

Event Title:

Faith, Family, and Fanaticism: Women Writing Religion

Event Description:

Many writers and academics are deeply influenced by our faith of origin, yet are often dismissed by society as secularists. Women writers who explore Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism in poetry, prose, and hybrid forms will discuss writing about faith in this era of rising faith-based fanaticism. How do we approach topics like spiritual abuse? How do we keep from self-censoring? Why is it important to share our stories despite the social cost?

Event Category:

Multiple Literary Genres Craft

Event Organizer:

Deirdre Sugiuchi

Event moderator:

Deirdre Sugiuchi

Event participants and bios:

Deirdre Sugiuchi spent her adolescence in a faith-based troubled teen facility and is finishing her reform school memoir, *UNREFORMED*. Her work has been featured in *Dame*, *Electric Literature*, and other places. She lives in Athens, GA, where until recently she served as a public school librarian.

Anjali Enjeti is the author of the collection of essays, *SOUTHBOUND* and the novel *THE PARTED EARTH*. She teaches in the MFA program at Reinhardt University. Her other writing has appeared in the *Oxford American*, *Harper's Bazaar*, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, the *Boston Globe*, and elsewhere.

Liz Harmer is the author of two novels: *THE AMATEURS* (2018) and *STRANGE LOOPS* (2022). She is at work on a memoir about her experience with and family history of mental illness.

Sakinah Hofler is a fiction writer, poet, and playwright. She has won the Manchester Fiction Prize, the Hurston/Wright Award for College Writers, and the Sherwood Anderson Fiction Award. She teaches creative writing at Loyola University.

Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, author of *Imperfect Tense* (poems), 4 education books, & numerous articles and essays, was awarded 2015-2021 NEA Big Read grants, a Fulbright (2014) and artist residency (2017) in Mexico. She is Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia.

Opening Remarks:

The moderator will begin by welcoming attendees and describing how this panel came into being. Each of the five panelists, including the moderator, will take turns introducing themselves and reading from their own work for five minutes each. The moderator will then open up discussion with a list of questions prepared in advance for roughly thirty minutes. The panel will end with a ten-to-fifteen-minute audience Q&A. We will provide a list of resources for our audience.

Moderator Questions Followed by Discussion

Why/ how did you approach writing about faith?
How do we approach topics like spiritual abuse?
How do we keep from self-censoring?
Why is it important to share our stories despite the social cost?

Recommended Reading (in progress)

Jesus Land by Julia Scheeres
Boy Erased by Garrard Conley
Shrapnel Maps by Phillip Metres
Midnight's Borders by Suchitra Vijayan
My Seditious Heart by Arundhati Roy
The Parted Earth by Anjali Enjeti