

Core Faculty

Shastri Akella



Shastri Akella's debut novel, *The Sea Elephants* (Penguin India, Flatiron Books USA) was named a most anticipated debut by Good Morning America. He won the 2025 Desperate Literature Short Fiction Prize, with judge Otessa Mosfegh calling his entry a ‘tender and haunting’ story of queer love on the Kashmir border." Lauren Groff selected his story for the 2024 Best American Short Fiction. His stories were also winners in the 2025 Galley Beggar Prize, the 2024 William Faulkner Prize, and the 2024 BLR Goldenberg Contest. His fiction was published in 2025 in The Massachusetts Review, Black Warrior Review, and Wasafiri London.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Book, [The Sea Elephants](#)
- Fiction, [The Magic Bangle](#)
- Fiction, [The Ghost that Shaped the Skin](#)
- Essay, [How Exile Allowed Shastri Akella to Write A Queer Novel](#)

Kenzie Allen



Kenzie Allen is a Haudenosaunee poet and multimodal artist. Her debut poetry collection, *Cloud Missives* (Tin House, 2024), was a finalist for the National Poetry Series, the CLMP Firecracker Awards, the Indigenous Voices Awards, and the Maya Angelou Book Award, and was long listed for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Kenzie is the recipient of a 92NY Discovery Prize, an inaugural James Welch Prize for Indigenous Poets, the 49th Parallel Award in Poetry, grants from Ontario Arts Council, and fellowships from Vermont Studio Center, Aspen Summer Words, and In-Na-Po. Her poems can be found in *Narrative Magazine*, *POETRY*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Best New Poets*, and other venues, and her work extends into concrete poetry, digital media, and site-specific arts. A first-generation descendant of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, she teaches creative writing and Indigenous literatures at York University in Toronto.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Artist Site](#)
- Poetry Collection, [Cloud Missives](#)
- Interview, [The Force that Shapes Us](#)

Sarah LaBrie



Sarah LaBrie is a Bay Area-born TV writer who grew up in Houston and currently lives in Los Angeles. She is the author of *No One Gets to Fall Apart* (Harper, 2024) a 2024 *New York Times* Notable Book and a finalist for the Writers League of Texas Book Award. Lorrie Moore calls *No One Gets to Fall Apart* “a brilliant memoir... a triumph of every kind of literary perseverance,” and the *Los Angeles Times* hails it as “extraordinary.” Her television credits include *Minx* (Starz), *Blindspotting* (Starz), *Love, Victor* (Hulu) and *Made for Love* (HBO Max). She currently has projects in development with Hulu and UTV. She’s been granted fellowships by Yaddo,

Macdowell and the Austin Film Society and is an alumna of Brown University and New York University's MFA in fiction program.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Book, [No One Gets to Fall Apart](#)
- Story, [Tender](#)
- Co-Writer, [Made For Love, HBO](#)
- Co-Writer, [Minx, Starz](#)
- Co-Writer, [Love, Victor, Hulu](#)

Jeff Parker



Jeff Parker's latest work is the novella *G v P* (Panhandler Books, 2024). He is also the author of *Where Bears Roam the Streets: A Russian Journal* (Harper Collins), the novel *Ovenman* (Tin House), and the short story collection *The Taste of Penny* (Dzanc). His many collaborative books and anthologies include: *Clean Rooms, Low Rates; Erratic Fire, Erratic Passion: The Poetry of Sportstalk; A Manner of Being: Writers on their Mentors; Rasskazy: New Fiction from a New Russia; Amerika: Russian Writers View the United States; and The Back of the Line*. His short fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *American Short Fiction, The Best American Nonrequired Reading, McSweeney's, Ploughshares, Tin House, and*

others. He teaches fiction in the MFA in creative writing at UMass Amherst and is the co-founder and Director of the DISQUIET International Literary Program in Lisbon, Portugal.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- Interview, [Proper Imposters & G v P](#)
- Book, [Where Bears Roam the Streets](#)
- Book, [Ovenman](#)
- Story Collection, [The Taste of Penny](#)
- Fiction, Photography Collaboration, [Clean Rooms Low Rates](#)
- Collaborative Book, [Erratic Fire, Erratic Passion: The Poetry of Sportstalk](#)
- Essay Collection, [A Manner of Being: Writers on Their Mentors](#)
- Story Collection, [Back of the Line](#)

Terri Witek



Terri Witek's newest books include *Down Water Street* (aboveground press) and *copies: I loved you in the hard old way* (Sigilist Press). *W/ \ SH*, a dystopian collaborative work with poet Amaranth Borsuk (Anhinga Press/ Visual Poetry Series), is forthcoming in 2026. Her work has been included in many journals and anthologies, including 2 from 2021: *JUDITH: Women Making Visual Poetry* (Timglasnet) and *WAAVe* (Women Asemic Artist and Visual Poets). Witek's art/text mixes are often featured in collaboration: she teaches Poetry in the Expanded Field in Stetson University's low-residency MFA with Brazilian visual artist Cyriaco Lopes; they also lead The Fernando Pessoa Game at the Disquiet International Literary Program in Lisbon. Their collaborative work has been represented at ARCO in

Madrid and in Seoul, Chania (Crete), Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Lisbon, and Valencia, Spain.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Book, [The Rattle Egg](#)
- Book, [Body Switch](#)
- Book, [The Rape Kit \(Slope Editions Prize\)](#)
- Book, [Exit Island \(Florida Book Award medalist\)](#)
- Book, [The Shipwreck Dress](#)
- Book, [Carnal World](#)
- Book, [Fools and Crows](#)
- Chapbook, [copies: I loved you in the hard old way](#)
- Chapbook, [Newsers \(Yavanika Press Publications Prize\)](#)
- Chapbook, On Gavdos Ferry
- Chapbook, [First Shot at Fort Sumter/Possum](#)
- Chapbook, [Courting Couples \(Center for Book Arts Prize\)](#)
- Anthology, [JUDITH: Women Making Visual Poetry \(Timglas\)](#)
- Anthology, [WAAVe \(Women Asemic Artist and Visual Poets\)](#)
- Publication, [BEYOND THE ILLEGIBLE ON BOUNDARY AVE](#)
- Exhibitions with Cyriaco Lopes, [The Severe Ones and Gods of Remainder \(The Liminal Gallery, ARCO 2023 - Madrid\)](#) Special jury mention: [E l a i r e c o m i e n z a a t o m a r l a s f o r m a s l e n t a s d e l m á r m o l](#)

Staff

Brendan Bowles



Brendan Bowles, Director of Stetson's MFA, is a writer from Toronto, Ontario. His work has been published and produced for stage and radio and has won some of the largest short story awards in Canada. He was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University and a Fiction Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts. He is currently the Director of Stetson University's MFA in Creative Writing.

Savannah Kater



Savannah Kater, MFA Program Coordinator, is a New England Native who currently resides in Port Orange, Florida. Her work has been published in *Collateral Journal* and the *WAAVe (Women Asemic Artist and Visual Poets) anthology*. She has also curated site-specific visual poetry addressing the multi-generational effects of war. She is the

CEO and founder of the nonprofit Scrap the Waste Corporation and is passionate about community outreach. Kater received three degrees from Stetson University, including her MFA.

Ryan Rivas



Ryan Rivas is the author of *Nextdoor in Colonialtown* (Autofocus, 2022) and *Lizard People* (ThirtyWest, 2023). He is the Publisher of Burrow Press, and the Coordinator of MFA Publishing at Stetson University's MFA in Creative Writing program. A Macon Writers Workshop fellow, his work has appeared in *The Believer*, *The Rumpus*, *Literary Hub*, *Best American Nonrequired Reading 2012*, and elsewhere.

Shelby Smotherman



Shelby Smotherman is a writer, artist, and theatrical technician working in the Tampa Bay Area. Most often, she works with paint and lighting and uses language from her technical background to fill her poetry, as well as taking heavy influence from pop culture.

Exploratory Workshop Faculty:

Gabrielle Civil



Gabrielle Civil is a black feminist performance artist, poet, and writer, originally from Detroit, MI. She has premiered over fifty original performance works around the world,

most recently *"s e a i n g"* (2025), *My San Francisco* (2024), and *Black Weirdo School (Pop Up Critique)* (2023). Her performance memoirs include *Swallow the Fish* (2017), *Experiments in Joy* (2019), *(ghost gestures)* (2021), *the déjà vu* (2022) and *In & Out of Place* (2024) which documents her time making performance as a Fulbright fellow in Mexico. Her writing has also appeared in *New Daughters of Africa*, *Kitchen Table Translation*, *Migrating Pedagogies* and *A Mouth Holds Many Things*. Foundress of the Black Weirdo School, she earned her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from New York University and teaches at the California Institute of the Arts. The aim of her work is to open up space.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- [Performance Art](#)
- Performance Memoir, [In and Out of Place](#)
- Performance Memoir, [Swallow the Fish](#)
- Performance Memoir, [Experiments in Joy](#)
- Performance Memoir, [Ghost Gestures](#)
- Performance Memoir, [the déjà vu](#)

Lydi Conklin



Lydi Conklin has received a Stegner Fellowship, four Pushcart Prizes, a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award, a Creative Writing Fulbright in Poland, a grant from the Elizabeth George Foundation, and fellowships from MacDowell, Yaddo, Bread Loaf, Sewanee, Emory, Hedgebrook, Djerassi, the James Merrill House, Lighthouse Works, and elsewhere. Their fiction has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *One Story*, *McSweeney's*, *American Short Fiction*, and *VQR*. They have drawn cartoons for *The New Yorker* and *Narrative Magazine*, and graphic fiction for *The Believer*, *Lenny Letter*, and the Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago. They've served as the Helen Zell Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan and are now an Assistant Professor of Fiction at Vanderbilt University. Their story collection, *Rainbow Rainbow*, was longlisted for

the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Award and The Story Prize. Their novel, *Songs of No Provenance*, was longlisted for the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Book, [Songs of No Provenance](#)
- Book, [Rainbow Rainbow](#)
- Short Story, [World Peace Now](#)
- Short Story, [Laramie Time](#)
- Code, [Three Men in Trouble](#)
- Short Story, [Blue Hamburger Hour](#)
- Short Story, [Goodnight Baby](#)
- Short Story, [Friendly Crossroads](#)

Kevin Moffett



Kevin Moffett is the author of two short story collections, as well as *The Silent History*, a narrative app for mobile devices. His work has been awarded the National Magazine Award, the Nelson Algren Award, and a literature fellowship from the National Endowment of the Arts. *Only Son*, published in November 2025, was longlisted for the National Book Award. He teaches in the creative writing program at the University of Virginia and lives in Charlottesville.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- Book, [Only Son](#)
- Short Story App, [The Silent History](#)

- Book, [Further Interpretations of Real-Life Events](#)
- Book, [Permanent Visitors](#)

Urayoán Noel



Urayoán Noel is the author of eight books of poetry--most recently *Transversal* (Arizona 2021), named a book of the year by the New York Public Library and longlisted for the PEN Open Book Award--and of the critical study of Nuyorican poetry *In Visible Movement* (Iowa, 2014), winner of the LASA Latino Studies Book Prize. A finalist for the National Translation Award and the Best Translated Book Award, his most recent translation is Nicole Cecilia Delgado's *adjacent islands/islas adyacentes* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2022). Noel has been a fellow and faculty of CantoMundo and the Macondo Writers Workshop and has also received fellowships from the Mellon, Ford, and Howard Foundations. Forthcoming from

La Impresora in Puerto Rico is his hybrid prose text *Cuaderno de Isabela / Isabela Notebook*. Noel's visual work has been published in the *New York Times* and exhibited in museums and art spaces in New York and Puerto Rico as well as at Poesiefestival Berlin and is included in collections of Latin American and Latinx electronic literature. He lives in the Bronx and is Director of Graduate Studies for NYU's MFA in Creative Writing in Spanish.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Digital Translation Video Poem, [Modular Hervor](#)
- Book, [Transversal](#)
- Book, [Buzzing Hemisphere / Rumor Hemisférico](#)
- Book, [Los Días Porosos](#)

Marketing Panel Guest Speaker:



Zoe-Aline Howard joined Howland Literary while earning her BFA in Creative Writing and Publishing Certificate at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. She has had the privilege to work across publishing in multiple capacities, including an internship at Lookout Books, and her current roles as a literary agent and book publicist at Pine State Publicity.