This is a preliminary plan and will be updated in spring as panelists make poem selections and we collectively hone our interests in the conversation between our work, our experiences, and Texas itself.

WELCOME (3-5 min)

*Insert common intro text as it becomes available. Mention handouts, accessible seating, etc.*

I’ll read everyone’s bio, then we will each read for eight minutes, I have a few questions for them, and then we’ll open up questions to you for the last 15 minutes.

As we become increasingly mobile as people, increasingly writers are in places that may not have originally been home but that have become home. The panelists here today are transplants—poets who live in cities across Texas, but none of us are from here. We’ve lived in the state for varying amounts of time and come here from a wide range of other places. We are interested in the pressures that place puts on a work—and how those pressures sometimes shape the work, and how other times our resistance to the pressures becomes an invisible or subterranean force.

Since Texas is also an active site of international and interstate migration, we’re also interested in the experience of landing somewhere—the liminal space of being both insider and outsider to this place—subject to myth-making/place-making and the tension of the real. Making a home in a new place gives one a hybrid insider/outider presence. You are no longer traveler or tourist, you are resident, and so what is around you is yours to write about...in a way. And in some ways, outsider status may sometimes help, because things naturalized for natives or long-term residents may be strange—and thus more visible—for you.

I’m thinking here about flying into Houston for the first time and being shocked at how far the airports were from the city—and how entirely populated the distance was between the airport and city center (mostly by strip malls)—and with the percentage of billboards on the route advertising not strip malls but strip clubs. What was natural to my tour guide—a family friend from Houston—was alien to me. If artists are observers, this outsider-ness gives us a certain role.

However, historically, we also know that being the outsider means that you will get many things wrong, that you may unintentionally erase/misinterpret/misunderstand, just plain *miss*. So while outsider status may render something visible, sometimes it renders us blind.

I’m looking forward to hearing from each of these poets how they are navigating their place in this place.

PANELIST BIOS (drawn from AWP program) (3-5 min)

To be updated from AWP program in spring.
PANELISTS READ POETRY (8 min per poet)

Order for panelists has yet to be determined. Poems to be announced by panelists in spring.

MODERATED CONVERSATION (10 min)
Panel moderator will draw on some of the following questions and ones that arise out of the connections between the work panelists read and the comments they make.

1) (If there’s time, otherwise skip) Texas is a state that looms large in the national consciousness. I’m curious what your experience of moving here was? What was it like to move inside a place so mythologized and so complex in its current realities (tailor to panelists’ interests in poems)?

2) Has living and working in Texas influenced your work? If so, what parts of the Texan experience: historical, geographical—including our border with Mexico and our central spot in the national immigration conversation, political, patterns of industry, ecological?

3) Follow up: If you do write about Texas, how have you navigated your non-native status when Texas comes into the work? What issues of authority as a speaker arise and what craft helps you navigate those? Where do you feel the benefits and drawbacks of arriving here in media res? Have you posed ethical questions/limits for yourself in how you represent the space as an outsider, a transplant?

4) Has your relationship to Texas as a writer changed in your time here?

5) Where do you feel most strongly resistance to the pressure of living in Texas? In other words, what are the ways that Texas hasn’t changed your work at all, do those sites somehow feel visible as aesthetic/content choices to you in different ways because you are here.

AUDIENCE Q AND A (15 min)