



JILL CHRISTMAN

Nominated for Board Representative, Midwest Region, she is running unopposed.

CAMPAIGN STATEMENT

Having cut my administrative teeth as assistant to the director of creative writing at the University of Alabama in during my MFA candidacy, I've been involved in running university visiting-writer and academic programs almost as long as I've been a writer. On the foundation of this early experience, I landed my first job at the University of Minnesota as the coordinator of the creative writing program in 2001, where I managed a large MFA program and an active visiting writers series, as well as initiating the *First Books* reading series to celebrate first-time authors and their newly minted books. That same summer, my memoir, *Darkroom: A Family Exposure* (University of Georgia Press, 2002), won AWP's Award Series in creative nonfiction. The following fall, I began my tenure at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, where I am now associate professor and assistant chair of programs in the department of English. In 2008, I joined Ashland University's low-residency MFA program in Ohio, and as I consider the honor and responsibility of the board's invitation to run for the seat of Midwest regional representative, I realize I have close relationships and experience in a wide range of programs across the Midwest—a low-residency program, as well as brick-and-mortar MFA, MA, and undergraduate majors and minors in creative writing.

I've chosen to accept the nomination because of these deepening connections to the Midwest contingency, as well as my enduring gratitude to AWP and my genuine interest in helping to shape the future of creative writing. As a discipline, our programmatic growth over the past twenty years has been stunning, but that growth—justly so—seems to be reaching a plateau. In these difficult economic times, we face new administrative challenges as we answer to pressures from our institutions and legislators to define our role and usefulness. How will online learning and the increased burden to define and assess student learning shape program development? What's the relationship between full-residency and low-residency MFA programs? What innovations might be next in linking writing programs with those in digital media and electronic publishing? How do we continue to send the message that what we do in our classrooms with language and storytelling remains absolutely vital? If we hesitate in carving out and defining the role of creative writing in our institutions and states, we risk having that role defined for us.

If elected, I would bring significant administrative experience to the board of AWP. In my current role as assistant chair of programs in the department of English at Ball State University, I administer a total of nineteen doctoral, Master's, and undergraduate programs for a large department serving over 750 majors/minors and 100 graduate students across diverse disciplines, including creative

writing, English education, linguistics and TESOL, literature, and rhetoric and composition. Our ten-year-old creative writing major is the second largest in the department, with over 150 enrolled majors. What opportunity does this enrollment shift bring to our programs?

I would like to bring my experience and energy to serious conversations with the board about innovative programmatic and curricular design and development, how to best include the expanding genre of creative nonfiction in new and existing programs, strategies to lobby our institutions and government for necessary resources, consideration of how we might integrate rigorous online learning into our programs, and the continuing search for a solution to provide secure and affordable childcare at our conferences. I am grateful for your attention, hope for your support, and look forward to serving you should I be elected.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Jill Christman's memoir, *Darkroom: A Family Exposure*, won the AWP Award Series in creative nonfiction in 2001 and was reissued in paperback by the University of Georgia Press in Fall 2011. Recent essays appearing in *River Teeth* and *Harpur Palate* have been honored by Pushcart nominations and her writing has been published in *Barrelhouse*, *Brevity*, *Descant*, *Literary Mama*, *Mississippi Review*, and many other journals, magazines, textbooks, and anthologies. She teaches creative nonfiction in Ashland University's low-residency MFA program and at Ball State University in Muncie where she lives with her husband, poet Mark Neely, and their two children.