

The Department of English at the William Paterson University of New Jersey is proud to continue its annual Spring Writer's Conference, which in the past has hosted such luminaries as Paul Muldoon, Francine Prose, David Means, Terese Svoboda, Russell Banks, Alison Lurie, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Yusef Komunyakaa, Chang-Rae Lee, Kimiko Hahn, Sindiwe Magona and Anthony Swofford. Join us for a day of workshops and readings in creative writing, literature and publishing. We welcome participation from scholars in all disciplines, creative writers of all stripes, professional editors, secondary-, middle-, and elementary-level educators, graduate and undergraduate students, and the general public—in short, anyone interested in reading, writing and literary pursuits. We offer Professional Development Hours to New Jersey Educators.

Keynote Speaker: Porochista Khakpour



“Khakpour brings her characters vividly to life; their flaws and feints at intimacy feel poignantly real, and their journeys generate real suspense.”

— *The New York Times*

“Khakpour expertly captures the culture clash between generations of immigrant families as well as the questions about identity and home that are common themes in immigrant novels. She brings a fresh perspective and style to the genre, exploring themes of escape and being lost and found.”

— *The Chicago Tribune*

Porochista Khakpour's debut novel, *Sons and Other Flammable Objects*, was named a New York Times Editor's Choice, one of the Chicago Tribune's Fall's Best and the 2007 California Book Award winner in the First Fiction category. Her recently released second novel, *The Last Illusion* (Bloomsbury, 2014), was a Kirkus Best Book of 2014, a BuzzFeed Best Fiction Book of 2014, an NPR Best Book of 2014, one of BuzzFeed's 28 Best Books By Women in 2014, an Electric Literature Best Book of

2014, a Volume1 Brooklyn Favorite Book of 2014, a PopMatters Best Book of 2014, one of Refinery29's 2015 Books to Read in 2015, and one of Largehearted Boy's 11 Favorite Novels of 2014. It was also one of Flavorwire's 15 “Most Anticipated Books of 2014”, The Millions “Most Anticipated” in their “The Great 2014 Book Preview”, Flavorwire's “50 Excellent Fabulist Novels Everyone Should Read,” and the Huffington Post's “30 Books You NEED to Read in 2014.” Her honors include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars, Northwestern University, the Sewanee Writers' Conference, Ucross, and Yaddo. Her non-fiction has appeared in *Harper's*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Spin*, *Slate* and *Salon*, among many others. Khakpour is currently Writer in Residence at Bard College. She lives in New York City. Check out her website at www.porochistakhakpour.com

on *The Last Illusion* – In tones haunting yet humorous and unflinching yet reverential, *The Last Illusion* explores the powers of storytelling while investigating contemporary and classical magical thinking. Its potent lyricism, stylistic inventiveness, and examination of otherness can appeal to readers of Salman Rushdie and Helen Oyeyemi. A celebrated essayist and chronicler of the 9/11-era, Khakpour reimagines New York's most harrowing catastrophe with a dazzling homage to her beloved city.

on *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* – A wry and haunting first novel from a fresh Iranian-American writer, *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* is a sweeping, lyrical tale of suffering, redemption, and the role of memory and inheritance in making peace with our worlds. Growing up, Xerxes Adam is painfully aware that he is different—with an understanding of his Iranian heritage that vacillates from typical teenage embarrassment to something so tragic it can barely be spoken. *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* is a masterful tale of immigrant identity, assimilation, and the universal struggle of sons to define themselves in the shadow of their fathers; it is at once a comedy and tragedy, a family history and a modern coming-of-age story with a distinctly timeless resonance.



Spring Writer's Conference

Saturday, April 18th, 2015

9:30 AM - 3:30 PM

featuring

Porochista Khakpour

and writing workshops in

☼ Poetry ☼ Fiction ☼ Screenwriting ☼ Young Adult Fiction ☼
☼ Creative Nonfiction ☼ Publishing ☼

To register, please visit

www.wpunj.edu/writing

or go directly to

<https://springwritersconference.eventbrite.com>

Breakfast Orientation Registration 9:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Porochista Khakpour's Keynote Address, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Morning Workshops: 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

- ❖ **The End: A Seminar, with Porochista Khakpour.** Founded on the idea that endings are intrinsically unnatural to us as living human beings who never truly experience our own “ends” (we experience fabricated endings, such as compartmentalized phases: relationships and break-ups, the death of others, etc.), this seminar will explore the difficulties in crafting the “genuine” ending to a story. We will look at various takes on this, examining the attempts of poets, essayists, short story writers, and novelists. How does it change the process to begin with an awareness of where it will end up? What happens when we formulate a story from the ending up? What is the ultimate responsibility of an ending? How does closure relate to the opening? What happens when we give our own stories entirely different endings?
- ❖ **Publishing Your Work Online, with Timothy Liu.** This workshop will cover all the basics on how to effectively submit your poems (and stories!) to online publications. What pieces do you send? How many? What zines are worthy of your attention? What about print journals? And entry fees? All this and more. Workshop participants will each bring a writing sample for possible discussion, time permitting. A Professor of English at William Paterson University, **Timothy Liu** is the author of nine books of poems, most recently *Don't Go Back to Sleep*. Widely published, his work has been included in *Best American Poetry* and *The Pushcart Prize*.
- ❖ **Work It: How Our Busy Lives Make for Poetry, with Soraya Shalforoosh.** There is often a perceived dichotomy between what people view as our creative lives versus our professional jobs. Add to that the pressures of family life, and it is hard to figure out how to balance our creative and professional worlds. Soraya Shalforoosh, a N.J.-based poet who works full-time in the finance industry, has discovered the myriad ways one can draw from daily life to inspire poetry. Ms. Shalforoosh will illustrate through her own experience, and, through readings of other poets, how we can bring work, *no matter what it is*, into the poem. We will focus on place—be it the gas station or a posh office in Midtown or a factory—and how it can serve as an inspirational prompt, allowing us to explore our identities and environments. **Soraya Shalforoosh's** first collection of poetry, *This Version of Earth* is forthcoming from Barrow Street Press. Soraya has been a featured poet in the Journal of the Academy of American Poets *Emerging Poet Series*, and has had poems and reviews in *Tribes.org*, *Good Foot*, *Taos Journal*, *Barrow Street*, *Skanky Possum*, *Bomb Magazine*, *Marlboro Review*, *WSQ*, *Can We Have Our Ball Back.com*, *Shampoo Poetry*, *Brink: An Anthology of Post Modern American Poetry*, *Four Corners*, and *Salonika*. Soraya earned her MFA in Creative Writing from the New School and has performed her poetry with jazz, blues and world music bands.
- ❖ **The End of Sentimentality: Crafting Creative Non-Fiction That Resonates, with N. West Moss.** Creative non-fiction (CNF) often covers universal subjects from illness and addiction to heartbreak. Successful CNF finds fresh ways of telling stories that avoid cliché and sentimentality. In this workshop, we will look at powerful examples of CNF, and will discuss what makes them strong, as well as the pitfalls to avoid. Participants should leave with concrete ideas about how to revise their own creative non-fiction work. **N. West Moss** received the Faulkner-Wisdom Award and the Diana Woods Memorial Award for her creative non-fiction (which has been published in *The New York Times*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Memoir Journal*, *The Double Dealer* and elsewhere). She received the *Glimmer Train* Top 25 (2014) and *The Saturday Evening Post's* Great American Fiction Contest (2015) for her fiction.
- ❖ **Turning Nonfiction into Story, with Marina Budhos.** Narrative nonfiction is a growing and popular field in publishing, as it marries a reader's thirst for knowledge with the pleasures of storytelling. But how does one blend what is true with what is imagined? What is the ethical line between fiction and nonfiction? How do we balance explanation with narrative drive and storytelling? In this workshop, we will hone in on how to dramatize true material, making use of fictional techniques. We will examine how characterization, mood, setting, plot, and suspense can play a role in crafting a nonfiction work. We will also look at some exemplary narrative nonfiction excerpts. Participants should come to the workshop prepared with an outline or précis of what they wish to work on. **Marina Budhos** is an author of numerous books of fiction and nonfiction, for adults and young adults, and is an associate professor at WPU. Her most recent book, *Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom & Science*, co-authored with Marc Aronson, was a Los Angeles Times Book Award Finalist.

Buffet Lunch, 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Afternoon Workshops, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

- ❖ **Finding (and Writing) Your Inner Teenager, with Robin Wasserman.** No one spots a fake faster than a teenager, so creating an authentic voice is key to writing good YA. But what is voice, and how do you find yours, much less strengthen it until it's shouting from the page? How do you write like a teenager without, well...writing like a teenager? We'll explore these questions and discuss strategies for connecting with your inner adolescent through textured character development and authentic voice. Bring along a page of your own teen writing, preferably a letter or diary entry...if you dare! **Robin Wasserman** is the author of more than 16 books for children and young adults. Her essays and short fiction have appeared in several anthologies, as well as *The Atlantic* site and *The New York Times*. A former children's book editor, she now teaches on the faculty of the low-residency MFA program at Southern New Hampshire University.
- ❖ **Script Writing, with Philip Cioffari.** A lecture/workshop in dramatic writing, for both stage and film. The focus will be on how to develop strong, compelling scenes. Students are encouraged to bring, for discussion, one or several of their own original scenes for a play or a movie. **Phil Cioffari's** most recent novel is *Dark Road, Dead End*. Previous works of fiction include: the novel, *Jesusville*; the story collection, *A History of Things Lost or Broken*; and the novel, *Catholic Boys*.
- ❖ **So You Want to Be a (Re) Writer: How to Revise Your Work, with Anica Mrose Rissi.** "The best writing is rewriting," E.B. White said, and this session will give you the tools to become a great reviser. How do you face down a page that's as good as you can make it...and make it *better*? How do you know which words to cut and decide which darlings to kill? In this workshop, we'll talk strategies for all stages of revision, from structural overhauls to the final polish, from revising solo to working with an editor, agent, or critique partner. Bring three pages of your own work, and a pen. You will be (re)writing. **Anica Mrose Rissi** is an executive editor specializing in YA and middle-grade fiction at Katherine Tegen Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. She tells stories onstage for Story Collider and The Gnat, and she's the author of a forthcoming chapter-book series from Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, launching with *Anna, Banana, & the Friendship Split* in May 2015.
- ❖ **Flashback, Flashforward: Jumping through Time in Fiction, with John Parras.** This workshop will focus on the ideas behind and techniques of flashbacks and flashforwards in fiction writing. In which circumstances might memories or thoughts of the future be best invoked in fictional work? The topic will be explored through readings and on-the-spot writing exercises. **John Parras** received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Prose, and his book *Fire on Mt. Maggiore* won the Peter Taylor Prize for the Novel. His work has appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Salmagundi*, *American Suburb X*, *Gulf Stream Magazine* and other journals, and his chapbook *Dangerous Limbs: Prose Poems and Flash Fictions* was published in 2012.
- ❖ **The Poem of the Moment: Making It "New" Again, with Christopher Salerno.** In the last several years, mainstream American poetry has seen and welcomed a surge in radical, rebellious, associative, and "experimental" poetries, in a wild variety of forms and voices. Does our contemporary experience, our life at this moment, call on the poet to abandon the old modes, the old reliable ways? In this workshop we will look at several poem(s) of our contemporary moment, consider their forebears, their styles, modes, and approaches. Participants are encouraged to bring drafts of work in progress, or work that they would like to revise. **Christopher Salerno's** most recent book of poems, *ATM*, was selected for the 2013 Georgetown Review Poetry Prize. A 2014 New Jersey State Council on the Arts fellow, Salerno's poems have been published in numerous magazines, including *Boston Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Fence*, *Denver Quarterly*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *Verse Daily*, *Mississippi Review*. He is currently an assistant professor of English at William Paterson University where he manages the journal, *Map Literary*.

REGISTRATION INCLUDES

Light Breakfast 9:30-10:00

Plenary Reading with Porochista Khakpour, 10:00-11:30 am

One Morning Workshop, 11:30 am-1:00 pm

Full Buffet Lunch, 1:00-2:00 pm

and One Afternoon Workshop, 2:00-3:30 pm

Tickets: Regular \$55. WPU Alumni \$44. WPU Graduate Students \$33. WPU Undergraduate Students \$22.

Late registration (after April 8th) is \$66, so please register early.

www.wpunj.edu/writing

<https://springwritersconference.eventbrite.com>