

Event Title: Abandoning the Prescriptive in the Creative Writing Classroom

Event Description: In the creative writing classroom, students learn to structure stories and poems around an epiphanic moment, and in creative nonfiction they are taught to give reflection moments. These examples of strict prescriptive craft elements limit our notions of what these genres can do. This panel will share methods for writing and teaching within the genres as well as strategies for empowering students to interrogate established aspects of craft and invent new shapes capable of holding their experiences.

Event Category: Creative Writing Pedagogy

Event Organizer and Moderator: Rachel M. Hanson has published work in *Ninth Letter*, *The Iowa Review*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Best New Poets*, *North American Review*, *American Literary Review*, and elsewhere. A former Olive B. O'Connor Fellow in Nonfiction at Colgate University, she holds an MFA from the University of Utah and a PhD in literature and creative writing from the University of Missouri. She is an assistant professor of English at the University of North Carolina Asheville.

Event Participants:

Jessica Alexander - Jessica Alexander's novella, *None of This Is an Invitation* (co-written with Katie Jean Shinkle) is forthcoming from Astrophil Press in spring 2023. Her story collection, *Dear Enemy*, was the winning manuscript in the 2016 Subito Prose Contest, as judged by Selah Saterstrom. Her collaborative project *That Woman Could Be You* came out with BlazeVox in April 2022. She lives in Louisiana where she teaches creative writing at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Ginger Ko - Ginger Ko is an Assistant Professor at Sam Houston State University's MFA program in Creative Writing, Editing, and Publishing. She is the author of *Motherlover* and *Inherit*, as well as several chapbooks. Her latest project is *POWER ON*, a book as interactive app.

Eric Tran - Eric Tran is a queer Vietnamese poet and the author of *Mouth, Sugar, and Smoke* (Diode Editions 2022) and *The Gutter Spread Guide to Prayer* (Autumn House Press). His poetry has been featured in *All Things Considered*, *Poetry Daily*, and *Best of the Net*, among other publications. He is completing his fellowship in Addiction Psychiatry at the Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, OR.

Event Outline:

- The moderator will begin the event by introducing herself, and the three panelists, including their short biographies, and how the panel came about. (5 minutes)
- The panelists will present alphabetically, giving a brief introduction of their own work and how it influences and informs their pedagogy, offering specific examples of their teaching methods (15 minutes each)
- The moderator will then open up discussion with a list of questions prepared in advance, but also allowing for panelists to ask questions of each other (for about 10 minutes)
- The panel will end with a fifteen-minute audience Q&A.

Opening Remarks (abbreviated) – Students come to the creative writing classroom for reasons as varied as their skill levels, whether they are taking courses as part of their major requirements, attending community programs to reenergize and pull themselves out of that “writerly vacuum,” or

simply because creative writing is something that sounds appealing. One thing that most students do have in common, however, is a sense of joy and excitement for creative writing. As creative writing teachers, our job is to guide students in the creative writing process while also nurturing their joy for the work. Doing so means understanding that not all students are alike, share similar paradigms, nor do they have identical learning styles. While one student might do quite well in a traditional workshop setting, another might find it terrifying. This panel will discuss teaching strategies that abandon prescriptive approaches to the workshop model, in favor of ones that encourage and challenge students to create, revise, and lean into intellectual exploration within a classroom setting that nurtures joy for experimentation and the writerly process.

Brief Overview of Panelists Presentation/Approaches to Abandoning the Prescriptive

Jessica Alexander - I will discuss a workshop I taught on flash fiction and how shorter forms lend themselves to the exploration of multiple methods of establishing tension and structuring narratives.

Ginger Ko - I will be sharing several workshop techniques that have been inspired by the teachings and writings of various writers and thinkers. I will offer various workshop exercises that respond to and break open various received forms and established norms for writing pedagogy, which includes answering back to standards of “taste,” making moves against epiphany, and incorporating physical movement and rhythm into the composition process.

Eric Tran - will discuss various approaches to crafting poetry in the nontraditional creative writing classroom.