

WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

# Spring Writer's Conference 2009

“Breaking the Rules”

Saturday, April 18, 2009

9:15 am – 3:45 pm

*featuring keynote speaker*

**Terese Svoboda**

**Terese Svoboda** is the author of ten books of prose and poetry, most recently the memoir, *Black Glasses Like Clark Kent*, winner of the 2007 Graywolf Nonfiction Prize. The *NY Post* called it "Astounding!" Forthcoming in 2011 is her sixth novel, *Indian Slave*, in 2010 her fifth novel, *Pirate Talk or Mermelade*, and in 2009 a fifth book of poetry, *Weapons Grade*, and the paperback release of her third novel, *Trailer Girl and Other Stories*. Her writing has been featured in the *TLS*, *New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *Atlantic*, *Slate*, *Bomb*, *Columbia*, *Yale Review*, and *Paris Review*. Her honors include an O. Henry Prize, a Pushcart Prize, a National Endowment for the Humanities translation grant, three New York Foundation for the Arts grants in poetry and fiction, a New York State Council for the Arts and a Jerome Foundation grant in video, a John Golden Award in playwriting, a Bellagio residency, a Bobst Prize in fiction and an Iowa Prize in poetry. Her opera *WET* premiered at L.A.'s Disney Hall in 2005. She has taught at Davidson, Williams, William and Mary, the Universities of Hawaii and Miami, the New School, Sarah Lawrence, Fairleigh Dickinson, Bennington, Fordham University, San Francisco State, and the Summer Literary Seminars in St. Petersburg, Russia and in Nairobi, Kenya.

## Today's Schedule

**9:15-10:00 AM, BREAKFAST, REGISTRATION & ORIENTATION, in the Atrium Lobby**

**10:00-11:30 AM, PLENARY READING with Terese Svoboda, in the Atrium Auditorium**

**11:30 AM-1:00 PM, MORNING WORKSHOPS (see reverse)**

**1:00-2:15 PM, LUNCH, in the Atrium Lobby**

**2:15-3:45 PM, AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS (see reverse)**

## MORNING WORKSHOPS

◆ **Fiction: Where the Story Starts, with Terese Svoboda.** The story starts when the reader stops saying, "So?" In both experimental and traditional writing, the goal is to get the reader to turn the page, to read on. He needs only the smallest amount of backstory, that prose you read on the screen before *Star Wars* starts, and everything that happened before the detective arrived. How little you can get away with is our elegant question. In this class we'll look at DeLillo, Spark, and other writers' beginnings, we'll listen to your beginnings, and we'll try a writing exercise. Bring 5 copies of no more than a 5-page story for possible discussion. **Hunziker Wing 241.**

◆ **Editing and Publishing, with George Witte.** What do book editors do? How do they decide what they want to publish? And how can writers most effectively approach and work with editors? These and other questions will be addressed in a workshop led by George Witte, editor-in-chief of St. Martin's Press. **George Witte** has edited both fiction and non-fiction, and his edited books have won various awards. He also is the author of two collections of poems and has been published in a range of journals. **Hunziker Wing 232.**

◆ **Form and the Breaking of Form: The Case of the Sonnet, with Rachel Wetzsteon.** Can poets write in traditional forms and also be innovators? How much variation can a poetic form stand before it ceases to be that form? In this course we'll brood on these questions by looking closely at one poetic form—the sonnet—and the many ways that poets have experimented with its constraints. Fifteen-line sonnets, sonnets with unusual (or no) rhyme schemes, fourteen-word sonnets and other formal adventures will keep us busy during the first part of the course as we examine the work of such poets as Frost, Auden, Bishop, Heaney and Gluck; and we'll wrap things up with several in-class exercises in which students try their hand at experimental sonnets of their own. **Rachel Wetzsteon's** books include *The Other Stars*, *Home and Away*, and *Sakura Park*. She has received the Witter Bynner Prize from the Amer. Academy of Arts and Letters. **Hunziker Wing 221.**

◆ **Breaking the Rules in Journalism: Writing your passions into personal essays, travel writing and op-eds that sell, with William Powers.** Participants in this learning-packed workshop will feel energized to write and successfully sell something within one month. Using the author's own published work, we'll explore the art and business sides of rule-bending freelancing that both increases writing income and builds synergistically toward a winning book proposal. **William Powers** has freelanced for the *New York Times* and various other newspapers and publications. He is author of two memoirs: *Whispering in the Giant's Ear: A Frontline Chronicle from Bolivia's War on Globalization* and *Blue Clay People: Seasons on Africa's Fragile Edge*. **Hunziker Wing 237.**

---

## AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

◆ **Fiction, with Phil Cioffari.** Over and above discussing basic elements of fiction, this workshop will focus on the way scene structure contributes to the art of storytelling. Students are asked to bring, if possible, 3-4 pages of their own fiction for discussion. **Philip Cioffari's** short story collection, *A History of Things Lost or Broken*, won the Tartt Fiction Prize as well as the D.H. Lawrence Award for fiction. Cioffari is a Professor of English at William Paterson University. **Hunziker Wing 241.**

◆ **When the News Hits the Poem, with Charlotte Nekola.** We will examine the poets Kenneth Fearing's, William Carlos Williams' and Muriel Rukeyser's work as inspiration and models for incorporating news elements (headlines, news pieces, short histories) into poetry—an example of the technique of incorporating collage prose elements inside of poems. We will discuss the immediacy, vibrancy, humor, irony and impact that this technique can offer. **Charlotte Nekola** teaches creative writing and American Literature at William Paterson University. Her poetry will be appearing soon in the *Ragged Sky Poetry Anthology on Clothing*. Her books include *Dream House: A Memoir*, and *Writing Red*. **Hunziker Wing 232.**

◆ **Blogging, with Steve Newton.** This workshop will provide an overview of the blogosphere, introducing attendees to a ubiquitous online world of writing, rants, photographs and music, and will show how to start your own web-log, or blog. The only qualification is a willingness to learn and an open receptivity to the possibilities of composing and self-publishing on the web. **Steve Newton** teaches literature and writing at William Paterson University and is the Director of the WPU Writing Center. **Atrium Computer Lab 114.**

◆ **Writing about God in a Secular World, with Christopher Weaver.** In certain institutions and among certain audiences, God may be the last taboo. Liberal institutions such as public schools and universities tend to dismiss religious themes and ideas as the domain of cultural conservatives. Either God is redefined as "spirituality" or the subject is avoided entirely as inappropriate. This class will confront the God taboo and discuss how writers of all faiths (and none) can use religious questions, beliefs, ideas, and experiences to form meaningful connections with each other and to spark valuable, probing, vivid writing. **Christopher Weaver** teaches writing and literature at WPU. His published works include "The Rhetoric of Recovery: Can Twelve Step Programs Inform the Teaching of Writing?" **Hunziker Wing 221.**

◆ **Reading, with George Witte, Rachel Wetzsteon and others.** Kick back and soak in the poetry of George Witte, Rachel Wetzsteon and other guests. There will also be an **Open Mic**—if you are interested in reading a brief selection of your work, please sign up at the registration table or contact John Parras. **Hunziker Wing 237.**