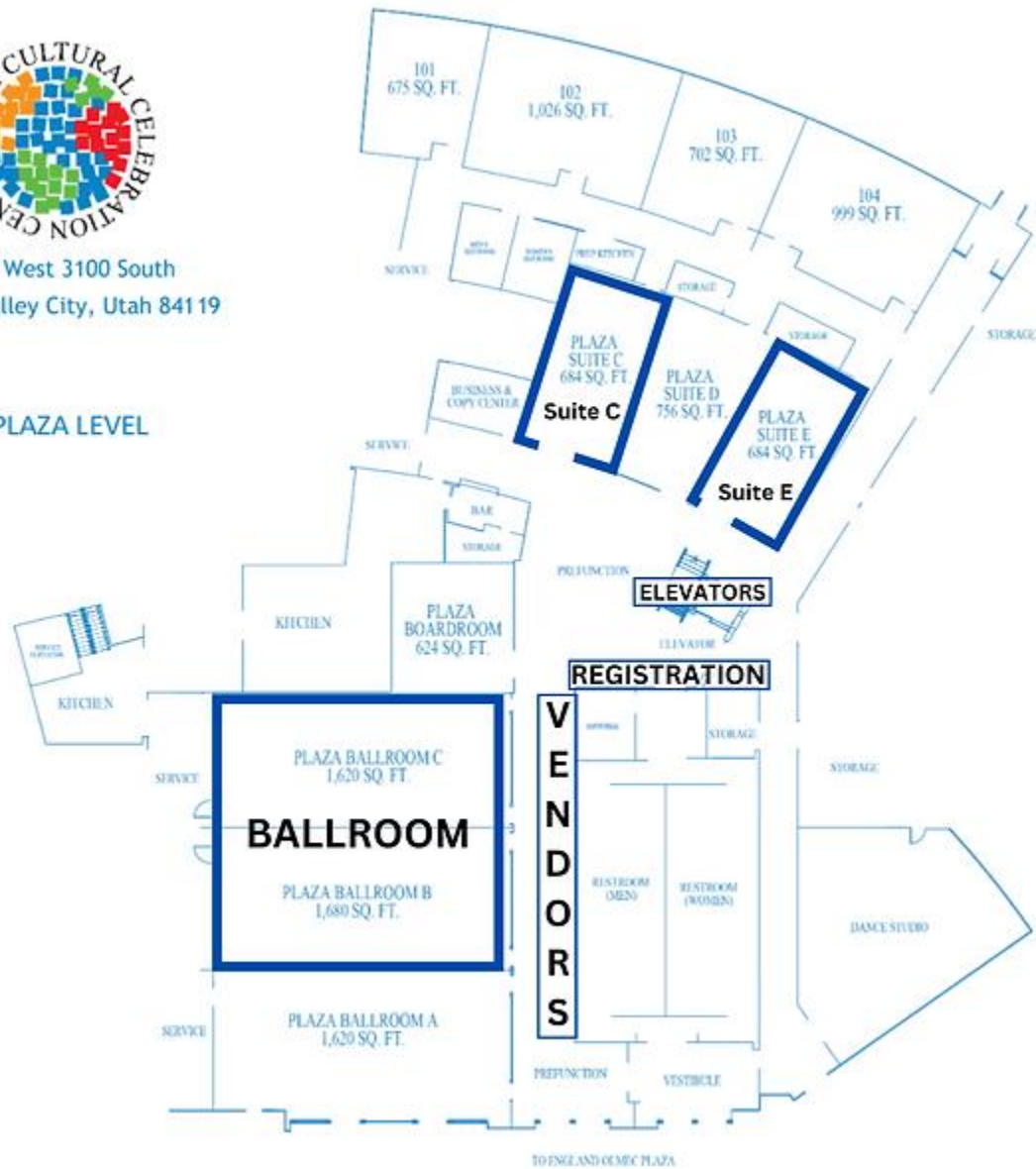
At-a-Glance Schedule

Schedule At-a-Glance: Saturday, March 29, 2025				
Time	Plaza Ballroom	Plaza Suite C	Plaza Suite E	Plaza Lobby
9:30am - 9:55am				Registration
10:00am - 10:10am	Welcome Address			
10:15am - 11:15am	Short Stories: From Idea to Completion Cassidy Ward	Creative Non-Fiction: Life Stories Worth Reading McKel Jensen	Seven Ways of the Self-Editing Samurai Sarah Maloy Bailey	Vendor Hall
11:30am - 12:30pm	Self Publishing 101 Caryn Larrinaga	Structure, Outlines, and Other Things Pantsers Hate John M. Olsen	Writing BIPOC Characters with Sensitivity J.T. Moore	Vendor Hall
12:45pm - 2:15pm	Lunch on your own		League board meeting	Vendor Hall
2:30pm - 3:30pm	Avoiding Tropes & Clichés Kase Johnstun	Creative Marketing for Beginners Candace J. Thomas	All Things Critique: How to NOT Make People Cry Makayla Nielson	Vendor Hall
3:45pm - 4:45pm	Epic First Chapters! Lindsay Hiller	Looking Behind the Traditional Publishing Curtain Sylvia Langille	Tips and Tricks to Beat Writers Block Jodi L. Milner	Vendor Hall
5:00pm - 6:15pm	Keynote: What We Imagine Cassidy Ward ----- Closing & Anthology Release Party			Vendor Hall

Venue Map



PLAZA LEVEL



2025 Classes and Faculty



Looking Behind the Traditional Publishing Curtain - C.R. Langille

Award-winning author, publisher, and editor.

Learn the ins and outs of the publishing world. Come and find out how do editors/publishers choose their stories; pare down the slush to the short list; get a book/story ready for publication; increase your chances of acceptance; shed some light on why your story may have been rejected; and more!

Level: Intermediate (students have some writing experience or familiarity with this topic)

Track: The Business of Writing (querying, publishing, marketing, career development)

Presenter bio: C.R. Langille spent many a Saturday afternoon watching monster movies with her mom. It wasn't long before she started crafting nightmares to share with her readers. She is a retired, disabled veteran with a deep love for weird and creepy tales. This prompted her to form Timber Ghost Press in January of 2021. She is an award-winning author, affiliate member of the Horror Writers Association, the DEI Chair for the League of Utah Writers, earned her MFA: Writing Popular Fiction from Seton Hill University in 2014, and was named Editor of the Year by the League of Utah Writers in 2024.



Self-Publishing 101 - Caryn Larrinaga

Bestselling Horror and Mystery Author

Demystify self-publishing with this overview of everything you need to know to turn your unpolished manuscript into a finished book. From formatting and cover design to marketing and distribution, this class covers it all from a beginner's perspective.

Level: Intermediate (students have some writing experience or familiarity with this topic)

Track: The Business of Writing (querying, publishing, marketing, career development)

Presenter bio: Caryn Larrinaga is an internationally best-selling mystery and horror author. She has won multiple awards for her work, and in 2021, she was named Writer of the Year by the League of Utah Writers. Caryn lives near Salt Lake City, Utah, with her husband and their clowder of cats. She is an active member of Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of

America, the Horror Writers Association, the Cat Writers Association, and the League of Utah Writers. Visit www.carynlarrinaga.com for a free spooky cat story and true tales of haunted places.



Writing BIPOC characters with sensitivity - J.T. Moore

An author who likes diverse stories

American fiction writing is saturated with straight white male voices. With our diversifying country it makes sense to diversify our writing. Writing all characters with sensitivity represents our world.

Level: Beginner (students are EITHER new to writing OR new to this topic)

Track: General Writing Craft

Presenter bio: J.T. Moore writes magic with diversity because she wants to see more BIPOC protagonists in speculative fiction. J.T. celebrated the completion of the Ray Bradbury challenge to write 52 Stories in 52 weeks with a loud scream, wine and the conviction that she could pursue her dream. An active member of the League of Utah Writers Blue Quill and Genre Writers Chapters, you can find her on Twitter @jtmoore487, Instagram jtmoore487 and her website: jtmoorewrites.wordpress.com.



Structure, Outlines and Other Things Pantsers Hate - John Olson

Author and editor

Some people are outliners, while others are not. Some understand story structure, while others don't. How can you make the most of outlines and structure tailored to your writing style? Let's discuss outlines in relation to the story structure you're after, and what you can do to match it to your writing style.

Level: Intermediate (students have some writing experience or familiarity with this topic)

Track: General Writing Craft

Presenter bio: John M. Olsen is an award-winning author and editor. His work spans multiple genres, and he loves stories about ordinary people stepping up to do extraordinary things. His short stories have appeared in dozens of anthologies. His novels include the Polecat Protocol science fiction series, the Riland Throne fantasy series, High Hopes, a

historical military fantasy set in the JTF13 universe, and Foiled Ambitions, a military SF novel set in the Four Horsemen universe.



Epic First Chapters! - Lindsay Hiller

Author of Bailey in the Corner, Indy Author

Are you entering a writing contest? Or pitching to an agent? Come learn the essential elements of a First Chapter that will ground your reader into your scene, attach them to your character, and leave them desperate to get their hands on chapter 2.

Level: Intermediate (students have some writing experience or familiarity with this topic)

Track: General Writing Craft

Presenter bio: LINDSAY HILLER grew up in Seattle hating creative writing—but she loved to read. At age 23 her husband dared her to write a book of her own and her entire world changed. After dabbling in YA fantasy and romance, she finally settled happily into upmarket adult fiction. Lindsay and her husband are dedicated entrepreneurs, so logically she jumped head-first into Indy Publishing. She’s an obsessive plotter and an avid book collector, a mother of six, and president of the Typewriters chapter of the League of Utah Writers.



Creative Non-Fiction: Life Stories Worth Reading - McKel Jensen

Professional technical writer, editor, word nerd

Your life story isn't about you, it's about your reader. Learn how to connect with your reader in ways that engage and entertain in ways that make your lived experience matter.

Level: Beginner (students are EITHER new to writing OR new to this topic)

Track: Non-Fiction

Presenter bio: McKel Jensen is an award-winning author whose work has appeared in multiple anthologies including Utah’s Best Poetry and Prose 2022. She earned a Master of Arts in English degree from Weber State University and has worked as a technical writer for almost two decades. McKel owns her own business, McKel Writes: Professional Writing Services, where she works as a book editor and helps others develop their resumes. McKel

is a word nerd, through and through. She is also a stay-at-home mom to three curious kids and lives with her husband in Brigham City.



Creative Marketing For Beginners - Candace J. Thomas

League of Utah Writers Marketing Chair

Marketing is something that surprises many writers, not knowing that this was now part of the job of being an author. Candace, current marketing chair for the League of Utah Writers and multi-genre author, breaks down marketing basics and savvy secrets from years of traditional, indie, and hybrid publishing.

Level: Intermediate (students have some writing experience or familiarity with this topic)

Track: The Business of Writing (querying, publishing, marketing, career development)

Presenter bio: Candace J. Thomas is an author of young adult fantasy and currenting Marketing Chair for the League. She is known for being stupidly spontaneous and has flashes of brilliance at 4 in the morning.



Short Stories: From Idea to Completion - Cassidy Ward

Author and journalist

Short stories can be a way to experiment, a bite-sized way to flex your writing muscles, and a pathway to publication. We'll talk about generating ideas, creating miniature outlines, and putting pen to paper.

Level: Beginner (students are EITHER new to writing OR new to this topic)

Track: General Writing Craft

Presenter bio: Cassidy writes about science, stories, and the ways the two influence one another. He's a science and entertainment journalist and author based outside of Salt Lake City. He writes the popular Science Behind the Fiction column, exploring the real-world science behind your favorite shows and movies, for SYFY Wire. And he's been interviewed by NPR's "All Things Considered" and the BBC's "The Naked Scientists" as an expert on the intersection of science and stories. Cassidy's other bylines include NBC, USA, StarTrek.com, SlashGear, Observer, and The Daily Beast. He was named 2024 Writer of the Year by the League of Utah Writers.



Tips and Tricks to Beat Writer's Block - Jodi L. Milner

Author and Podcast Host

Writer's block stinks, but its cause might be different than you think. Come learn the psychology behind why we hesitate to do the hard stuff and techniques to overcome this reluctance.

Level: Intermediate (students have some writing experience or familiarity with this topic)

Track: The Writer's Life (League opportunities, support networks, critique groups, dealing with rejection)

Presenter bio: Jodi L. Milner is the author of the YA fantasy series The Shadow Barrier Trilogy, which has won several awards including the prestigious Diamond Quill from the League of Utah Writers in 2023. She's also a cohost of Squirrel! The Podcast for the Distracted Writer, runs a small virtual assisting business helping author clients overcome their technical challenges, and teaches at local writing conferences.

When not chasing daydreams or her children, she enjoys destroying movie plots, making amigurumi, and plotting to take over the world. Learn more at <https://jodilmilner.com/>



Avoiding Tropes and Cliches - Kase Johnstun

Writer, Runner, Book Dude

Tired of predictable plots and stereotyped characters? Learn the most overused tropes—and what to do instead—so you can break free from tired clichés, subvert expectations, and breathe fresh life into your stories.

Level: Beginner (students are EITHER new to writing OR new to this topic)

Track: General Writing Craft

Presenter bio: Kase Johnstun lives and writes in Ogden, Utah. Johnstun is the Manager for the Utah Center for the Book and Utah's Representative to the Library of Congress.

His recently released CAST AWAY, about a young boy who, along with his formidable great-aunt (an immigrant who settled on the Utah salt flats in 1923), devises a plan to join the cast of a reality show, win the prize money, and bring back their undocumented family safely to America, has been named a finalist for the multicultural category for the 2024 IPPY Awards, a finalist for the 2024 Page Turner Awards, and a SHELF UNBOUND 2024

Notable Reads.

He is the author of the acclaimed novel, *LET THE WILD GRASSES GROW* (Torrey House Press, 2021), a reimagining of his Mexican American grandparents' lives during the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and WWII. The novel was recently named a finalist for the High Plains Book Awards, longlisted for Reading the West, and named a coveted Women's National Book Association Great Group Reads for 2022.

Additionally, Johnstun is the author of *BEYOND THE GRIP CRANIOSYNOSTOSIS* (McFarland & Co., 2015), which has been featured in Pennsylvania Parenting Magazine, Portland Family Magazine, The Ogden Standard Examiner, as well as having mentions in the Chicago Tribune and the Seattle Times. It was awarded the Gold Quill (First Place) in Creative Nonfiction by the League of Utah Writers for 2015.



All things Critique: How to NOT Make People Cry - Makayla Nielson

Contest Chair for The League of Utah Writers

Writing is often thought of as a lonely endeavor... but it doesn't have to be! Come learn about finding the right critique partner and the tools to keep them (and how to NOT make them cry!).

Level: Beginner (students are EITHER new to writing OR new to this topic)

Track: The Writer's Life (League opportunities, support networks, critique groups, dealing with rejection)

Presenter bio: Makayla Nielson was raised in Illinois and currently resides in Lehi, Utah with her husband and three children. When she's not writing, she's out on adventures in the canyons near to her home, watching science fiction movies, or crocheting.

She has published short stories in Flash Fiction Magazine and Stance: Studies on the Family, along with articles in academic journals. Her novel, *Chimera's Blood*, will debut in late 2025. She is the current Contest Chair for The League of Utah Writers.



Seven Ways of the Self-Editing Samurai - Sarah Maloy Bailey

Freelance Book Editor, Bailey Editing

Developing the delicate skill of self-editing requires as much patience and tenacity as writing a first draft. This presentation will arm you with seven strategies to help you master the art of intentional, wise, and thorough self-editing to save you time and money and bring the very best out of your writing.

Level: Beginner (students are EITHER new to writing OR new to this topic)

Track: General Writing Craft

Presenter bio: Sarah Bailey is a freelance editor specializing in many fiction and nonfiction genres. One of her greatest passions is helping authors access editorial services at any price point. She holds a degree in Writing and Rhetoric from the University of Utah and a publishing certificate from the Denver Publishing Institute. When Sarah is not writing, editing, or listening to audiobooks, she can be found walking outdoors, planning her next travel adventure, or helping one of her five kids find their shoes. Learn more about Sarah at www.baileyediting.com.

