

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA OMAHA

MFA IN WRITING

10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION RESIDENCY

ALUMNI VISITING FACULTY & PRESENTERS





Welcome

The University of Nebraska at Omaha low-residency MFA in Writing program celebrated its 10th anniversary with the Summer 2015 Residency session. We welcomed back dozens of alums, representing each of our graduating classes, who returned to us as visiting faculty, presenters and readers. Those featured in the following pages represent ten years of our program's excellence educating the future's literary masters of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, playwriting and young adult fiction. Along with our Mentoring faculty, our alums packed our nine-day schedule with craft and theory lectures, readings from their original work, and panels on writing and publishing to help train our cohort of current students engaged in their two-year curriculum toward mastery of their own craft and art.

We are proud in the knowledge that our alumni are contributing to the world of international literature as authors, teachers and editors.

Alumni Visiting Faculty

Shanan Ballam earned an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2007). She teaches poetry writing and fiction writing at Utah State University and was named the 2014 Lecturer of the Year for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. She is the author of the chapbook *The Red Riding Hood Papers* (Finishing Line Press 2010) and the full-length poetry collection *Pretty Marrow* (Negative Capability Press 2013) which was a semi-finalist for the 2010 Brittingham and Polk Poetry Prizes, the 2010 May Swenson Award, the 2010 Philip Levine Prize in Poetry, and the 2012 Louise Bogan Award; in 2012 it received

first place in the Utah Arts Council's Original Writing Contest, judged by Sue Walker, Poet Laureate of Alabama. Ballam's poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *Pilgrimage*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *American Poetry Journal*, *Sugar House Review*, *15 Bytes: Utah's Art Magazine*, *Whistling Shade*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *South Dakota Review*. In 2013, she was appointed to the Utah Arts Council Board of Directors where she serves as the Literary Arts Representative.



Cat Dixon is the author of *Our End Has Brought the Spring* (Finishing Line Press, 2015) and *Too Heavy to Carry* (Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2014). She is the marketing director and board secretary of [The Backwaters Press](http://TheBackwatersPress.com), a nonprofit press in Omaha. Dixon earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2007). In addition to teaching in UNO's undergraduate creative writing program part-time, she works full-time as a church administrator. Her poetry and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous journals and anthologies including *Sugar House Review*, *Midwest Quarterly Review*, *Coe Review*, *Eclectica*, *Trinity Review*, *Calliope Magazine*, *Thin Air Magazine*, and *Mid-American Review*. catdix.com.



Alumni Visiting Faculty



Gary Dop — poet, performer, playwright, and professor — grew up throughout Germany and the United States, and he now lives with his wife and three daughters in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, where he is an English professor at Randolph College. He holds an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2007).

Dop's writing has appeared in dozens of national and international journals, including *Prairie Schooner*, *Sugar House Review*, *New Letters*, *Rattle*, *Agni*, *The Florida Review*, *Midwestern Gothic*, *Ocean State Review*, *Eclectica*, *Oxford Magazine*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *South Dakota Review*, and *Blackbird*. Dop also dabbles in playwriting, acting, screenwriting, comedy, and radio. Dop's essays have been heard on public radio's *All Things Considered*; he has written, consulted for, directed, and sold scripts for video and film projects (including commercials, short films, documentaries, features); and his plays have been produced in small venues around the country. In 2013, Dop was awarded the Great Plains Emerging Writer Prize, and in 2015, his first book of poems, *Father, Child, Water*, was published by Red Hen Press. garydop.com



Alumni Visiting Faculty

Liz Kay is a founding editor of Spark Wheel Press and the journal *burntdistrict*. Kay holds an MFA from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2009), where she was the recipient of both an Academy of American Poets Prize and the Wendy Fort Foundation Prize for exemplary work in poetry. In 2008, she was awarded a Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Prize for excellence in lyric poetry. Her poems have appeared in such journals as *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *RHINO*, *Nimrod*, *Willow Springs*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Redactions*, and *Sugar House Review*. Her chapbook, *Something to Help Me Sleep*, was published by dancing girl press in 2012, and her debut novel, *Monsters: A Love Story*, is forthcoming from G. P. Putnam's Sons in 2016. lizkay.net

Winner of the 2011 Nebraska Book Award for Poetry for her debut collection, *Cradling Monsoons*, as well as the 2014 Nebraska Book Award for Poetry Anthology, **Sarah McKinstry-Brown** studied poetry at the University of Nebraska under the tutelage

of Missouri's Poet Laureate, William Trowbridge, earning her MFA in Writing (Summer, 2010). She's been published everywhere from West Virginia's standardized tests to literary journals such as *South Dakota Review* and *Ruminate*. Published in a number of poetry slam anthologies, her poems are featured alongside Poet Laureates Billy Collins and Ted Kooser in *The Spoken Word Revolution Redux*. McKinstry-Brown, a Teaching Artist for the Lied Center for Performing Arts' Arts Integration Program, teaches performing and writing workshops in schools, libraries, lockdown facilities, nursing homes, colleges, universities, and everywhere in-between. Sarah is the founder, organizer, and host of *feedback*, a quarterly reading series held at the public non-profit cultural organization, KANEKO. sarah.midverse.com



Alumni Visiting Faculty



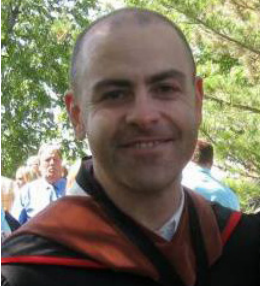
Born in Mexico City and raised in San Antonio, Texas, **Natalia Treviño** was raised in Spanish by her parents while Bert and Ernie gave her English lessons on the side. Treviño is an Associate Professor of English at Northwest Vista College and a member of the Macondo Foundation, a writer's workshop aimed at encouraging non-violent social change. She holds a BA and MA in English from The University of Texas at San Antonio and an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2010). Her poetry has won the Alfredo Moral de Cisneros Award for Emerging Writers from Sandra Cisneros, the Wendy Barker Creative Writing Award, the 2008 Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Prize, and the 2012 San Antonio Artists Foundation Literary Award, and her poems have appeared in *Bordersenses*, *Borderlands Texas Poetry Review*, *The Houston Literary Review*, *Sugar House Review*, *Sliver of Stone*, *burntdistrict*, *Voices de la Luna*, and North Texas State's *Inheritance of Light*, among other places. Her first book of poetry, *Lavando La Dirty Laundry* was published by Mongrel Empire (2013). Treviño's fiction has appeared in Curbstone Press' *Mirrors Beneath the Earth* and *The Platte Valley Review*, and nonfiction essays are included in the *Wising Up* Anthologies, *Shifting Balance Sheets: Women's Stories of Naturalized Citizens* and *Complex Allegiances: Constellations of Immigration*. She is currently finishing her novel, *La Cruzada*, and lives with her husband Stewart and son Stuart just outside of San Antonio, Texas.

natoliatrevino.com



Alumni Visiting Faculty

Philip Jude Weitl is an Associate Professor of English and holder of the Ardis Butler James Endowed Chair at Doane College, where he was named the 2010 Teacher of the Year. He teaches creative, technical, and expository writing and recently accepted an invitation to lead Doane College's Health and the Humanities Working Group. Prior to this, he developed the Doane College Writing Center, which he directed for five years before passing those duties to a protégé in 2013. He holds a



Master of Fine Arts in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2008), as well as a Master of Arts in English and a Graduate Certificate in Technical and Professional Communication from Kansas State University. His work has been published in several literary magazines including *The Briar Cliff Review*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Jelly Bucket*, the *Flint Hills Review*, the *Georgetown Review*, *Ruminate*, and *Limestone*, as well as in *Next Text*, a 2007 instructional anthology. He has been a columnist, contributing editor and regular feature contributor for *Nebraska Life*. Prior to his academic career, he served as political campaign operative and then as the speechwriter and deputy press secretary for the Nebraska governor's office.



Alumni Presenters & Readers

David S. Atkinson is the author of *Bones Buried in the Dirt* (2014 Next Generation Indie Book Awards finalist, First Novel <80K) and *The Garden of Good and Evil Pancakes* (2015 National Indie Excellence Awards finalist in humor). His writing appears or is forthcoming in numerous venues, including *Bartleby Snopes*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Interrobang?! Magazine*, *Cease, Cows*, *The Writing Disorder presents The Best Fiction and Nonfiction of 2012*, *Atticus Review*, and others. Atkinson earned his MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer 2010). He spends his non-literary time working as a patent attorney in Denver.

davidsatkinsonwriting.com

Robin Buckallew is a biologist and a playwright. She received her MFA in Writing with a focus in playwriting from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2014) and has been produced professionally in New York City and in Lincoln, NE.



She is currently the playwright in residence for the Central Community College Earth Day celebration, providing one-act plays for Earth Day performances each year. She has also been read at the Great Plains Theatre Conference in Lincoln, and has been a finalist and received an honorable mention at the Region 5 Kennedy Center College Theater Festival.

She is currently working on a Women of the Bible play series and is putting together a festival for Freethought Theatre to be held in 2016.



Alumni Presenters & Readers

Kristen Clanton is an adventurer, defenseless only to gravity and the subconscious. She graduated from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2008), earning an MFA in poetry. Her poetry and short fiction have been published by *Bicycle Review*, *The Birds We Piled Loosely*, *Burlesque Press*, *MadHat Drive-By Book Reviews*, *MadHat Lit*, *Midnight Circus*, *The Outrider Review*, *Ragazine*, *Quilt*, and *Sugar House Review*. She has work forthcoming in *The Mangrove Review* and *Otto Magazine*. www.kristenclanton.com



Kate Claus received her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2013). Professionally, she has held a variety of positions from librarian to market analyst. She lives in the Kansas City area with her husband and two sons, and she is working on a novel.



Denise Emanuel Clemen's fiction and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in the *Georgetown Review* (including an honorable mention for their prize), *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *Literary Mama*, *The Rattling Wall*, *Fiction Fix*, *Knee-Jerk*, *Chagrin River Review*, *Delmarva Review*, *New Plains Review*, and *Serving House Journal*. She earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2009). She has received fellowships to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Vermont Studio Center, Ragdale Foundation, and was an Auvillar fellow in France in 2009. Her memoir, *Birth Mother*, was published by Shebooks in 2014. deniseemanuelclemen.com.



Alumni Presenters & Readers

Although he struggled with a speech impediment for much of his life, **Jason Freeman** came to realize that his unique voice is one of his biggest assets. After earning his MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2007), Freeman created Talk Swap Coaching and has been speaking on stages, at schools and presenting at multiple conferences, recently on a tour in Los Angeles, speaking with famous comedian/transformational speaker Kyle Cease at his sold out events, Evolving Out Loud. For more information, visit jasonwfreeman.com



Derek Glissmann lives in Ankeny Iowa. He received his MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2012). He is currently self-publishing his novella *Eli* with Dorrance Publishing. He is also working on a novel.



Fiction writer and singer-songwriter **Luke Hawley** is an Associate Professor of English at Dordt College.



His collection of short stories and accompanying songs, *The Northwoods Hymnal*, recently received a Nebraska Book Award. His short stories have also appeared in journals such as *The Blotter*, *Sleet Magazine*, *Sparrow*, *Hobart*, and *Oeuvre Magazine*. Hawley earned his MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2011). He lives in rural Iowa with his

wife and two children. When not writing, teaching, or recording, he spends his time building bookcases out of old windows and learning from his agrarian neighbors about hogs and soybeans and how to change head gaskets on his Subaru.

lhawley.com/

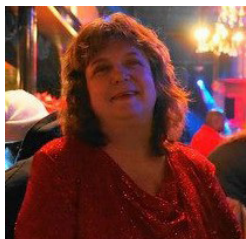


Alumni Presenters & Readers

Tonie Harrington earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2007). She and her husband, Dan, live in Downers Grove, Illinois, just west of Chicago, where she works part-time as a transcriptionist, proofreader and ghostwriter. She is currently working on a novel.



Heidi Hermanson earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2008). Her poems have been published in *Midwest Quarterly*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, and *PlainSpoke*. In 2010 she won the Omaha Public Library's annual poetry contest and performed her winning work, *Memento Mori*, accompanied by Silver Roots, a New York-based violin and flute duo. She has read at the John H. Milton Conference in Vermillion, SD, on the Kerry Pedestrian Bridge over the Missouri, at the Bowery Poetry Club in New York City, and at the Roebuck Pub in England. In her spare time she hopes to open a library of maps to towns that do not exist and learn dialects of the seven-year cicada.



B.H. James' novel, *Parnucklian for Chocolate*, was a finalist for the 2014 PEN Center USA Literary Award in Fiction. His short fiction, creative nonfiction, and drama have appeared or are forthcoming in various online and print journals, including *The Los Angeles Review*, *F(r)iction*, *The Subtopian Selected Stories Volume 2*, *Marco Polo Arts Mag*, and *Cease, Cows*. James received his MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2012) and has taught high school English in Stockton, CA for the past nine years. Prior to that he worked at Walmart. James lives in Stockton with his wife, two boys, and two cats. www.bhjames.com.



Alumni Presenters & Readers

Deirdre White Jones is a mother, (new) grandmother and wife by choice, a high school English teacher by profession and a writer at heart. She earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2010). Jones publishes a line of picture books for memory loss patients called Elderbooks; the first two books in the series are called *Something About that Smile* and *The Umbrella Man* (Elderbooks.org). She is also the author of the novella *The Friendly Beasts*, an anti-sentimental Christmas story about survival on the streets, which she is turning into a musical play, and she is working on a novel. Next to writing, Deirdre's favorite pastime is spending time with her family in the great Colorado outdoors.



Natasha Kessler-Rains earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2011) where she received the Academy of American Poets Helen W. Kenefick Poetry Prize. Her poetry has been featured in *burntdistrict*, *Sixth Finch*, *RealPoetik*, *Blue Mesa Review*, and *South Dakota Review*, among journals. She is the author of the poetry collection *Dismantling the Rabbit Altar* (Coconut Books) and the collaborative chapbook *SDVIG* (alice blue), co-written with Joshua Ware. Kessler-Rains teaches literature and creative writing at the University of Nebraska Omaha and Creighton University. She also curates the Strange Machine Reading Series.



Michael Lundy holds an MA in English from Northwest Missouri State University and an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2010). He currently teaches at Bellevue University and Peru State. Lundy's current book in progress, *The Academy*, uses both fiction and non-fiction techniques to wind together the stories of former staff and students of the Tarkio Academy, a residential/treatment facility for adjudicated, at-risk teens.



Alumni Presenters & Readers

Teri Kramer-Mandel earned her MFA at the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2014) with a poetry emphasis and is working on her PhD in English at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. She has worked as the publishing coordinator for *Horse & Rider Magazine* and currently serves as a writing instructor at the high school level in an alternative learning center. Kramer-Mandel is researching the benefits of writing witness poetry and how writing after trauma can heal both the writer and the collective. She uses her studies and background in this area to speak to domestic violence groups and others impacted by trauma.



Jordan Mapes received her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2013), and she has been featured in SP CE's *LOVEbook*, EAB Publishing's *Midnight Circus*, and Myth Ink Books' *Dark Tales from Elder Regions: New York*. She is also the co-founder of *New Bile*, an online literary journal. Professionally, she works as the editor and content manager for an e-commerce company, and she freelances in videography and new media consultation. Mapes manages the UNO MFA social media accounts and the UNO MFA blog. She lives in Omaha with her dog, Phin, and has an insatiable appetite for pizza. jordanmapes.com



Louise Miller made a trip to Red Cloud, NE in late 2009. A devotee of Willa Cather's work, she flew from her home in Indonesia to check out the town where Willa grew up. En route back, she stopped in at Omaha and applied to the University of Nebraska Omaha MFA in Writing Program. After graduating (Winter, 2012), she now has a portfolio of 12 linked stories, has been published in Australia and was short-listed for a *Glimmer Train New Fiction* prize. Miller lives in London and is working on a novel and resists the urge to travel overseas on a daily basis.



Alumni Presenters & Readers

Michaela Mullins' first book of poetry, *must*, with drawings by Argentinean artist Mariela Yeregui, was published in 2014, by Nomadic Press (Oakland). She writes book reviews and is a contributing editor for Nomadic Press, as well. Mullins earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2011) and is a doctoral candidate in the Philosophy, Art, and Thought division at the European Graduate School.



Molly O'Dell lives, works and writes in southwest Virginia where she was born and raised. She serves as medical director for the New River Health District of the Virginia Department of Health and received her MFA in Writing from University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2008). Her poems and essays have appeared in both medical and literary journals, including *JAMA*, *CHEST*, *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel*, *Virginia Literary Journal*, *Platte Valley Review*, and *Whitefish Review*, and her first chapbook, *Off the Chart*, was released in June 2015.



Stanley Odle has spent a lifetime in communication. He has a BA in Comparative Psychology/Animal Ethology from the University of Southern California, Certificate in Writing the Screenplay from the University of Washington, and an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2009).

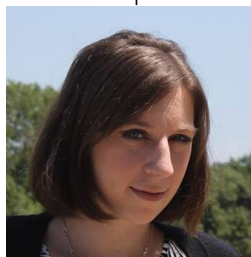
Odle has worked as a family counselor, Army captain during the sixties, and college instructor in video production, writing, and screenwriting. He created, wrote and produced *The Homeland Project*, a late 1980's-early 1990's independent television documentary series jointly developed with the Soviet Union's Central Studio of Moscow, which was aired on The Discovery Channel, National PBS, and on Channel One throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Block countries; the series won three International Television Association awards for excellence in



Alumni Presenters & Readers

programming, the 1991 Telly award, and was nominated by The Discovery Channel for the cable Emmy award in the category of Best Documentary Special of the Year. Odle continues his communication work with a coming novel, *In Search of a Soldier*, the story of his search for an Uncle who was killed during the Second World War and for whom he was named. stanleywodle.com

Jillian M. Phillips is a poet from Northwestern Wisconsin. Phillips earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2014). Her work has appeared in *Nonbinary Review*, *Silver Apples Magazine*, *Heavy Feather Review*, and others. Her chapbook, *Pretty the Ugly*, was published by ELJ Publications. She is also the founder and managing editor of Villainess Press and its online journal, *The Plot*.



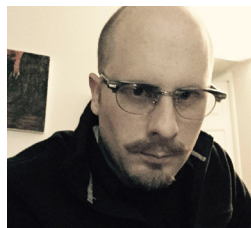
Amy Plettner is an outdoor educator on Nebraska's endangered tallgrass prairie. She has a particular love for all species of beetles and can often be found sketching, reading, or writing about them. Her poems, most recently, have appeared in *The Sow's Ear*, *burntdistrict*, *RATTLE*, and *The Untidy Season*. Plettner earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2010), and she is extremely grateful for the dedication of all the mentors involved in the program. Her poetry can be heard, live, once a month, on KZUM's *The*

Wimmin's Show.



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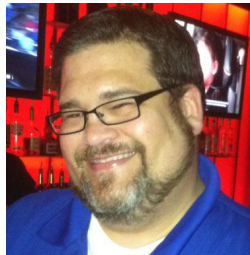
David Ravenberg is an active writer and illustrator from Omaha Nebraska. He teaches undergraduate creative writing at the University of Nebraska Omaha and serves as the Creative Director of [EAB Publishing](#). You'll find some of his writing in *Midnight Circus* and his artwork in children's books like *Salt Shaker Claw Man and the Broccoli Wilds* and *Timothy's Tree*. His illustrations have also been featured on the covers and inside of several novels including *The Adventures of Braxton Revere* and the upcoming *ABC's of Dinkology Volume 3*. Ravenberg holds an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer 2012).



AE Stueve teaches writing at the University of Nebraska Omaha and journalism, filmmaking, and design at Bellevue West High in Bellevue, Nebraska where he and Britton Sullivan also advise for the nationally recognized high school literary magazine, *Escape Key*. Stueve holds a Bachelor's in Education from St. Ambrose University, a BA in English from Augustana College, and an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2009). He is the managing editor of [EAB Publishing's](#) *Midnight Circus* and his novels, *The ABCs of Dinkology: Life* and *The ABCs of Dinkology: Time In-Between* are available wherever good books are sold. The third installment in the *Dinkology* series will be available later this year, as will his first foray into horror, a novel titled *Former*. aestueve.com



Britton Sullivan earned his MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Summer, 2012).



Alumni Presenters & Readers

Alan Tessaro graduated from the University of Nebraska Omaha MFA in Writing program (Winter, 2008). His poetry has been published in *The Honey Land Review*, *MilSpeak*, and *O-Dark-Thirty* and other places. He teaches English at Spartanburg Community College in Spartanburg, SC.



Rhonda Williams lives in South Arkansas and is an online composition instructor with Virtual Arkansas. Her novel, *The Naming of Girl*, will be published by Upper Hand Press in February of 2016. Williams earned her MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2011). When she's not writing or teaching, she's slowly growing a menagerie that includes a lot of cats, a guinea fowl or two, a stray duck, more chickens than she can keep up with, and a Nigerian dwarf goat.



Dr. **Charlie Youngblood** is an Assistant Professor of Medicine and the Chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology at Creighton University School of Medicine. He received his MD from Creighton University, holds a Masters of Arts in English from Colorado State University, a Masters of Business Administration from Creighton University, and he will earn his MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska Omaha (Winter, 2015).



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Richard Duggin, Program Director
Jenna Lucas Finn, Associate Director

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