

SENIOR poetry, short fiction, memoir, play script, novella, fantasy

WRITERS

READING

Friday, May 6 • 5-6p.m.



• Elena Blaisdell • Ammielle Charles • Alyssa Leston • Josiah Marchese • Annie Molnar • Lauren Oliver •

• Mary Stuart Murray • Zech Pappageorge • Brianna Rivera • Daniel Rodd • Joanna Sheldon •

in Jenks 237 and on Zoom

This year's **senior creative writers** read **bite-sized excerpts** from their thesis manuscripts for a vivid hour. If you're interested in applying for the Advanced Creative Writing course, come listen, and imagine yourself living the writing life for a semester.

Elena Blaisdell

With this novella, a girl must use her unusual powers to unravel the mysteries between dreams and reality. I wanted to delve into the unknown and the familiar within the human imagination and how it affects the psyche. The land of dreams and nightmares is an area of infinite possibilities where the strange becomes mundane and where our deepest desires often lie.

Ammielle Charles

My manuscript this semester is a collection of poems inspired by my time in The Democratic Republic of Congo, the United States, and Haiti. The poems include my thoughts as a Haitian-American daughter of missionaries and themes of location, dreams, and identity. I will be reading the poems, "My Dad Wants to Go to Brazil," "After All These Years, I Still Can't Pack Food," and a cento poem called "I'm Lovin' It."

Alyssa Leston

This book explores where we draw the line between what is morally acceptable and legally permissible. What laws do even criminals hesitate to break? Why do we root for some and not others? And what is the difference between a hero with flaws and a villain with a good side? As Gavin, an up-and-coming criminal mastermind pulls together a team from all stages of life, one question emerges: can you trust someone you don't believe?"

Josiah Marchese

Set in a world where superpowers have become commonplace and mundane, private detective Mason Jewett is called by the mayor of Boston to investigate a high-profile murder. In his search, he clashes with the head detective on the case as he navigates barely functional superpower restrictions and dangerous political machinations to find the killer. When everyone's theories fall apart and an innocent man is arrested, Mason is forced to finally look at the scars of his past to solve the case.

Bri Rivera

Over the course of the semester, I've been exploring the ins and outs of my childhood leading up to my college years. This journey had led me to produce short stories based on vivid memories focused on a myriad of topics including my perspective as the

youngest of three children, growing up in a legalistic church, navigating the struggles of neurodivergence in school and more. It hasn't been easy to unravel memories that were somewhat dormant in the back of my mind, but it has been a rewarding and fulfilling process to unlock them and experience my young mind once again.

Daniel Rodd

"The Compound" is a short fictional story that intends to convey the notion that mental illness comes in all different shapes and sizes. In this piece, Martin and Olivia are confronted by the ghosts of their past, while also conflicted by the terrors of the mysterious compound where they are being held.

Lauren Oliver

Inspired by my Senior Seminar on Mystics and language surrounding God, I begin to complete the language I use when approaching God and how I speak in reference to God. Through the medium of short spiritual essays, I try to piece together my thoughts surrounding God and my relationship with my creator.

Joanna Sheldon

In times of personal or world crisis, we often desire constancy through the beauty and normalcy of the everyday. What may seem mundane is often the source of comfort in times of trouble, and literature that celebrates the mundane shows how we might look to small moments of beauty as means of comfort.

Mary Stuart

For my project, I composed a chapbook of poetry called, "Poems for My Mother". This collection catalogues the memories I have with my mom: from the pivotal moments in our relationship to the small, quiet memories that I don't want to forget (there is much love stored in those memories). While writing this semester, I took inspiration from poets such as Mary Oliver, Sylvia Plath, and Christian Wiman. Hold these poems gently in your hands; they are fragile, tender things.

Zech Pappageorge

My play is a series of bits, most of them funny (I hope). A bit is the smallest unit of comedy, e.g., sloppily eating eggs benedict, or performing a Charleston dance fight. The characters do bits to relate to each other, to cope with life, and for fun.

My Dad Wants to Go to Brazil

Ammielle Charles

My dad wants to go to Brazil,
not to see the statue of Christ the Redeemer,
but to see his brother.
The sister group chat leads me
to online travel agencies once more.

It will be for our parent's anniversary, not for his birthday.
For now, he'll be getting a photo collage from an aspiring
communication arts minor
who had to shake down birthday quotes from her siblings
in the middle of the night.

Why is everyone so far away?

My parents are in Kinshasa,
My sisters are in Irvington,
My mom's sister is in Maplewood,
And our cousins are in Pennsylvania.
We all used to be in Brooklyn.

My sisters begin to hope for a family trip to Brazil.
I have realized that people like being warm
in hot countries.
My birthday wish would have been for a ticket
for the train ride between Big Ben
and the Eiffel Tower.

Months ago, before I could set out for a class trip to Europe,
a pandemic made me reside
in the heat and maternal hospitality
of Tennessee.

There's no family in England.

What is the Opposite of a Prodigal Son?

Mary Stuart Murray

I am standing on the porch of your parent's lake cabin,
In that flannel of my father's that you hate,
And I am trying not to think about the reason
I left your house all those summers ago,
After I took my sexuality and hurled it in your face,
As if to say: you know *nothing* about me.

Those words were ruinous.
I tried to cram them back into my mouth, but I,
Couldn't seem to swallow their sharp edges.
I tried to shut my bedroom door, to lock it, except
Your foot wedged in the gap before I could
Force you out, and you stormed in,
Burning words raining down like apocalyptic hail.

We ripped something from one another that night,
When you held my pulsating heart in your hands.
You bit into it with no remorse, only anger,
Teeth tearing through muscle and sinew, ventricle and aorta.

The next day, with two thirds of a heart and no cellphone,
I walked five miles in the summer heat,
Blood spreading across that flannel of my father's that you
hate.
I was directionless, determined to get away from you, but I
Ended up calling you from a gas station telephone,
Asking you to pick me up.

I was fifteen then; I am twenty two now.
I am standing on the porch of your parent's lake cabin,
In that flannel of my father's that you have learned to love,
And I am thinking about that night last winter.
Do you remember?

When the dried hydrangeas on the dinner table caught fire,
And the hole in the center of the floor—
The one with tendrils of ivy creeping out of it,
The one so dark it seemed to be an endless void—
When that hole kept growing wider and wider,
Til we couldn't avoid it anymore—
I stepped down into it.

I landed in the crawl space below our house,
Somewhere between foundation and floorboard,
I dug into the red earth with bare hands—
Hands that no longer look like my own.
The soil was like blood under my fingernails,
It stained the lines of my palms deep crimson.

I dug until I found the skeleton I buried in that gaping dark;
I read aloud to you the words carved into it:
All the things I said and did not say,
And you wept over them,
Your tears falling soft on those harsh bones.

Unleavened

Mary Stuart Murray

It was a grey, rainy day, when she
Extricated the recipe from that overfilled box that held
A hundred hominies to past appetizers, entrees, and hors
d'oeuvres.
Prying it from slips of white paper and magazine clippings,
The recipe from her mother, transcribed onto a postcard,
Stamped with postage and grease stains.

Looking at the directions was more ritual than necessity:
Smearing a loaf pan with butter,
Sifting the sugar and flour,
Scooping the pulpy, orange meat from a tin.
Canned is fine, but fresh pumpkin is best.
James Taylor sang hymns on the CD player as she worked.

Now see the prodigal daughter, a few years removed,
Trudging homewards in the damp after
A long day spent slogging through
Pre-algebra, Latin, lunch, and the Pacer Test.
Hair pulled back into a limp ponytail, shoes holding water,
She cracked open the front door like an egg, only to
Be met with the scent of baking pumpkin bread.

Cinnamon and nutmeg, ginger and cloves,
Holy incense used in lieu of smelling salts.
It made the daughter's shoulders slump in relief.
The smell was like a hug from her mother,
Whose own arms followed soon after.

Then, pressed into the daughter's hand,
A small, warm body—
Weighted with butter and veined with allspice.
It touched the daughter's lips; a hot coal,
Purging her soul of the day's muck as she ate.
Transubstantiation on a Thursday afternoon,
When she, the mother, took a loaf of bread and made it
something
Holy. Something healing.