



Midwest Writing Center

Fostering appreciation of the written word, supporting and educating its creators.

David R. Collins 2017 Writers' Conference

June 22, 23, & 24

St. Ambrose University, McCarthy Hall
518 W. Locust Street, Davenport, IA



Conference Schedule

	June 22	June 23	June 24
8:45 - 10:15am	Revision Strategies for the Novel – VanBaale (3-day workshop)		
10:00am - Noon			Book Pitches: Abby Saul from The Lark Agency \$25
10:30am - Noon	Nothing Fancy: Lessons on The Art and Craft of Memoir – Daniels (3-day workshop)		
Noon - 1:30pm	Lunch on your own	Lunch on your own <i>or optional</i> Author Luncheon with Keynote Speaker Kelly Daniels “I’m Nobody! Who are you?”: On Writing Because You Love It. \$17 Rogalski Center	Lunch on your own <i>or</i> Conference Concluding Lunch included with conference registration fee, \$17 if you did not pay a registration fee. Rogalski Center
1:45 - 3:15pm	Partnership: Finding, Working with, and Keeping an Agent – Saul (3-day workshop) Writing About Our Times: Should/Could/Would Poetry Do it? – Duplan (3-day workshop)		
2:30 - 4:30pm			Book Pitches: MWC Press \$25
3:30 - 5:00pm	Combinatory Play, Conspiracy Theories, & The Collage Essay: Short Prose – Yoder (3-day workshop)		
5:30 - 9:00pm	Conference Keynote Address: Luis Alberto Urrea Figge Art Museum, John Deere Auditorium, 225 W. 2nd St., Davenport, IA • Meet & Greet for Conference participants only 5:30-6:30pm • Public Reception 6:30-7:15pm/ Program at 7:30pm – both free and open to the public • Cash bar & light hors d'oeuvres will be available	DRC Conference Social Mixer & Faculty Reading/Participant Open Mic Rozz-Tox, 2108 3rd Ave., Rock Island, IL • Faculty Reading & Participant Open Mic / Social starts at 5:30pm • Faculty Reading starts at 7pm, participant open mic immediately after	

Conference Sponsors:

- Modern Woodmen of America - *Founding Sponsor of the David R. Collins Writers' Conference*
- Regional Development Authority
- St. Ambrose University English Department
- Figge Art Museum
- This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency through federal funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts



Workshop Descriptions

Combinatory Play, Conspiracy Theories, & The Collage Essay: Short Prose

Presenter: Rachel Yoder (3:30-5:00pm)

Einstein's theory of where creativity comes from and the conspiracy theorist's impulse toward pattern making will both inform this workshop's exploration of the collage essay, an innovative form that offers a potent opportunity for writers to explore associative play, experiment with juxtaposition, and crack apart traditional narrative time and point of view. We'll explore the work of contemporary writers such as Annie Dillard, Joe Wilkins, JoAnn Beard, and Anne Carson to discover how they piece together research and information, memories, images, reportage, storytelling, and sparks of lyric inspiration...and may even dip our toes in a few short stories. Come prepared to participate in pattern-making exercises using both narrative and imagery, as well as other experimentation in arrangement, textual quilt-work, and fragmentation.

Nothing Fancy: Lessons on The Art and Craft of Memoir

Presenter: Kelly Daniels (10:30am-12:00pm)

In this workshop, you are invited to gather, order, and revise your personal experience into a story, or stories, with the goal of creating works worthy of publication, and beyond. Over the three course periods, we will work on generating material, manipulating time to achieve the most powerful effect, choosing to present material as scene or summary, locating theme from within that material and using it to grow an organic structure for your story, and finally strategies for polishing your work and seeking publication.

Partnership: Finding, Working with, and Keeping an Agent

Presenter: Abby Saul (1:45-3:15pm)

A good agent is a true partner for your writing career: helping you to get published, write well, and maximize your author brand. So how do you get and work with one, and what, exactly, can an agent do for you? This class will discuss finding an agent (including the art of the query letter), the winding way of the publishing path (and how an agent guides you along it), and what to expect of your agent partnership (including business management, contracts, and editorial processes).

Revision Strategies for the Novel

Presenter: Kali VanBaale (8:45-10:15am)

So, you've written the first draft of a novel (Congratulations!) and you're ready to start giving it some shape and polish through the editing process. This workshop is designed to help you develop a revision plan and is for any fiction writer with a rough draft of a novel-in-progress. Through discussion, examples, and writing exercises, we'll focus on the areas of central conflict and plot, scene, characterization, setting, dialogue, opening lines, and titles.

Writing About Our Times: Should / Could / Would Poetry Do It?

Presenter: Anaïs Duplan (1:45-3:15pm)

The morning after Donald Trump's election, Becca Klaver's *Empire Wasted* arrived at my doorstep. The stylish-looking poetry collection from Bloof Books seemed like an uncanny arrival. 14 pages in, Klaver's poem, "We Got Him" haunts me. In particular for its epigraph, which reads: "NBC News interrupts *The Celebrity Apprentice* to inform viewers that President Obama will be delivering an important statement from the White House." Klaver then seems to list off a series of Tweets, all wildly varying responses--by seemingly random people--to Osama Bin Laden's murder. When I brought the collection in to my undergrads, we tried to decide whether this was poetry. For example, are Tweets poems? We decided they were. I've always liked poems that talk about our times and I like to write those poems, too. Of course, there's always a danger of writing overly symbolic poems, or poems that want too much to be our anthems, or poems that want to tell us how to feel. I don't like those poems. In this workshop, we'll talk about how to successfully write about what's happening now around us, how to avoid some of the pitfalls in writing poems like these, and then, of course, we'll read and write those poems.

Conference Faculty

Kelly Daniels

Kelly Daniels contributes regularly to *The Sun* magazine. His essays and stories have otherwise appeared in many literary journals, among them *Hotel Amerika*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Cimarron Review*, *Third Coast*, *Fifth Wednesday*, and the *Sonora Review*. A former fellow at the MacDowell Colony, he is an associate professor of creative writing at Augustana College. His debut memoir, *Cloudbreak, California*, was one of BuzzFeed's "13 favorite works of nonfiction and memoir" in 2013. He co-hosts *Personal Rejection Letter: A Podcast by Writers with Day Jobs*.



Anaïs Duplan

Anaïs Duplan is the author of *Take This Stal-lion* (Brooklyn Arts Press, 2016). Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming on PBS News Hour, in *Hyperallergic*, *FENCE*, *Redivider*, *Horse Less Review*, *The Journal*, *Boston Review*, and elsewhere. In collaboration with Public Space One, she runs the Center for Afrofuturist Studies, an artist residency program for new media artists of color. She lives and works in Iowa City, where she is MFA candidate at the Iowa Writers Workshop.



Abby Saul

Abby founded The Lark Group (www.larkwords.com) after a decade in publishing at John Wiley & Sons, Sourcebooks, and Browne & Miller Literary Associates. She's worked with and edited bestselling and award-winning authors as well as major



brands. At each publishing group she's been a part of, Abby also has helped to establish ebook standards, led company-wide forums to explore new digital possibilities for books, and created and managed numerous digital initiatives. A zealous reader who loves her iPad and the ebooks on it, she still can't resist the lure of a print book. Abby's personal library of beloved titles runs the gamut from literary newbies and classics, to cozy mysteries, to sappy women's fiction, to dark and twisted thrillers. She's looking for great and engrossing adult commercial and literary fiction. A *magna cum laude* graduate of Wellesley College, Abby spends her weekends—when she's not reading—cooking and hiking with her husband. Find her @BookySaul on Twitter.

Kali VanBaale

Kali VanBaale's debut novel, *The Space Between*, earned an American Book Award, the Independent Publisher's silver medal for general fiction, and the Fred Bonnie Memorial First Novel Award. Her second novel, *The Good Divide*, was published by Midwestern Gothic Press in 2016. Her third novel, *The Cure for Hopeless Causes*, was awarded a State of Iowa Arts Council major artist grant and is pending publication.



Her short stories and essays have appeared in *Nowhere Magazine*, *Numéro Cinq*, *The Milo Review*, *Northwind Literary*, *Poets & Writers*, *The Writer* and several anthologies. Kali holds an MFA in creative writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts and she is a faculty member in the Lindenwood University MFA in Creative Writing Program. She currently lives outside Des Moines with her family. www.kalivanbaale.com

Rachel Yoder

Rachel Yoder's stories and essays have appeared in a wide array of print and online publications including *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune's Printers' Row Journal*, *The Paris Review Daily*, *Tin House's Open Bar*, and *The Sun Magazine*. She is also the creator and host of *The Fail Safe*, an interview podcast that explores writing and failure. In 2010, she helped to found *draft: the journal of process*, which publishes first and final drafts of stories, essays, and poems along with author interviews about the creative process. She is the former director of the Iowa Youth Writing Project, and currently serves as Outreach Coordinator for the Mission Creek Festival and Witching Hour in Iowa City. She earned MFAs from the University of Arizona (Fiction) and the University of Iowa (Creative Nonfiction), where she was an Iowa Arts Fellow.



Book Pitches

Abby Saul (Saturday, June 24) (10:00am-Noon)

Abby Saul founder of The Lark Group, will hear pitches Saturday.

What We Want

- Adult literary fiction and adult commercial fiction (including historical fiction, women's fiction, mysteries, and thrillers)
- Queries that clearly state what the book is, what it's about, how long it is, and who it's by

What We Don't Want

- Nonfiction, children's books, or screenplays

Conference Keynote Address

Luis Alberto Urrea

Thursday, June 22, Figue Art Museum
Community Gallery & John Deere Auditorium, 225 W. 2nd St.,
Davenport, IA

Meet & Greet - for Conference Participants only

5:30-6:30pm (included in registration fee)

Public Reception & Keynote Address

6:30-7:15pm – Reception, 7:30pm – Keynote
Both Free & Open to the Public

Cash bar & light hors d'oeuvres will be available

Luis Alberto Urrea

Luis Alberto Urrea is a prolific and award-winning writer, a master storyteller who uses his dual-culture life experiences to explore greater themes of love, loss and triumph.



Born in Tijuana to a Mexican father and an American mother, Luis grew up in San Diego. Like so many great writers, Luis got his start in literature writing poems to impress girls in junior high. His early heroes were all rock stars, but not being especially musically gifted Luis chose to follow in the steps of his literary role models. "What I really wanted to be was Jim Morrison," he has said "however, if I weren't a writer, I'd be dead."

As a young man Luis served as a missionary in the Tijuana dumps prior to receiving a teaching Fellowship to Harvard University. The author of sixteen books, he has published extensively in many genres and has received many prestigious awards. *The Devil's Highway*, his non-fiction account of a group of Mexican immigrants lost in the Arizona desert, won the Lannan Literary Award and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. His highly acclaimed historical novels; *The Hummingbird's Daughter* and *Queen of America* together tell the epic story of Teresita Urrea, a great aunt who was a healer and Mexican folk hero. Collectively *The Devil's Highway*, *The Hummingbird's Daughter* and his novel *Into the Beautiful North* have been chosen by more than one hundred different cities and colleges across the country for community-wide reading programs.

Book Pitches

MWC Press (Saturday, June 24) (2:30-4:30pm)

A panel of representatives from MWC Press will hear pitches for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry manuscripts on Saturday. The panel requests each author bring a one page summary of their pitch—brief synopsis of the manuscript, brief author bio/other publications, brief outline of marketing ideas/strategy, etc. The panel will take these summaries and their input from the pitch sessions back to the MWC Board of Directors and related committees to make a final decision. Authors whose work advances through this process may be asked to provide more detailed information. Please note the MWC Press reserves the right not to publish any manuscript from these pitch sessions. For more information about MWC Press pitch sessions, please contact MWC via phone or email.

