

The Department of English at the William Paterson University of New Jersey is proud to continue its annual Spring Writer's Conference, which in the past has hosted such luminaries as Paul Muldoon, Francine Prose, David Means, Terese Svoboda, Russell Banks, Alison Lurie, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Yusef Komunyakaa, Chang-Rae Lee, Kimiko Hahn, Sindiwe Magona, Anthony Swofford, Porochista Khakpour, and Luc Sante. Join us for a day of workshops and readings in fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry and publishing. We welcome participation from scholars in all disciplines, creative writers of all stripes, professional editors, secondary-, middle-, and elementary-level educators, graduate and undergraduate students, and the general public—in short, anyone interested in reading, writing and literary pursuits. We offer Professional Development Hours to New Jersey Educators.

## Keynote Speaker: Rosa Alcalá



**"Rosa Alcalá, originally from Paterson, N.J. is a true daughter of W.C. Williams with a distinct, gutsy, and penetrating identity twining a public poesis with her own luminous particulars. I know of no one else writing such poems that cut into and reenact the 'plebeian' with such personal force, eloquence, and skill."**

—Rodrigo Toscano, *Shearsman Books*

**"Rosa Alcalá's poems dwell in the liminal space between the personal and the political—poems built on the idea that 'the world exists,' and that work to define the metaphysical and ephemeral architectures of origin, migration, nationalism, and loss. Rosa Alcalá is uncompromising, wry, and brutal: all of the qualities that significant poetic works of cultural criticism require."**

—Carmen Giménez Smith

Rosa Alcalá is a poet and translator originally from Paterson, NJ. She is the author of three books of poetry, *Undocumentaries* and *The Lust of Unsentimental Waters*, both from Shearsman Books (2010 & 2011), and *M(y)Other Tongue* (forthcoming 2017, Futurepoem Books). Her poetry has also appeared in a number of anthologies, including Stephen Burt's *The Poem is You: 60 Contemporary American Poems* and *How to*

*Read Them* (Harvard UP, 2016) and *Angels of the Americlypse: An Anthology of New Latin@ Writing* (Counterpath, 2014). She has translated books of poetry by Lila Zemborain, Lourdes Vázquez, and others, and her translations appear in *The Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry*. Her recent translation and editorial projects include *Spit Temple: The Selected Performances of Cecilia Vicuña* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2012) and *Cecilia Vicuña: The Selected Poems* (forthcoming 2017, Kelsey Street Press). She is the recipient of an NEA Translation Fellowship, and was runner-up for a PEN Translation Award. She is Associate Professor in the University of Texas-El Paso's Department of Creative Writing and Bilingual MFA Program.

**on *The Lust of Unsentimental Waters*** – "What I love about Alcalá's work is that she takes risks. What I mean by risk here is not the one you find where a poet will jump off an emotional and intellectual cliff and land perfectly square on a cement trampoline. What I mean by risk is that sometimes she produces fragments or lines that are not easily accessible. She cloisters her lines, but I don't feel that she has left me outside to stand alone in the rain or has attempted to confuse me. Some poets will do this out of spite, out of boredom, out of egoism, but I do not see that in her work. In fact, I don't expect to understand everything Alcalá writes, nor should I feel obliged to. But there is tremendous conviction and faith in knowing that you can invite your readers into an enigmatic, poetic party and not make them feel like outsiders." —Vi Khi Nao, *Poetry*



# Spring Writers Conference

Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017

9:30 AM – 4:00 PM

*featuring*

Rosa Alcalá

*and special guest*

Wendy Oleson

*as well as writing workshops in*

\* Poetry \* Fiction \* Creative Nonfiction \* Writing for Young Adults \*  
\* Publishing \* Memoir \* Literature \*

To register, please visit

[www.wpunj.edu/writing](http://www.wpunj.edu/writing)

or go directly to

<https://springwritersconference2017.eventbrite.com>

*Please note that we will be convening in the Atrium Building this year*

*Please convene in the Atrium Building*

**Breakfast - Orientation- Registration, 9:30 AM – 10:00 AM (Atrium)**  
**Rosa Alcalá's Keynote Address, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (Atrium)**

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**Morning Workshops, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM**

❖ **Negation Vacation, with Rosa Alcalá, our keynote speaker.** *Negation (n): An act of denial; a negative statement, doctrine, etc.; a refusal or contradiction; a denial of something (OED).* Poetry has a long history of saying NO, of rejecting norms and expectations, even of turning on itself; we see this negation in Shakespeare's "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;" Keats' "Negative Capability;" Marianne Moore's "Poetry," "I, too, dislike it;" the Dadaist "beauty is dead;" Nicanor Parra's anti-poemas and Alfonsina Storni's anti-sonetos. One can, in fact, take a very long negation vacation through the land of poetry and never run out of things to see; such has been the generative effects of this desire to refuse, deny, resist, contradict. In this workshop we will tour diverse modes of negation found in contemporary poems and, combined with exercises and writing prompts, use them as starting points for our own poetic explorations. Participants are encouraged to bring along on this nay-say vacay a draft of a poem that feels overworked or neglected.

❖ **The Air Here: Creating Atmosphere in Fiction, with Wendy Oleson.** In this workshop we will read passages of seductively atmospheric short stories to better understand how writers employ the craft elements of setting, detail, and tone to materialize living fictional worlds. We will follow the reading and discussion with writing exercises designed to evoke our most atmospheric prose. Attendees are also invited to bring a page of a story-in-progress that needs some fresh air. **Wendy Oleson is author of *Our Daughter and Other Stories*, winner of *Map Literary's 2017 Rachel Wetzsteon Chapbook Award*.** Her fiction appears in *Cimarron Review*, *Carve*, *Normal School*, *PANK*, and elsewhere. In 2015 she won the *story South* Million Writers Award and was a fiction fellow at the Vermont Studio Center. Based in Pullman, WA and Los Angeles, CA, Wendy teaches for the Writers' Program at UCLA Extension. She serves as assistant fiction editor for *Memorious: A Journal of New Verse and Fiction*.

❖ **Editing Workshop, with Theresa DiGeronimo.** Between you and I, this sentence will bother your future editor when they are deciding whether to accept your manuscript or not. Bump your writing up a few notches by learning how to proofread your work for the most egregious, but common, grammar mistakes that can kill a good deal. Using quick review lessons, worksheets and collaborative activities, this workshop will help you put your best writer's foot forward when you submit your article, poem, short story and/or book. Participants may also bring their own writing samples with pesky grammar issues for instant feedback. **Theresa DiGeronimo** is an Adjunct Professor of English at William Paterson University, teaching the undergraduate course Book & Magazine Editing. She is the author of 58 non-fiction books with major publishing houses, including Penguin, Random House, and Simon & Schuster; she is also chief copy-editor of *MDAdvisor: A Journal for the Healthcare Community*.

❖ **Scriptwriting Workshop, with Philip Cioffari.** A lecture/workshop in dramatic writing, for both stage and film. The focus will be on how to develop strong, compelling scenes. Students are encouraged to bring, for discussion, one or more of their own original scenes for a play or movie. **Philip Cioffari's** most recent novel is *The Bronx Kill*. His previous works of fiction include the novels: *Catholic Boys*; *Dark Road, Dead End*; *Jesusville*; and the story collection, *A History of Things Lost or Broken*. He wrote and directed the independent feature film, *Love in the Age of Dion*. His plays have been performed Off and Off-Off Broadway.

❖ **Storyboarding for Revision, with Barbara Krasner.** To revise is to re-see your characters, plot, point of view, setting, and more. In this workshop, you'll learn the basics of storyboarding and apply it to your work-in-progress. After charting the action and your main character's emotion state in each scene, you'll be able to determine scenes you need to drop, add, or modify, where to effectively begin your story, whether you need to add or drop characters, and the best method for narration. At the end, you'll have a blueprint for revision. Open to fiction and nonfiction writers. **Barbara Krasner** holds an MFA from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her work has appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Nimrod*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Jewish Literary Journal*, and other journals. She teaches creative writing at William Paterson University. She is a fellow of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati.

**Buffet Lunch, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM (Atrium)**

## Afternoon Workshops, 2:30 PM–4:00 PM

❖ **Fiction Workshop, with Martha Witt.** Avoid tension in life, but embrace it in fiction! This workshop will cover everything from story beginnings to scenes to sentence-level tweaks with a focus on upping the stakes and revising for maximum tension. Targeted writing exercises and discussions about selected models will inform our practice as we dive back into work that needs a little more umph. Participants are asked to bring that work. **Martha Witt**, recipient of a New York Times Writing Fellowship, is author of the novel *Broken as Things Are*. Her short fiction, selected for inclusion in *This is Not Chick Lit: Original Stories by America's Best Women Writers*, has appeared in several national literary journals and anthologies. She is currently associate professor of English at William Paterson University.

❖ **Poetry and Divination, with Timothy Liu.** How do we get help with writing and rewriting our own poems outside of ourselves? How do we move from an ego-driven self to a more mystical Self? To "divine" is the attempt to gain insight and inspiration by way of occult practices and rituals. In this workshop, we will first consider texts influenced by such practices (including excerpts from Italo Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* and James Merrill's epic tome *The Changing Light at Sandover*). We will then consider how we can incorporate Oracles such as the I-Ching and the Tarot into our own daily writing lives. **Timothy Liu** is the author of ten books of poems, including *Kingdom Come: A Fantasia*. His poems have appeared in such places as *Best American Poetry*, *The Pushcart Prize*, *The Paris Review* and *American Poetry Review*. He has also given tarot card readings from the islands of Greece to the mountains of Peru. A Professor of English at William Paterson University, he lives in Manhattan and Woodstock, NY.

❖ **Art of Brevity: Flash Fiction, with David Galef.** Flash fiction is all over the place these days, in contests, anthologies, and the classroom. It goes by various labels, from short-shorts of 1,500 words and under to nanofiction of 140 characters or fewer, with microfiction and hint fiction in between. Will your flash fiction be a vignette, a character sketch, a what-if tale, a fable, or a twist story? Maybe it'll be a lyric burst, like a prose poem, or a new take on a genre formula. But what works best in a small space, and what is the art of compaction? Though the possibilities abound, each form has its own rules to play with: finding the proper representative details for a slice of life, for example, or taking an absurd premise to a logical conclusion. We'll explore the world of flash fiction through readings and prompts. **David Galef** directs the creative writing program at Montclair State University and has published over a dozen books. His latest is *Brevity: A Flash Fiction Handbook*.

❖ **The Art of Creative Nonfiction, with N. West Moss.** Many of the tenets of good fiction, such as character and arc, apply to the writing of successful Creative Nonfiction. In this workshop, we will look at the problems inherent in taking something that is true, and making it into a moving, compelling, rich work of art. We'll look at some examples of excellent CNF, as well as some of the traps inherent in the form. **N. West Moss** has had her work published in *McSweeney's*, *The New York Times*, *Salon*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and elsewhere. Her short story collection, *The Subway Stops at Bryant Park*, is due out in May 2017 from Leapfrog Press.

❖ **Playwriting, with Yasmine Rana.** This workshop will begin with a brief performance, by professional actors from the Writers Theater of New Jersey, of key scenes from Yasmine Rana's play *Dance the Orange*. The playwright will then lead a brief writing exercise in drama and engage in Q&A with the workshop participants. **Yasmine Rana** received a 2015 Fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and was one of six finalists for the 2015 Francesca Primus Prize (THE WAR ZONE IS MY BED). Her plays have been developed and performed in the United States and internationally at theaters including Playwrights Theater of New Jersey, La MaMa Theater, Halcyon Theatre of Chicago, New Stages Performing Arts Center in the Berkshires, Write-Act Repertory Theater in Los Angeles, The Looking Glass Theater, John Hopkins University Theater, Tara Arts Theater of London, Nora's Playhouse, and T. Schreiber Studio and Theater among others. She was a founding member of Nora's Playhouse.

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### REGISTRATION INCLUDES

A copy of the Rachel Wetzsteon Chapbook Award winner, *Our Daughter and Other Stories* by Wendy Oleson

Light Breakfast 9:30-10:00

Plenary Reading with Rosa Alcalá, 10:00-11:30 am

One Morning Workshop, 11:30 am-1:00 pm

Full Buffet Lunch, 1:00-2:30 pm

and One Afternoon Workshop, 2:30-4:00 pm

Tickets: Regular \$55. WPU Alumni \$44. WPU Graduate Students \$33. WPU Undergraduate Students \$22.

*Late registration (after February 15<sup>th</sup>) is \$66, so please register early.*

[www.wpunj.edu/writing](http://www.wpunj.edu/writing)

or

<https://springwritersconference2017.eventbrite.com>