

AALAC Conference Proposal: Toward Inclusive Creative Writing Programs and Pedagogy

Faculty Liason

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The deadline to submit is **Tuesday March 12, 2019**. Please send 1) a brief statement (no more than 150 words) describing your interest in the workshop 2) a list of creative writing courses you teach 3) short cv (no more than 2 pages) to:
inclusivecreativewriting@gmail.com

Committed Workshop Leaders, Planners, and Participants

Amy Benson, Rhodes College (workshop leader and planner)

Chanelle Benz, Rhodes College (workshop planner)

Felicia Rose Chavez, Colorado College (workshop leader and keynote speaker)

Sarah Gambito, Fordham University (keynote speaker)

Caki Wilkinson, Rhodes College (workshop planner)

Rachel Pastan, Swarthmore College (participant)

Tiphanie Yanique, Wesleyan College (participant)

Itinerary:

Friday, May 24

Day 1:

Arrival in Memphis by Midday, Check in at Hampton Inn Beale St.

2:00-3:00 Check-in and Refreshments at Rhodes College

3:00-4:15 Participants introduce themselves/their programs and share their classroom and institutional experiences with inclusivity

4:15-4:30 Break

4:30-5:45 Keynote Address 1: Felicia Rose Chavez

6:30-end Dinner for Participants

Saturday, May 25

Day 2:

9:00-9:30 Coffee and Pastries

9:30-10:45 Rethinking the Traditional Writing Workshop: participant presentation of innovations and alternate models

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-12:00 Small group pedagogy discussions: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00-2:15 Keynote Address 2: Sarah Gambito—Building Inclusive Writing Programs

2:15-2:30 Break

2:30-3:45	Keynote Follow-up: Roundtable presentations by participants on Building Inclusive Writing Programs
3:45-4:00	Break
4:00-5:30	Outreach, Faculty/Student Recruitment, Community Connections, and the Role of Visiting Writers: Roundtable presentations by participants
6:30-End	Dinner

Day 3:

Visit to the Civil Rights Museum (optional)

Departure

Workshop Description

The workshop will gather creative writing professors to consider how our workshop pedagogy, curriculum choices, and programming might better invite and support historically marginalized students in creative writing classrooms and programs.

Writing programs began to proliferate in the decades post-World War II, with the Writing Workshop as their primary tool for shaping the work of students. The traditional writing workshop, a pedagogical model still standard today, asks students to submit work for roundtable critique while the author remains silent. This method grew out of more homogenous university settings (white, male, relatively affluent) and often prided itself on a kind of creative hazing: withering critique was understood as rigor or unassailable honesty. College demographics have changed (though change is slow and ongoing), and today the creative writing workshop usually strives to be a more supportive environment.

The pervasive pedagogical model for creative writing classes, though, is still the traditional workshop. At writing conferences and in print, writers of color, queer and gender non-conforming, disabled, international, and under-class writers have expressed their discomfort and even distress with traditional workshops and writing programs. Many under-represented writers have found the traditional model damaging to their voice, vision, and ability to produce. Open critique has sometimes led peer readers to try to shape or erase the reality of the experiences of underrepresented writers. Professors have often operated with a restricted sense of what counts as “good writing” or as “literary.” Workshop participants who do not share the identity and experiences of the writer often try to curate narrowly the marginalized writer’s subjects, forms, and voice.

Felicia Rose Chavez (Colorado College) is currently writing a book exploring her innovative, anti-racist creative writing pedagogy. She has agreed to serve as keynote speaker and a workshop leader in order to catalyze a larger discussion about how to build a creative writing pedagogy that attracts and supports underrepresented writers in the writing workshop. We will think through how our practices affect the demographics of the classroom (which are, for AALAC colleges and creative writing classrooms alike, largely white, cis-gendered, female, and affluent) and the experience of the participants. How do we foster the fledgling work of each writer in the classroom; how do we create an atmosphere where students feel challenged and excited to stretch beyond their initial efforts but not erased through critique. The latter is always the charge of the fine arts classroom, but what dimensions come with the necessary attention to inclusivity? And how do creative writing teachers handle these questions in predominantly white, straight, cis-gendered classrooms and institutions? The AALAC workshop would be a space to ask difficult questions about the impediments to change institutionally and within our assumptions and practice.