

# THE RAINIER WRITING WORKSHOP

## MFA @ PLU

### Faculty Biographies

**Kelli Russell Agodon** is a bi/queer poet and editor from the Pacific Northwest. Her newest book, *Dialogues with Rising Tides* (Copper Canyon Press), was named a Finalist in the Washington State Book Awards and shortlisted for the Eric Hoffer Book Award Grand Prize in Poetry. She is the cofounder of Two Sylvias Press, where she works as an editor and book cover designer. Her other books include *Letters from the Emily Dickinson Room*, *Hourglass Museum*, *The Daily Poet: Day-By-Day Prompts for Your Writing Practice* (coauthored with Martha Silano), *Fire on Her Tongue: An Anthology of Contemporary Women's Poetry*, and *Demystifying the Manuscript: How to Create a Book of Poems* (coauthored with Susan Rich). She lives in a sleepy seaside town where she is an avid paddleboarder and hiker. She teaches at Pacific Lutheran University's low-res MFA program, the Rainier Writing Workshop. Kelli is the cohost of the poetry series "Poems You Need" with Melissa Studdard.

**Rick Barot** has published three books of poetry with Sarabande Books: *The Darker Fall* (2002), which received the Kathryn A. Morton Prize; *Want* (2008), which was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award and won the 2009 Grub Street Book Prize; and *Chord* (2015), which received the UNT Rilke Prize, the PEN Open Book Award, the Publishing Triangle's Thom Gunn Award, and was a finalist for the *LA Times* Book Prize. He has received fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Artist Trust of Washington, the Civitella Ranieri Foundation, and Stanford University, where he was a Wallace E. Stegner Fellow and a Jones Lecturer in Poetry. In 2020 he received the Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America. He lives in Tacoma, WA and is a professor of English at Pacific Lutheran University and is the director of The Rainier Writing Workshop. His fourth book, *The Galleons*, was published by Milkweed Editions in 2020. *The Galleons* was listed on the top ten poetry books for 2020 by the New York Public Library and was on the longlist for the National Book Award. Also in 2020, his chapbook *During the Pandemic* was published by Albion Books. His new book of poems, *Moving the Bones*, was published by Milkweed Editions in 2024.

**Barrie Jean Borich** is the author of *Apocalypse, Darling* (2018), which was short-listed for a Lambda Literary Award. *PopMatters* said "*Apocalypse, Darling* soars and seems to live as a new form altogether. It's poetry, a meditation on life as 'the other,' creative nonfiction, and abstract art." Her memoir *Body Geographic* (2013) won a Lambda Literary Award in Memoir, and in a starred review *Kirkus* called the book "...an elegant literary map that celebrates shifting topographies as well as human bodies in motion, not only across water and land, but also through life." Borich's previous book, *My Lesbian Husband* (2000), won the American Library Association Stonewall Book Award.

Borich's essays have appeared most recently in *Conjunctions* and *Ploughshares* and have been anthologized in: *Isherwood in Transit*; *Critical Creative Writing*; *Waveform: Twenty-First Century Essays by Women*; and in *After Montaigne: Contemporary Essayists Cover the Essays*, and have been cited in *Best American Essays* and *Best American Non-Required Reading*. She is a professor in the Department of English-MFA/MA in Creative Writing and Publishing Program at DePaul University in Chicago, where she edits *Slag Glass City*, a journal of the urban essay arts.

**Wendy Call** (she/ella) is author, co-editor, or translator of nine books. She co-edited the craft anthology *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide* (Penguin, 2007) and is co-founder and co-editor of the annual *Best Literary Translations*, published each spring by Deep Vellum. She wrote *No Word for Welcome: The Mexican Village Faces the Global Economy* (Nebraska, 2011), winner of the Grub Street National Book Prize and an International Latino Book Award Gold Medal, and the chapbook *Tilled Paths Through Wilds of Thought* (MBR/K2, 2012). She has translated three books of poems by Mexican-Zapotec poet Irma Pineda, with whom she shared the 2022 John Frederick Nims Prize for Translation from the Poetry Foundation. Her co-translation of *How to be a Good Savage and Other Poems* (Milkweed, 2024), by Zoque poet Mikeas Sánchez, was called "a significant work in more ways than one" by the *New York Times* and won the 2024 Gold Medal for Best Translation from the International Latino Book Awards. Wendy has received grants and fellowships for her creative nonfiction from 4Culture, Artist Trust, the Seattle City/Artist Program, and the Wurlitzer Foundation. Fellowships for her poetry translations have come from Cornell University, Fulbright Commission, National Endowment for the Arts, and University of Iowa. She has served as Artist / Translator / Writer in Residence at 29 institutions, including universities, national parks, visual arts centers, and a public hospital. Wendy writes, edits, and translates books in Seattle, on Duwamish land, and in Oaxaca, on Mixtec and Zapotec land.

**Geffrey Davis** is the author of three books of poems, most recently *One Wild Word Away* (BOA Editions 2024). His second collection, *Night Angler*, won the James Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets; and his debut, *Revising the Storm*, received the A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize and was a Hurston/Wright Legacy Award Finalist. His writing has been published in places such as *AGNI*, *The Atlantic*, *New England Review*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Orion Magazine*, *Oxford American*, PBS NewsHour, *Ploughshares*, and *Poetry Northwest*. A recipient of the Anne Halley Poetry Prize, the Dogwood Prize in Poetry, the Porter Fund Literary Prize, a Pushcart Prize, and the Wabash Prize for Poetry, Davis has also been awarded fellowships from Bread Loaf, Cave Canem, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Vermont Studio Center, and the Whiting Foundation for his involvement with The Prison Story Project, which strives to empower incarcerated women and men to tell their own stories through writing. Davis currently lives in the Ozarks, where he teaches for the Program in Creative Writing & Translation at the University of Arkansas. Raised by the Pacific Northwest, he also serves as Poetry Editor for *Iron Horse Literary Review*.

**Oliver de la Paz** is the Poet Laureate of Worcester, MA. He is the author and editor of seven books: *Names Above Houses*, *Furious Lullaby*, *Requiem for the Orchard*, *Post Subject: A Fable*, and *The Boy in the Labyrinth*, a finalist for the Massachusetts Book Award in Poetry. His newest work, *The Diaspora Sonnets*, is published by Liveright Press (2023), was the winner of the 2023 New England Book Award for Poetry, and was longlisted for the 2023 National Book Award. With Stacey Lynn Brown he co-edited *A Face to Meet the Faces: An Anthology of Contemporary Persona Poetry*. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. He has received grants from the NEA, NYFA, the Artist's Trust, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellowship, and has been awarded multiple Pushcart Prizes. He teaches at the College of the Holy Cross and in the Low-Residency MFA Program at PLU. [On Leave 2025-26.]

**Jennifer Elise Foerster** is the author of three books of poetry, *The Maybe Bird* (2002), *Bright Raft in the Afterweather* (2018), and *Leaving Tulsa* (2013), and served as the Associate Editor of *When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry*. She is the recipient of a NEA Creative Writing Fellowship, was a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Poetry at Stanford, and holds a PhD in Literary Arts from the University of Denver. Foerster grew up living internationally, is of European and Mvskoke descent, and is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma. She lives in San Francisco.

**torrin a. greathouse** is an award-winning transgender cripple-punk poet and essayist. She received her MFA in creative writing from the University of Minnesota. Their work has been featured in *Poetry Magazine*, *The Rumpus*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Copper Nickel*, *The Kenyon Review*, and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Effing Foundation for Sex-Positivity, Zoeglossia, The Ragdale Foundation, and the University of Arizona Poetry Center. They are the author of *DEED* (Wesleyan University Press, 2024), winner of a 2025 Stonewall Book Awards Barbara Gittings Prize in Poetry, and *Wound from the Mouth of a Wound* (Milkweed Editions, 2020), a Minnesota Book Award and CLMP Firecracker Award finalist, and winner of the 2022 Kate Tufts Discovery Award. She teaches at the Rainier Writing Workshop, the low-residency MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University.

**Jenny Johnson** is the author of *In Full Velvet* (Sarabande Books, 2017). Her poems and essays have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Bomb Magazine*, *New England Review* and elsewhere. Her honors include a Whiting Award, a Hodder Fellowship, and an NEA Fellowship. She has also received awards and scholarships from the Blue Mountain Center, Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Yaddo. She is an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at West Virginia University, and she is on the faculty of the Rainier Writing Workshop, Pacific Lutheran University's low-residency MFA program. She lives in Pittsburgh, PA.

**April Ayers Lawson** is the author of *Virgin and Other Stories*, which was named a Best Book of the Year by *The Irish Times* and *Vice*, and a Best Foreign Book of the Year by Spain's *Qué Leer Magazine*. *Virgin and Other Stories* has been (or will be) translated into German, Spanish, Norwegian, and Italian. She has received The Plimpton Prize for Fiction, as well as a writing fellowship from The Corporation of Yaddo. Her fiction has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Granta*, *Die Welt*, *ZYZZYVA*, and *Oxford American*, among others, has been cited as notable in *Best American Short Stories*, featured by *Huffington Post*, and anthologized in *The Unprofessionals: New American Writing from The Paris Review*. Her nonfiction has appeared in *Der Spiegel*, *Granta*, *Vice*, and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung Magazine*, and been named a Most Popular Read of the Year by *Granta*. She has taught in the creative writing programs at Emory University and the University Of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and now teaches at Clemson University.

**Aram Mrjoian** is the managing editor of *Michigan Quarterly Review*, an editor-at-large at *The Rumpus*, and a 2022 Creative Armenia-AGBU Fellow. Aram has previously worked as an editor at the *Chicago Review of Books*, the *Southeast Review*, and *TriQuarterly*. He is also the editor of the anthology *We Are All Armenian: Voices from the Diaspora*. His writing has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Runner's World*, *Literary Hub*, *Catapult*, *West Branch*, *Electric Literature*, and many other publications. He holds an MFA in creative writing from Northwestern University and a PhD in creative writing from Florida State University. His debut novel, *Waterline*, will be published by HarperVia in 2025. He lives in Michigan.

**Scott Nadelson** is the author of six collections of short fiction, most recently *While It Lasts*, winner of the Donald L. Jordan Prize for Literary Excellence; the novels *Between You and Me* and *Trust Me*, winner of the Edward Lewis Wallant Award; and a memoir, *The Next Scott Nadelson*. His stories and essays have appeared in *Harvard Review*, *AGNI*, *Ploughshares*, *New England Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and *The Best American Short Stories*. Winner of the Oregon Book Award, the Great Lakes Colleges New Writers Award, and the Reform Judaism Fiction Prize, he teaches at Willamette University and lives in Salem, Oregon.

**Sequoia Nagamatsu** is the author of the national bestselling novel, *How High We Go in the Dark* (William Morrow, 2022), a New York Times Editors' Choice, and the story collection, *Where We Go When All We Were Is Gone* (Black Lawrence Press, 2016), silver medal winner of the 2016 Foreword Reviews Indies Book of the Year Award. His work has appeared in publications such as *Conjunctions*, *The Southern Review*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Tin House*, *Iowa Review*, *Lightspeed Magazine*, and *One World: A Global Anthology of Short Stories*, and has been listed as notable in *Best American Non-Required Reading* and the *Best Horror of the Year*. He has previously taught at The College of Idaho, Southern Illinois University, and the Martha's Vineyard Institute of Creative Writing. He currently teaches at St. Olaf College and resides in Minneapolis. He is at work on the forthcoming novel, *Girl Zero*. More at <http://SequoiaNagamatsu.com>.

**Renee Simms**, J.D., MFA, is a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship, a John Gardner Fiction Fellowship at Bread Loaf, and fellowships from Ragdale and Vermont Studio Center. She's an associate professor of African American Studies at University of Puget Sound and teaches with the Rainier Writing Workshop, Pacific Lutheran's low-residency MFA program. Her debut story collection *Meet Behind Mars* was a Foreword Indies finalist for Short Stories, was featured on NPR, the National Book Critics Circle blog, and was listed by The Root as one of 28 brilliant books by Black authors in 2018. She has a memoir forthcoming with Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

**Justin St. Germain** is the author of *Bookmarked: Truman Capote's In Cold Blood*, part of IG Publishing's Bookmarked series, and the memoir *Son of a Gun* (Random House, 2013), which won the Barnes & Noble Discover Award, was a New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice, and was named a best book of the year by Amazon, *Publishers Weekly*, *Salon*, *Library Journal*, and others. His nonfiction and fiction have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Tin House*, *New England Review*, *DIAGRAM*, *ZYZZYVA*, and many other publications, as well as anthologies including *Best of the West* and *The Pushcart Prize*. He was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University and has a BA and MFA from the University of Arizona. He lives in Oregon and teaches at Oregon State University and the Rainier Writing Workshop.

**Brian Teare**, a 2020 Guggenheim Fellow, is the author of seven critically acclaimed books, including *Companion Grasses* and *Doomstead Days*, winner of the Four Quartets Prize and a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle, Kingsley Tufts, and Lambda Literary Awards. His most recent publications are a diptych of book-length ekphrastic projects exploring queer abstraction, chronic illness, and collage: the 2022 Nightboat reissue of *The Empty Form Goes All the Way to Heaven*, and the fall 2023 publication of *Poem Bitten by a Man*, also from Nightboat. After over a decade of teaching and writing in the San Francisco Bay Area, and eight years in Philadelphia, he's now an Associate Professor of Poetry at the University of Virginia. An editorial board member of Poetry Daily, he lives in Charlottesville, where he makes books by hand for his micropress, Albion Books.

**Matt Young** is the author of the memoir, *Eat the Apple*. His stories and essays have appeared in *TIME*, *Granta*, *Tin House*, *Catapult*, and *The Cincinnati Review* among other publications. He is the recipient of fellowships from Words After War and The Carey Institute for Global Good, and teaches composition, literature, and creative writing at Centralia College in Washington. His novel, *End of Active Service*, was published by Bloomsbury in 2024.

[Updated May 2025]