Outside the Cone of Silence: Rethinking How and Where We Teach Creative Writing

Description: The teaching of creative writing often defaults to the workshop model of an author remaining silent, which can sometimes lead to inefficient and non-inclusive dialogue. Teachers at varying levels of their career and with experiences with a diversity of non-traditional teaching spaces explore alternatives to workshop in both academic and non-academic spaces that foster collaboration, development, and inclusion.

Participants:
Sequoia Nagamatsu is the author of the story collection, Where We Go When All We Were Is Gone. His stories have appeared in Conjunctions, ZYZZYVA, Black Warrior Review, and Pleiades, among others. He is an editor of Psychopomp Magazine and an assistant professor at St. Olaf College.

Molly Gaudry is the author of the verse novel We Take Me Apart, which was a finalist for the Asian American Literary Award and shortlisted for the PEN/Osterweil. She is the founder of Lit Pub.

Brian Evenson has published a dozen books of fiction and a number of book-length translations from French and Spanish. He has been three times a finalist for the French-American Foundation Translation Prize and is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and an NEA Fellowship. He teaches at CalArts.

Michael Noll is the author of THE WRITER'S FIELD GUIDE TO THE CRAFT OF FICTION and the Program Director at the Writers' League of Texas. He edits the blog Read to Write Stories, and his fiction has appeared in the BEST AMERICAN MYSTERY STORIES anthology.

Dawn Raffel is the author of five books, including The Strange Case of Dr. Couney (narrative nonfiction), The Secret Life of Objects (memoir in flash), two collections of very short stories, and a novel. She teaches creative writing and yoga.
Introductions & Opening Statement

**Questions:** (an updated outline will be provided in the weeks leading to the conference and will be available in print during the panel)

1. Why has the traditional workshop model persisted? What are some of the negatives about this model and what are some of the ways that you work against these shortcomings?

2. Fostering a supportive community is sometimes easier said than done in a creative writing space where there may be very little warning regarding the topics of particular conversations. How do you address equity, inclusion, and safety in a creative writing classroom? Is it a matter of texts? Moderating discussion in a certain way?

3. There are many craft books out there that are designed to help writers navigate craft and their creative identities. Some books like Janet Burroway’s *Imaginative Writing* have become staples for many creative writing teachers while others find these canonical craft books to be archaic or stifling. Some of you have even written craft books yourselves or contributed to them. And I’m sure all of us have our favorite craft essays. What makes for a worthwhile craft book or essay and when/how should these texts be integrated into the teaching of writing? What is their place?

4. Of course, the teaching of creative writing exists beyond the traditional college workshop. This might mean taking students to a museum or a park or another department. But creative writing spaces can also be found in senior centers, conferences and residencies, hospitals, prisons, and after school programs. Please share any experiences you have teaching in non-traditional spaces and how strategies in particular contexts might offer tools across the board.

5. Often in creative writing classrooms and certainly in graduate programs, it can be easy to get caught up in high literary art
(whatever that means) and immersing yourself in the appreciation and analysis of literature. But most artistic disciplines benefit from exposure to other disciplines and experiences. Art doesn’t simply live in the mind and on the page, but is a conversation with our own bodies and the world our bodies navigate. Can you talk about how you merge the teaching of creative writing with other forms and experiences to open up writers and to illuminate lessons?