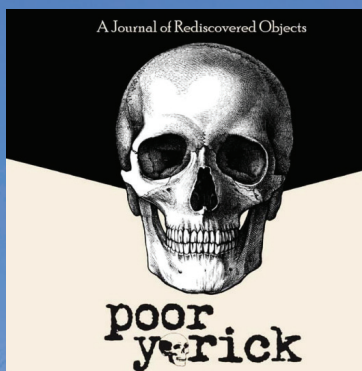


WCSU | **MFA**
CREATIVE
AND
PROFESSIONAL
WRITING



**Bram
Stoker
Festival**



WCSU MFA
2022 Winter Residency



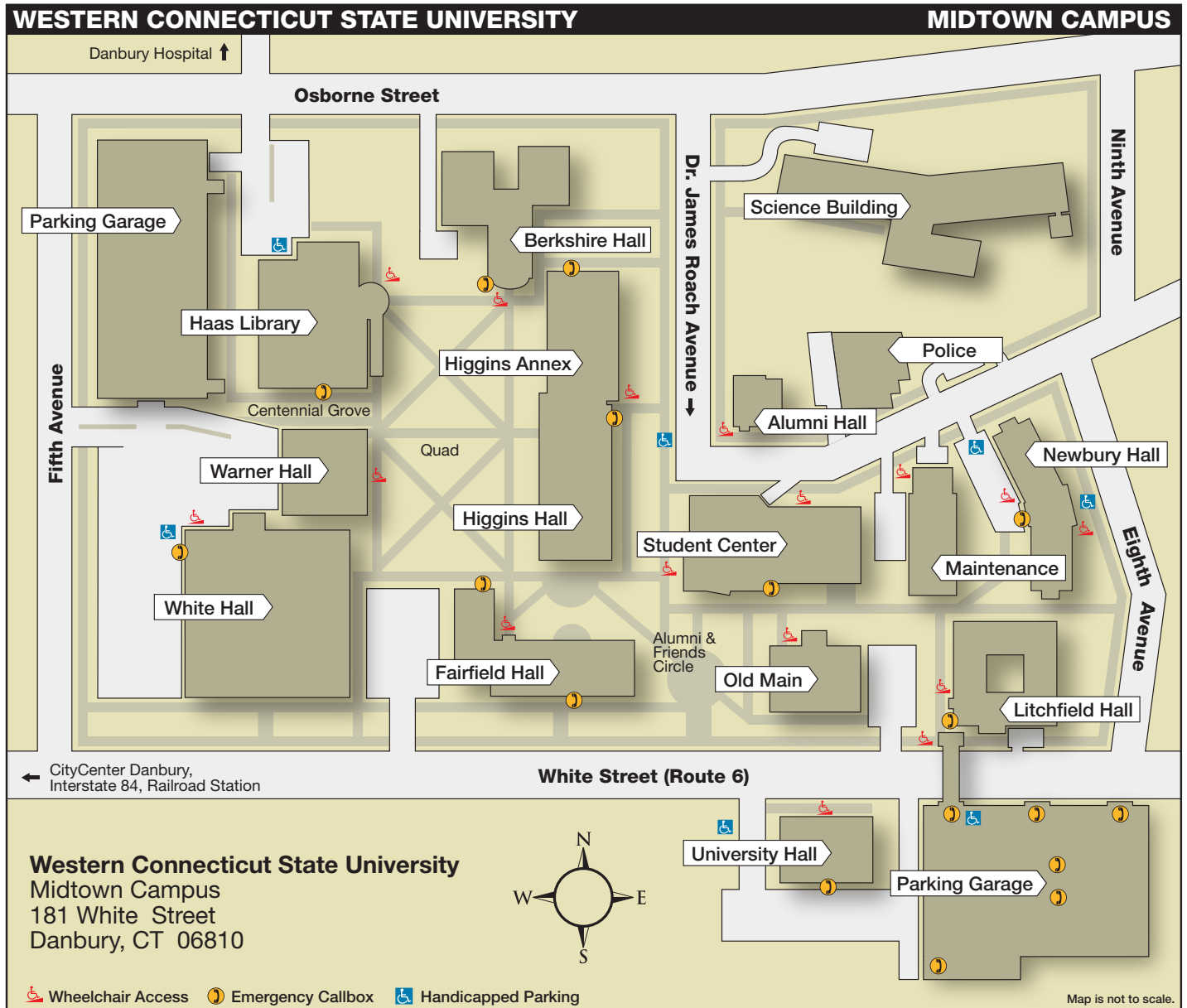
**Residency books are available through
our local independent bookstore, Byrd's Books.**

Visit their website here.



178 Greenwood Avenue • Bethel, CT 06801 • 203-730-2973

Campus Map



Nearby Restaurants

Midtown

Soho Pizza Danbury
Minas Carne & Deli
Mothership on Main
TK's American Cafe
Three Brothers Diner

West Side

Stanziato's
Square One
Mill Plain Diner
Rosy Tomorrow's
Market Place Kitchen & Bar

2022 Winter Residency Schedule

	9:15-11:15	11:30-12:30	12:30-1:45	2:00-4:00	4:00-5:00	5:00-7:15	7:30-9:00
Sun., Jan. 2	Arrivals			New Student Orientation HI-118	Mentor Meetings	Dinner	Opening Remarks/Faculty Flash Reading Featured Faculty Elizabeth Cohen Warner Hall, 1 st floor
Mon., Jan. 3	Elizabeth Cohen HI-118	George Brown HI-116	Lunch	David Treuer HI-118	Graduate Student Reading Warner Hall, 1 st floor	Dinner	David Treuer HBA Nonfiction Warner Hall, 1 st floor
Tues., Jan. 4	Penny Guisinger HI-118	Thesis Q&A HI-116	Lunch	Melanie Brooks HI-118	Enrichment Project Presentations HI-116	Dinner	Melanie Brooks & Penny Guisinger Warner Hall, 1 st floor
Wed., Jan. 5	Jane Cleland HI-118	Poor Yorick/Dublin Info Session HI-116	Lunch	Onnesha Roychoudhuri HI-118	Graduate Student Reading Warner Hall, 1 st floor	Dinner	Onnesha Roychoudhuri Warner Hall, 1 st floor
Thur., Jan. 6	Cristina Alger HI-118	Featured Alum: Ben Chase Warner Hall – 1 st floor	Lunch	Jeff Walt HI-118	Online Multi-Genre Workshop Meetings Oscar: HI-116 Erik: HI-118	Dinner	HBA Poetry and Fiction: Cristina Alger Jeff Walt Warner Hall, 1 st floor
Fri., Jan. 7	Kateri Kosek HI-118	Mentor Meetings	Lunch	Matthew Quinn Martin HI-116	Free	Dinner	Bad Poetry Contest Warner Hall, 1 st floor

Green: Required sessions
Yellow: Optional sessions

2022 Winter Residency Schedule

***Note: Breakfast will be served from 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM each morning of residency in the lobby of Higgins Hall**

Sunday, January 2nd

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
New Student Orientation
Higgins Hall 118

All students starting the program in spring 2022 are required to attend this session with program coordinator Anthony D'Aries. We will discuss syllabi, Blackboard, and how best to prepare for your first semester.

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Mentor Meetings
Various Locations

Students will meet with their spring semester mentors to begin planning course syllabi.

5:00 PM – 7:15 PM
Dinner

Students and faculty are welcome to meet for dinner at any of the local Danbury restaurants.

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM
Opening Remarks & Faculty Flash Reading. Featured Reader: Elizabeth Cohen
Warner Hall – First Floor

Join us for snacks and refreshments as we kick off the winter 2022 residency! Several faculty members will share brief excerpts from their work before we welcome our featured reader, Elizabeth Cohen.

Monday, January 3rd

9:15 AM – 11:15 AM
Elizabeth Cohen
“Poetry and Prose”
Higgins Hall 118

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes).

-Walt Whitman

The world so loves a category, and this goes for our writing lives as well. We are often told as writers that we must choose a genre. Like so many things in life, we are asked to check a box. Are you a poet or prose writer, memoirist or novelist, short story writer or long form journalist? But in many ways, the writers that we are are not so easy to define. What if we are poets AND journalists? Short story writers AND memoirists? Where is the “all of the above” box?

The truth is we do not have to define our writing identities according to genre modalities. We can truly be (and very likely are) “all of the above.” This begins with seeing, and moreover hearing, the ways our writerly voices appear in all we write. Can you hear your poet self in an essay? Or hear your essay self in your novel? This is a workshop on how you can easily hear, see and identify your voice in all you write. In this workshop we will work to identify what it is that makes our voices ours. Then we will find ways to mentally stop dividing our writing selves in ways the world has asked us to with exercises in which you will consciously integrate your poetic voice in your prose and fiction writing and vice versa, how you can integrate your narrative sensibility into your poetry.

A fun workshop about identity and voice. Bring two or three examples of your best work.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

George Brown – Highlights Foundation Q&A
Higgins Hall 116

Join us in an informal conversation about the history of the iconic children’s media brand, Highlights, while also learning about the work of the Highlights Foundation. We’ll have some historical conversation, some conversation about writing retreats and the pursuit of story for children and get a sense for how this nonprofit organization operates.

12:30 PM – 1:45 PM

Lunch
Student Center Cafeteria

Lunch is included each day of residency.

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

David Treuer – Nonfiction Master Class
Higgins Hall 118

TBD

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Graduate Student Reading
Warner Hall – First Floor

Join us as we celebrate our graduating students and listen to them read from their MFA theses.

5:00 PM – 7:15 PM

Dinner

Students and faculty are welcome to meet for dinner at any of the local Danbury restaurants.

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Housatonic Book Award Reading – David Treuer (Nonfiction)

Warner Hall – First Floor

Tuesday, January 4th

9:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Penny Guisinger

“Grant Writing for Writers”

Higgins Hall 118

To many people, the idea of successfully applying for grant funding is as mystifying as space travel. Finding the right match, assembling the materials, crafting the ask, and (gasp) creating a budget: none of this is what we imagined doing when we entered our MFA programs, but attracting philanthropic support can make a huge difference in the life of any artist. Fortunately, help has arrived! Led by a seasoned grant writer, this workshop will break grant seeking and writing into its essential steps. Participants will learn what a grant is, where to look for one, what to ask for, how to ask for it, and common mistakes to avoid. Further, we will explore grant writing as a viable career choice for anyone seeking to earn a living with words.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Thesis Q&A

Higgins Hall 116

All students entering their thesis semester are required to attend this session. Thesis mentors (and anyone else interested in learning more about the thesis) are also welcome to attend.

12:30 PM – 1:45 PM

Lunch

Student Center Cafeteria

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Melanie Brooks

“Writing What Hurts”

Higgins Hall 118

Writing about difficult life circumstances—such as illness, death, trauma, abuse, family dysfunction, displacement, and more—can help a writer understand them in a more profound way. The process of re-entering those memories, taking them apart, and then putting them back together again on the writer’s own terms, can transform them into something deeply meaningful for both writer and reader. In this workshop, we’ll look at ways to gently peel back the layers of memory to discover the stories at their core. We’ll talk about examining our motives for digging into these stories and how to take care of ourselves in the process. We’ll discuss how giving narrative shape to our hard stories can invite others to lean into our experiences and offer them permission to reveal some of their own.

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Enrichment Project Presentations

Warner Hall – First Floor

Come hear your fellow MFA students discuss their Enrichment Projects and answer questions about their process.

5:00 PM – 7:15 PM

Dinner

Students and faculty are welcome to meet for dinner at any of the local Danbury restaurants.

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Reading & Q&A – Melanie Brooks & Penny Guisinger

Warner Hall – First Floor

Wednesday, January 5th

9:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Jane Cleland

“Set the Stage: Character-based Descriptions & World-building Considerations”

Higgins Hall 118

We'll discuss the complexity of choosing settings that align with your story and enhance your readers' experiences. Specifically, we'll consider how to let decisions about your settings be driven by your characters' behavior and personalities (crucial) and how to use place to add intrigue and suspense (also crucial). We'll also discuss strategic world-building in fantasy, horror, sci-fi, and spec.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Poor Yorick/Dublin Residency Info Session

Higgins Hall 116

Interested in learning more about our literary journal, *Poor Yorick*, and our residency in Dublin? Come chat with students and faculty and find out how to participate in these two exciting features of our MFA program.

12:30 PM – 1:45 PM

Lunch

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Onnesha Roychoudhuri

“Playing with Blocks”

Higgins Hall 118

If you're struggling to re-enter prose that you want to revise or find yourself losing momentum in a writing project you're in the middle of, this workshop is for you. Through a series of guided readings and creative exercises, we'll focus on recapturing the playfulness and creativity that sparked the work you're most invested in revisiting or furthering.

In addition to experimenting with creative writing exercises, we'll also use prompts and exercises from the visual art and storytelling worlds. Writers from all genres are welcome, though the exercises will be most useful for those who can identify clear characters/narrators in the work they're focusing on—whether fictional or non-fictional. Attendees should bring a printout of 1-3 pages from a work in progress.

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Graduate Student Reading
Warner Hall – First Floor

Join us as we celebrate our graduating students and listen to them read from their MFA theses.

5:00 PM – 7:15 PM
Dinner

Students and faculty are welcome to meet for dinner at any of the local Danbury restaurants.

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM
Reading & Q&A – Onnesha Roychoudhuri
Warner Hall – First Floor

Thursday, January 6th

9:15 AM – 11:15 AM
Cristina Alger
“Explosive Openings”
Higgins Hall 118

A well-crafted opening (first sentence, first paragraph, first chapter) will hook, compel, and excite a reader, and set the tone for the rest of the novel. In this class, novelist Cristina Alger will discuss why openings are so crucially important, what elements make for a powerful opening, and what techniques can be used in drafting them. She will read short excerpts from her own writing as well as from the work of others from across genres, and will engage the class in a meaningful discussion about how best to open their own work of fiction.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Featured Alum: Ben Chase – Poetry Reading
Warner Hall – First Floor

Join us as we celebrate MFA alum Ben Chase on the upcoming release of his first collection of poetry: *Here to See It* (Kelsay Books).

12:30 PM – 1:45 PM
Lunch
Student Center Cafeteria

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Jeff Walt
“Surprise, Surprise: Structure in Poetry”
Higgins Hall 118

Poetic structure is the pattern of a poem’s turning. T.S. Eliot calls the poem’s turn “one of the most important means of poetic effect since Homer.” More than any other aspect of poetry, it is structure that reveals how poems remain whole and unified even as they move and leap. Structure’s primary concern is the art of the turn and often this means making surprising turns.

In this workshop, we will grow together in an exploration of the ways poets employ structure to craft poetry.

Jeff will bring many examples of structure for reading and discussion. Ultimately, we will produce poems in workshop which remind and encourage us to see and to create poems that consciously maneuver.

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Online Multi-Genre Workshop Meetings

Students will meet with their Online Multi-Genre Workshop instructor and fellow students to discuss course requirements and expectations.

5:00 PM – 7:15 PM

Dinner

Students and faculty are welcome to meet for dinner at any of the local Danbury restaurants.

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Housatonic Book Award Reading – Cristina Alger (Fiction) & Jeff Walt (Poetry)

Warner Hall – First Floor

Friday, January 7th

9:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Kateri Kosek

“Finding the Creativity in Science”

Higgins Hall 118

It's clearer than ever that science and scientific literacy are important right now, and we ignore it at our peril. Writing about science need not be a niche endeavor, either. It can find a home in the genres of creative nonfiction, fiction, and even poetry, adding depth to the most personal of stories. Or if science is the primary goal, some may think that it must be straightforward, that science doesn't lend itself to much creativity. While that may sometimes be the case, including a creative element can add depth and interest. How can you spin scientific information more creatively, or find the “emotional undercurrent” of the science? How do you bring “the personal” into science without making yourself the center of attention? Whether your goal is to write about scientific material, or to incorporate it into writing about something else, in this workshop we'll examine how the scientific and the creative, the objective and the subjective, blend and overlap in varying degrees, depending on writers' goals and audience.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Mentor Meetings

Various Locations

Students will meet with their spring semester mentors to begin planning course syllabi.

12:30 PM – 1:45 PM

Lunch

Student Center Cafeteria

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Matthew Quinn Martin

“Playing in Someone Else’s Sandbox: Life as a Hired Gun”

Higgins Hall 116

What do you do when your agent asks if you’d be up for completing an unfinished manuscript from one of the bestselling authors of all time? Or a multi-Grammy nominated heavy metal legend wants you to collaborate with him on his screenplay? Or a film producer hires you to write the screen adaptation of the work of a playwright so iconic, they coined a term after him?

Besides immediately saying “yes,” how do you prepare for such a task? How do you put yourself in position to secure an assignment like this in the first place? What responsibilities—to the work, to the person paying you, and to the world at large—do you bear? This is where the worlds of “creative” and “professional” writing collide. Whether dealing with an existing IP, or helping to create something from whole cloth, the demands and expectations for “on assignment” work can be quite different from those you are used to.

Drawing from close to two decades of trial and error, join me as I share the joys and frustrations, the pitfalls and the rewards, of working for hire. And take you through the fundamentals of what’s required to set you on your own journey towards this unique corner of the writing world.

5:00 PM – 7:15 PM

Dinner

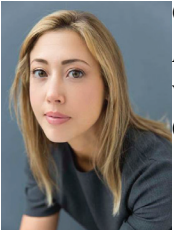
Students and faculty are welcome to meet for dinner at any of the local Danbury restaurants.

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Bad Poetry Contest

The most anticipated event of the winter residency! Sign up to read your “so bad it’s good” poem and you might just win one of our three fabulous prizes. All students, faculty, and alumni are welcome to read.

2022 Winter Residency Presenter Bios



Cristina Alger is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Girls Like Us*, *The Banker's Wife*, *The Darlings*, and *This Was Not the Plan*. A graduate of Harvard College and NYU Law School, she worked as a financial analyst and a corporate attorney before becoming a writer. She lives in Connecticut with her husband and children.

Melanie Brooks is the author of *Writing Hard Stories: Celebrated Memoirists Who Shaped Art from Trauma* (Beacon Press, 2017). She teaches professional writing at Northeastern University and narrative medicine in the MFA program at Bay Path University in Massachusetts and creative writing at Nashua Community College in New Hampshire. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Psychology Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Ms. Magazine*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Creative Nonfiction*. She is completing a memoir called *A Hard Silence* about the lasting impact of living with the ten-year secret of her father's HIV disease before his death in 1995. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband, two children, and two Labs.



George Brown is the Executive Director of the Highlights Foundation whose mission is to positively impact children by amplifying the voices of storytellers. A Highlights kid through and through, George held positions at Highlights, Inc. before transitioning to work for the Highlights Foundation in 2016. The Highlights Foundation hosts intimate and inspiring workshops at its retreat center in northeast Pennsylvania, as well offering online courses to those with a passion for storytelling for children.

Benjamin J. Chase is a Connecticut native with an MFA in poetry from WCSU. His poems have appeared in more than a dozen journals over the years, including *Connecticut River Review*, *The Aureorean*, and *Windhover*. He is a member of the literary reading group Chapter & Verse in New Haven, and he currently chairs the English department at Christian Heritage School in Trumbull. His first book of poetry, *Here to See It*, is being published by Kelsay Books in the summer of 2022.



Elizabeth Cohen is the author of *The Family on Beartown Road: A Memoir of Love and Courage* (Random House); *The Hypothetical Girl* (Other Press), short fiction, and 6 books of poetry, most recently *Wonder Electric* (Kelsay Press). In addition, she co-authored *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*, a biography/memoir of Dr. Lori Arviso Alvord, the first Navajo woman surgeon. She has taught at Binghamton University, The New School for Social Research, WCSU and SUNY Plattsburgh, where she received tenure in 2017. This winter she is retiring from academia to work on her writing and focus on Book Magick, her private memoir coaching business. For the last 11 years she and her daughter Aviva Lilith resided in Plattsburgh, NY. This winter she is so happy to be relocating to Albuquerque, NM, where she grew up.



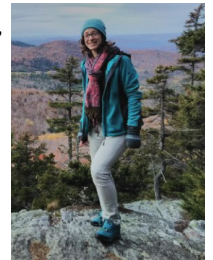
Jane K. Cleland writes both fiction and nonfiction. *Jane Austen's Lost Letters*, the 14th in her multiple award-winning Josie Prescott Antiques Mystery series (St. Martin's & *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*), has just been published. She also wrote the Agatha-award winning bestsellers, *Mastering Suspense*, *Structure & Plot* and *Mastering Plot Twists* (Writer's Digest Books). She is a member of the fulltime faculty at Lehman College, part of the City University of New York, a contributing editor for *Writer's Digest Magazine*, and the chair of the Wolfe Pack's Black Orchid Novella Award (BONA) in partnership with *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*. She is a frequent workshop leader and guest author at writing conferences, association meetings, and MFA Residencies. Also, Jane offers free monthly virtual workshops on the craft and business of writing, and Mystery Masterminds, a series of small group virtual workshops. More details are available at www.janecleland.com

Anthony D'Aries is the author of *The Language of Men: A Memoir* (Hudson Whitman Press, 2012), which received the PEN Discovery Prize and IndieFab's Book of the Year Award. His work has appeared in *McSweeney's*, *Boston Magazine*, *Solstice*, *The Good Men Project*, *Shelf Awareness*, *Memoir Magazine*, *The Literary Review*, *Sport Literate*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, and elsewhere. He has taught writing and literature in prisons, shelters, and hospitals and was selected as the Lighthouse Writers Workshop's Fort Lyon Writer-in-Residence. Anthony currently coordinates the MFA in Creative and Professional Writing at WCSU.



Penny Guisinger has worked and written grants in the nonprofit sector for almost thirty years, including positions as a fundraising consultant and development director. She has successfully attracted grants, public and private, ranging from \$2,500 to \$1 million and everything in between. As a writer, she is the author of *Postcards from Here*. Pushcart nominated, a Maine Literary Award winner, and a three-time notable in Best American Essays, she is a graduate of the Stonecoast MFA Program.

Kateri Kosek's poetry and essays have appeared in such places as *Orion Magazine*, *Terrain.org*, *Catamaran*, *Northern Woodlands Magazine*, and *Creative Nonfiction*, where, most recently, she was awarded the best essay prize for the "Intoxication" issue. Her poetry won a contest at *Briar Cliff Review*, and has been a finalist at *Flyway*, *Writers at Work*, *Rosebud*, and *Arts & Letters*. She has a collection titled *American Eclipse*, as yet unpublished. Kateri lectures in English at Northwestern Connecticut Community College, and has taught at Marist College, Dutchess Community College, and Western CT State University, where she mentors in the MFA program in Creative and Professional Writing. She lives in western Massachusetts, where she writes for *Berkshire Magazine* and *The Berkshire Edge*. She holds a B.A. from Vassar College, not far from where she grew up in the Hudson Valley, and an MFA from Western CT State University. She has been a resident at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts in Nebraska. For the past few summers, she has worked surveying bird populations in Aton Forest in northwest Connecticut.



Matthew Quinn Martin is the author of the *Nightlife* series (Pocket Star/Simon & Schuster) as well as numerous works of short fiction. He is the co-writer of the feature films *Being* and *Slingshot*. He lives in the shadow of the Capital in Upstate New York, and when he isn't writing or pulling a "Bob Vila" on the house he just bought, he spends his time playing bagpipes competitively (...for real).



Onnesha Roychoudhuri is an editor, journalist, and fiction writer. She is the author of *The Marginalized Majority: Claiming Our Power in a Post-Truth America*, named one of the best books of 2018 by Kirkus Reviews. Her writing has appeared in a number of outlets, including *The Nation*, *Boston Review*, *The American Prospect*, *Salon*, *Mother Jones*, *n+1*, *McSweeney's*, *Opium*, and *Wag's Review*. Most recently, she worked as an editor for the Investigative Fund at the Nation Institute, helping to fund, edit, and place investigative journalism in a range of outlets, from *Harper's* and *GQ* to *Orion* and the *Oxford American*. She has also contributed to a number of books, including *Women's Lives* (McGraw-Hill, May 2006), *Send Yourself Roses* (Springboard Press, February 2008), *109 Forgotten American Heroes* (DK Press, October 2009), *How to Rule the World* (Klutznick, January 2011), *Hope Deferred: Narratives of Zimbabwean Lives* (McSweeney's, March 2011), and *Junk-box Jewelry* (Zest Books, June 2012).

David Treuer was born in Washington, D.C., to a father who is a Jewish Holocaust survivor and an Ojibwe (Chippewa) mother. He was raised on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation with his extended family. He attended Bemidji Senior High School. After graduating he attended Princeton University where he worked with Toni Morrison, Joanna Scott, and Paul Muldoon. While getting his PhD at the University of Michigan he published his first novel, *Little*. In 1999 he published his second novel, *The Hiawatha* and received his PhD. Beginning in 2000 he became a professor of literature and creative writing at the University of Minnesota. In 2006 he published *The Translation of Dr Apelles* (novel) and a collection of essays, *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*. In 2012 he published *Rez Life* (nonfiction) and in 2014 *Prudence* (novel). He is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, a Best Nature and Science Writing Award, two Minnesota Book Awards, and fellowships from the Bush Foundation. He is a Guggenheim Fellow and is a professor of English at USC. His essays, journalism, and reviews have appeared in *Harpers*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Esquire*, *Lucky Peach*, *Saveur*, and *Orion* among others. He divides his time between Los Angeles and his home on the Leech Lake Reservation.



Jeff Walt was born and raised in rural Pennsylvania among a community of coal miners, bricklayers, and railroad workers. His chapbook, *Soot*, was awarded co-winner of the Keystone Chapbook Prize and published in 2010 by Seven Kitchens Press. He's been awarded writing residencies from The MacDowell Colony, The Djerassi Resident Artist Program, Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Fairhope Center for the Writing Arts, and Kalani Eco-village on the Big Island of Hawaii. His poems have appeared in journals such as *Los Angeles Review*, *Alligator Juniper*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Sun*, *Connecticut Review*, *Inkwell*, *New Millennium Writings*, *The Good Men Project*, *Harpur Palate*, *Cream City Review*, *The Ledge*, *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, and *Slipstream*. Several poems from *Soot* were selected and scored by composer David Sisco and performed at Carnegie Hall on November 14, 2014. A single poem was selected by Broadsided Press for a professionally designed broadside collaboration that was made available for download and available for vectoring in August 2016. His book, *Leave Smoke*, was published on Oct. 1, 2019 by Gival Press and was awarded Runner Up in the 2020 San Francisco Book Festival and the 2020 Housatonic Book Award given by the Western Connecticut State University MFA Program "...to promote excellent writing, to identify authors who serve as professional role models for writing students..." Jeff is the Program Coordinator for the Steve Kowit Poetry Prize sponsored by the San Diego Art & Entertainment Guild and a Regional Editor for the *San Diego Poetry Annual*. Also, Jeff is the Founder and Director of The Desert Rat Residency for Writers in Palm Desert, CA. www.jeffwalt.com

WCSU MFA Community Partnerships

