**Teaching in the Confederacy** (draft outline)

Category: Pedagogy

Inclusive pedagogy, questioning appropriation, and redressing ignorance about race and history are always part of the job description for good writing professors, but this moment in the U.S. presents particular challenges and opportunities. Five creative writers who teach in Virginia and North Carolina discuss how politics—including their schools removing Confederate markers and coming to terms with histories of slavery, or failing to—affect their classrooms.

Panelists:

Lauren K. Alleyne is an award-winning poet. She is the author of Difficult Fruit (Peepal Tree, 2014) and Honeyfish (New Issues, 2019), and has published her work widely. She is Assistant Director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center and Associate Professor of English at James Madison University.

Tyree Daye is the author of two poetry collections River Hymns winner of the APR/Honickman First Book Prize and Cardinal forthcoming. A Whiting Award Winner and Amy Clampitt fellow. Daye’s work has been published in Prairie Schooner, New York Times, Nashville Review, and VQR.

Gary Dop, poet, playwright, and professor, is the founding director of the Randolph College MFA program. Dop is the author of the poetry collection Father, Child, Water.

Lesley Wheeler’s forthcoming books include Unbecoming, a novel; The State She's In, her fifth poetry collection; and Poetry's Possible Worlds, a suite of hybrid essays. She is Poetry Editor of Shenandoah and her work appears in Ecotone, Poetry, Gettysburg Review, and other magazines.

Organizer and moderator: Chris Gavaler is an associate professor of English at Washington & Lee University, where he teaches creative writing, contemporary fiction, and comics. He has published two novels and four books of comics scholarship.

Discussion questions (posed to all panelists with opportunities for cross-talk and follow-ups):

1. What is your connection to the South? How did you come to teach in a southern school?
2. What unique challenges do southern institutions present for writing instruction? How has your school dealt with its history, and how does the makeup of its student body affect your responsibilities?
3. How have issues of race come up in your classrooms? How have you handled them?
4. I have had white students write scenes in which white characters have made racially insensitive or divisive statements. What advice do you have for coping with situations like this?
5. Creative writing often involves imagining and creating experiences and mindsets that are different from the writer’s own. How do you teach students to write across differences? Are some differences too fraught to be written about effectively?
6. Have you ever faced accusations of political bias? How would you respond to someone who felt you were inculcating students in your own beliefs?
7. What are the best practices for any creative writing workshop?
8. Audience questions and open discussion between panelists.