

FESTIVAL OF WRITERS



NOVEMBER 12–13, 2021



SCHEDULE

All events are in Foellinger Great Hall, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts

Friday, November 12

Tracy K. Smith Poetry Reading and Q & A

4:30 P.M. Opening Remarks

Antoinette Burton

Humanities Research Institute Director, Maybelle
Leland Swanlund Endowed Chair and Professor of
History

Introduction of Tracy K. Smith

Corey Van Landingham

Assistant Professor of English

Saturday, November 13

Jericho Brown Poetry Reading and Q & A

2:00 P.M. Opening Remarks

Ted Sanders

Director of Creative Writing Program and
Associate Professor of English

Introduction of Jericho Brown

Janice Harrington

Professor of English



Saturday, November 13

Roxane Gay & Jericho Brown in Conversation

Moderated by Stacey Robinson, Graphic Design Professor

4:00 P.M. Moderator Introduction

Antoinette Burton
Humanities Research Institute Director,
Maybelle Leland Swanlund Endowed Chair
and Professor of History

Roxane Gay Reading and Q & A

7:30 P.M. Remarks

Antoinette Burton
Humanities Research Institute Director, Maybelle
Leland Swanlund Endowed Chair and Professor of
History

Introduction of Roxane Gay

Karen Flynn
Associate Chair and Associate Professor in the
Department of Gender and Women's Studies,
Associate Professor in the African American Studies
Department



THE WRITERS



Jericho Brown

Jericho Brown is the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award and fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Brown's first book, *Please* (2008), won the American Book Award. His second book, *The New Testament* (2014), won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and was named one of the best of the year by *Library Journal*, *Coldfront*, and the Academy of American Poets. He is also the author of the collection *The Tradition* (2019), which was a finalist for the 2019 National Book Award and the winner of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. His poems have appeared in *Buzzfeed*, *The Nation*, the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *Time*, *The Pushcart Prize Anthology*, and several volumes of *The Best American Poetry* anthologies. He is the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Creative Writing and the Director of the Creative Writing Program at Emory University in Atlanta.

Roxane Gay

Roxane Gay's writing appears in *Best American Mystery Stories 2014*, *Best American Short Stories 2012*, *Best Sex Writing 2012*, *A Public Space*, *McSweeney's*, *Tin House*, *Oxford American*, *American Short Fiction*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and many others. She is a contributing opinion writer for the *New York Times*. She is the author of the books *Ayiti*, *An Untamed State*, the *New York Times* bestselling *Bad Feminist*, the nationally bestselling *Difficult Women* and the *New York Times* bestselling *Hunger*. She is also the author of *World of Wakanda* for Marvel. She has several books forthcoming and is also at work on television and film projects. She also has a newsletter, *The Audacity*.



Tracy K. Smith

Tracy K. Smith was appointed the 22nd United States Poet Laureate in 2017. She is the author of the critically acclaimed memoir *Ordinary Light* and four books of poetry, including her most recent *Wade in the Water*. Her collection *Life on Mars* won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize and was selected as a *New York Times* Notable Book. *Duende* won the 2006 James Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets and an Essence Literary Award. *The Body's Question* was the winner of the 2002 Cave Canem Poetry Prize. Smith was the recipient of a Rona Jaffe Writers Award in 2004 and a Whiting Award in 2005. In 2014 the Academy of American Poets awarded Smith with the Academy Fellowship, awarded to one poet each year to recognize distinguished poetic achievement. She is Professor of English and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University.



ABOUT HRI

The Humanities Research Institute (HRI) fosters interdisciplinary study in the humanities, arts, and social sciences at the University of Illinois.

We incubate bold ideas.

As the lifeblood of humanities research on the Urbana campus, we provide funding — through fellowships, internships, and programmatic support — and a forum for tackling big questions and imagining bold, human-centered approaches to working for change.

We build bridges between communities.

Whether by convening interdisciplinary academic audiences or doing work that impacts local communities, HRI is committed to developing programs where people can see the humanities in action. Our work encourages ongoing dialogue with Illinois' historic land grant mission by helping to orient humanities research, resources and influence toward new possibilities for the public university.

We shape conversations nationally and internationally.

HRI serves as the administrative locus for the Mellon-funded Humanities Without Walls (HWW) consortium, which links the humanities centers at 16 research universities throughout the Midwest and beyond. Through additional affiliations and advocacy work, HRI fosters opportunities for humanists to impact the dialogue both nationally and internationally.



ODYSSEY at 15

The Odyssey Project—one of HRI's public humanities initiatives—is marking its 15th anniversary this year. Odyssey offers free University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign courses in the humanities to income-eligible adults in our East Central Illinois community. Students can earn up to eight transferable college credits in an environment designed to support non-traditional students.

If you'd like to help ensure the future of this vital program—one that alumni have described as transformative and life changing—visit hri.illinois.edu/giving.

CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM

As part of the University of Illinois' Department of English, the Creative Writing program combines professional training in creative writing with literary study. Our undergraduate and graduate students display a wide range of educational and cultural backgrounds, and their work in prose and poetry explores diverse literary styles and skills. Faculty in the Creative Writing Program have published extensively and won national prizes for their teaching and writing alike.

NINTH LETTER

Ninth Letter is the award-winning literary arts journal edited and produced by the Creative Writing Program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The journal's mission is to present original literary writing of exceptional quality, illuminated by cutting-edge graphic design.

Work published in *Ninth Letter* has been selected for many awards anthologies such as *Best American Nonrequired Reading*, *Best American Poetry*, *The Pushcart Prize*, *Best American Short Stories*, *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror*, *Best Creative Nonfiction*, *Best New Fantasy*, *Best New Poets*, *Best of the Net*, and *New Stories from the Midwest*. During a decade-plus collaboration with the UIUC School of Art + Design, the journal also received many national and international awards for graphic design, and was featured in the design awards annuals of both *STEP Inside Design* and *HOW Magazine*.

YEAR OF CREATIVE WRITERS

This Festival of Writers marks the culmination of the Year of Creative Writers—a series of conversations in Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield with some of the nation's leading creative writers and authors. It launched in February 2020 with in-person events that spring, pivoting to virtual events in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We were proud to feature such an impressive and inspiring lineup of authors over the past year and a half. Thank you for joining us in this celebration of the written word!

SPRING 2022

The Year of Creative Writers series may be complete, but more excellent programming is planned for spring 2022. Make plans to join us at events featuring celebrated writer Dave Eggers and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Natalie Diaz.

Watch for more details to come at hri.illinois.edu.



March 2022

Dave Eggers



April 7, 2022

Natalie Diaz

Presented by the Humanities Research Institute, the Creative Writing Program in the Department of English, and Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

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