

# High School Writing Day at Penn State

## Friday, March 31



SPONSORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM, AND THE PROGRAM IN WRITING AND RHETORIC

**Goals:** Through readings, workshops, and college-level discussions, we will introduce students to college literary life. Students will generate new work, discuss literature, work with publishing writers, and meet like-minded young writers. Though open to any student who enjoys reading and writing, this event is particularly aimed toward sophomores and juniors considering the study of writing at the university level.

**Details:** A collaboration between the Creative Writing program and the program in Writing and Rhetoric, this event offers small workshops for engaged students, thus our overall number of students remains small, no more than seventy-five students will participate in the program, ensuring that all classes will contain ten students or fewer.

**Educators should plan to bring no more than ten students to the event.** However, if an instructor wants to bring more than ten students, please contact the Department of English at [english@psu.edu](mailto:english@psu.edu) to inquire about space.

**At least one teacher must be present at the conference from each school,** and teachers are encouraged to participate in all the activities of the day as well. Penn State is offering Act 48 credits through the program at no additional cost.

The registration system asks that teachers indicate whether they will be seeking Act 48 credits (3 credits).

Registration deadline: **March 1, 2023**  
Register: <https://cvent.me/aLEEvE>

## Codes of Conduct:

- Be respectful of others; harassment will not be tolerated. Hazing of any kind is prohibited. Cyberbullying is prohibited.
- Using inappropriate imaging, screenshots and digital devices is prohibited.
- Follow staff, volunteer, and guest instructions, and raise concerns respectfully.
- Contribute ideas and adhere to youth-driven group agreement.
- Dress appropriately.
- No photography is allowed.
- Participate actively, including participating when called on, listening attentively, and minimizing distractions to others.
- Stay with your campus group at all times. At no time is any student allowed to leave the conference.
- Teachers must be present for the entire day.

## Tentative Schedule for High School Writing Day 2023

9:00–9:30 a.m.—Intros and thanks

9:30–10:30 a.m.—Erin Murphy, Keynote Speaker

10:30–10:45 a.m.—Break

10:45–11:30 a.m.—Meditative Writing with Lauri Chose

11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m.—Lunch

12:15–1:30 p.m.—Session One

1:30–1:45 p.m.—Break

1:45–3:00 p.m.—Session Two

3:15–4:00 p.m.—Open Mic

## Keynote Speaker: Erin Murphy



Erin Murphy is the author or editor of thirteen books, most recently *Human Resources* (forthcoming from Salmon Poetry); *Taxonomies* (2022); the chapbook *Fields of Ache: Centos* (2022), available for free PDF download from Ghost City Press; *Assisted Living* (2018), winner of the Brick Road Poetry Press Prize; and *Bodies of Truth: Personal Narratives on Illness, Disability, and Medicine* (University of Nebraska Press 2019), winner of the Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Award. She is Professor of English and creative writing at Penn State Altoona and serves as Poetry Editor of *The Summerset Review*. In April 2022 she was named Poet Laureate of Blair County, Pennsylvania, where she is an inductee in the Blair County Arts Hall of Fame.

## **Penn State High School Day Writing Prompts**

By Erin Murphy

PROMPT #1: "WHITE LIES"

["White Lies"](#) (creative nonfiction essay)

Prompt: The narrator of "White Lies" doubts her memory of the events described in the essay. Write an essay in which you question your recollection of a significant experience.

PROMPT #2: "IN MY AMERICA"

["In My America"](#) (collaborative poem)

Prompt: Read (or watch the video of) "In My America." Brainstorm your thoughts on the United States in three categories: things you find beautiful; things that trouble you; and things that give you hope. Choose one and describe it using concrete imagery. Now use your image to complete this sentence: "In my America \_\_\_\_\_."

PROMPT #3: "E"

["E"](#) (demi-sonnet)

Prompt: "E" is a demi-sonnet, a 7-line poem that ends with a full or slant rhyme. It's about the theory that we are drawn to objects whose names start with the same letter as our own first name. Write a demi-sonnet about things you like that start with the first letter of your own first name.

### **Full Attendance Session 10:45–11:30 a.m. with Lauri Chose Meditative Writing**

Meditative writing not only allows writers to explore their craft in a low-stakes environment, but with regularity, it has therapeutic and creative value. Meditative writing combines the act of freewriting with relaxation, breathing, and rhythm techniques to help writers explore the ways in which these deliberative practices in writing can help them gain self-assurance, expand their creativity, restructure their thoughts, and improve their focus. In this workshop, students will be offered the tools to begin their own practice of meditative writing. Through the exploration of guided writing prompts, students will use rhythm to open their minds and find focus while they practice breathing and relaxation techniques.

## **Description of Courses**

### **You and I and the Noble Lie**

**Instructor: Christina Taheri**

In this session, we will use writing to explore our convictions about a moral question and present our position with sound reasoning. We will begin by asking about the merits of the “noble lie” and practice using the point-evidence-analysis paragraph development strategy to articulate a response.

After students have written their paragraphs, we will evaluate the effectiveness of three sample paragraphs that respond to the same prompt. Through this evaluation, students will identify some common weaknesses in paragraph development such as claim stacking, offering evidence that fails to support a claim, and stating evidence without analysis.

Students will have an opportunity to refine their paragraphs and then will be invited to share their writing with the group.

### **Write and Review! Collaborative Conversations with a Penn State Peer**

**Writing Tutor:**

**Instructor: Beth Parfitt and Writing Center Tutors Caroline Clontz, Lily Najjar, Naomi Ransom, Kyli Ramsay**

Join undergraduate students from The Writing Center @ Penn State Learning for a collaborative workshop on writing and review. As preparation for the workshop, students will get a brief overview of what a writing tutor is and how the writing center works. Then we write!

The first half of the session will be dedicated to crafting a piece of their choice (with a little help from some creative prompts). Afterwards, the class will be divided into small groups to share their work with each other through a guided conversation with one of our peer writing tutors.

By the end of the session, students will leave with an understanding of how collaborative learning can be used to open up conversations about writing. Students will leave with “crowdsourced” ideas for revision, and a better understanding of what it means to share their work with others.

Whether you are interested in becoming a tutor or see the benefits of working on your ideas with a peer, this session will talk you through it.

## **Mundane Fascinations: Composing a Dickinson-Style Poem**

**Instructor: Jamie Watson**

In this seminar, students will close read several of Emily Dickinson's poems, focusing on elements of subject, theme, construction, and style. These poems will include Dickinson's "The Railway Train," "A narrow Fellow in the Grass," and "'Hope' is the thing with feathers." Then, students will be tasked with creating a poem of their own. They will write 2 stanzas with an ABAB rhyme-scheme that focuses on revealing a truth about a subject (concrete or abstract) or subjects they often encounter in their daily lives. Utilizing the common-meter construction characterizing many of Dickinson's poems and the sorts of subjects Dickinson undertook herself, seasoned young poets and students new to poetry can all enjoy this poetic venture.

## **Haibun: Building Images through Lyric Words**

**Instructor: Mandy Passmore-Ott**

Poetry has the unique ability to express the beauty, mystery, and contradictions inherent in the world around us. One of the most challenging and evocative poetic forms is the haibun. *Bun* stands for prose and *hai* for haiku. Pieces like this are called "prosimetric forms." This term comes from *prosa* (prose) and *metrum* (verse). Haibun prose is usually descriptive. It uses sparse, poetic imagery to evoke a sensory impression in the reader. The section of prose is then followed by a haiku that serves to deepen the meaning of the prose, either by intensifying its themes or serving as a juxtaposition to the prose's content. In this workshop, we'll explore the elements of modern haibun and then try our hand at writing our own.

## **The Iceberg Theory of Writing**

**Instructor: Verna Kale**

"If a writer of prose knows enough [they] may omit things ... and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water." This writerly advice from famed American author Ernest Hemingway is sometimes called the "iceberg theory" of writing.

In this session we will experiment with this theory to give your writing maximum impact. This is a workshop for both fiction and creative nonfiction writers. You can bring your work in progress or start from scratch at the workshop. All you need is a willingness to take an icy plunge off your raft and dive down deep to explore.

## **Storytelling in Visual Media**

**Instructor: Anne Triolo**

"To make a great film you need three things – the script, the script and the script."  
– [Alfred Hitchcock](#)

Have you been bingeing that dragon show on HBO? Are you hooked on Marvel movies? Can you not get enough of Mrs. Maisel? What do they have in common? They all start with a script and a scriptwriter. This course will present an overview of the elements and process of screenwriting – from character development to dialogue, plot structure to scene structure – we'll look at what it takes to create a story in visual media.

## **Composing Songs for Legitimate Musicals**

**Instructor: Robert Reichle**

Those of you signing up for this little seminar in Composing Songs for Legitimate Musicals need to be jugglers. Creative jugglers. You know, the ones that can juggle tennis balls and burning candles and chain saws at the same time. Speaking from experience, no creative genre I have tried has so many purposes to consider in the creative process: melody, tone, plot development, internal rhyme, original rhyme, character development, staging potential, "radio" potential, something someone will remember and sing at home washing the dishes, live performance sing-ability without the help of Auto Tune—all the while maintaining originality.

Oh boy! Rock and roll songwriting is a walk in the park. Eight bars of a catchy rhythmic melody and some memorable phrase repeated as often as possible and you can make it to the Hall of Fame in Cleveland. Not so for stage. This is way more fun!

## **How Can I Make my Readers Care?**

**Instructor: Julian Darragjati**

Writing is a form of communication, and to write well means to make your message relevant for your readers. One way to achieve this is to connect the unique details of a subject with a universal value in which the reader also has a stake, as Jonathan Safran Foer succeeds in doing in his New York Times op-ed, "My Life as a Dog." Here Foer gives us details about his dog, George, that are important to him as the writer, but he interprets these with a broader regard for freedom that matters to us as well. In so doing, he even gives George a political voice. In this lesson, you will do the same by composing an essay that details what you love about a subject, such as a pet, and you'll aim to connect these to universal values meaningful to your reader, thereby helping to make your readers care.

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