



**LIGHTHOUSE**  
WRITERS WORKSHOP

**SHORT**

**FORM**

**FEST**

**JULY 26 - 27, 2025**

There's a unique magic to short-form prose that's often overlooked in favor of novels or memoirs. At Short Forms Fest, we're dedicating two days to celebrating this specific art form. From short stories to essays to flash, it takes special skill to craft a piece of writing that leaves a big impression in a small space. In workshops, panels, seminars, and special events, we'll explore questions specific to short form writing.

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# SCHEDULE

	<b>SATURDAY</b> July 26	<b>SUNDAY</b> July 27
<b>9:00 to 11:00 AM</b>	<b>Craft Seminars</b> see p. 2	<b>Craft Seminars</b> see p. 4
<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>		
<b>12:00 to 1:00 PM</b>	<b>Panel</b> Experimental Short Form	<b>Panel</b> Does It Need to Be a Book?
<b>1:30 to 3:30 PM</b>	<b>Afternoon Workshop</b> An Atlas of Everything—Maps, Unseen Worlds, and Writing	<b>Afternoon Workshop</b> And Then I Woke Up— Writing Endings
<b>HAPPY HOUR</b>		
<b>4:30 to 6:00 PM</b>	<b>Hauntings</b> Reading and Conversation with Samantha Hunt and Jenny Shank	<b>Secrets from the Slush Pile*</b>

\*This event is only open to passholders.

# MORNING CRAFT SEMINARS

**SATURDAY, JULY 26**

9:00 to 11:00 AM

**Member: \$75**

**Nonmember: \$85**

## Characterization is Everything

with **Erika Krouse**

When you get stuck in a story, it's usually a characterization issue, but isn't that great? You have someone else to blame (even if they're fictional). However, it's still up to you, brilliant author, god of worlds, to diagnose and fix your characterization issues. In this class, we'll investigate character motivation, voice, dilemmas, belief systems, wounds, and all the interesting ways human beings make plot-bending problems for themselves and others. The class will consist of craft mini-lectures, readings, discussions, and fun in-class exercises.

## Unlocking the Prose Poem

Blockheads, Poetic Leaps, and Strange Inspiration

with **Juan J. Morales**

The prose poem remains a mysterious vessel similar to flash fiction, the lyric essay, and other short forms. In this workshop, we'll explore what makes a prose poem a poem and its ability to unlock deep images, humor, strangeness, and the political power of brevity. We'll look at influential poets who've used the form, including Victoria Chang, Charles Simic, Benjamin Alire Sáenz, Claudia Rankine, and others to learn about where a poem goes when it stops working in verse.

# MORNING CRAFT SEMINARS

**SATURDAY, JULY 26**

9:00 to 11:00 AM

**Member: \$75**

**Nonmember: \$85**

## **Crafting the Container**

How Form Shapes an Essay's Meaning, and Vice Versa

with **Raksha Vasudevan**

Finding the best form or "shape" for an essay can not only amplify its power, but open up new realms of possibility for writing and meaning-making. In this class, we'll study examples of various forms that contemporary essayists including Leslie Jamison, Pico Iyer, and Lidia Yuknavitch all use to great effect: epistolary, lists, annotated, braided, and more. Through discussion and writing prompts, we'll figure out how to choose the right container for your subject, and also how to use various forms to generate new essays.

## **Stick by Stick**

Building Urgency and Emotional Complexity

with **Chris Vanjonack**

As anyone who's ever sat down to write a flash story or essay knows, it can be incredibly difficult to fit an entire narrative or experience into under 1,000 words. Even more difficult: lacing that narrative with enough urgency and emotional complexity to make your readers feel like they've just devoured a much longer work. In this two-hour craft seminar, we'll be breaking down George Saunders' 1995 flash fiction masterpiece, "Sticks," on a sentence-by-sentence level to examine and emulate the strategies that he uses to pack an entire universe of complexity—and decades of narrative time—into just 392 words.



# MORNING CRAFT SEMINARS

**SUNDAY, JULY 27**

9:00 to 11:00 AM

**Member: \$75**

**Nonmember: \$85**

## Vibrant Exposition

with **Jenny Wortman**

Fiction writers sometimes treat exposition as a necessary evil or a mere means to the dramatic pay-off of scene: this especially holds true for short stories, where limited space deters expository excess. Yet some of our best short story writers make liberal use of exposition. How do they pull it off? What purpose does heavy exposition serve? When is it useful? When does it weigh a narrative down? And what does writer Akhil Sharma mean when he says “exposition always contains tenderness?” Through readings, discussion, and exercises, we’ll explore these questions and more.

## You’ll See What I Mean

Structure and Meaning in the Short Story Form

with **Trent Hudley**

This class will focus on the function of the short story form: how the form defines the genre, how it allows writers to create meaning, and the concision and precision of language it requires. We’ll read and discuss how a couple masters of the short story form—Raymond Carver and George Saunders—have achieved greatness in their use of it, with the goal of understanding how form itself can become a tool of craft. Writers will leave with insight into how the short story form can be used to help create meaning within the story.

# MORNING CRAFT SEMINARS

**SUNDAY, JULY 27**

9:00 to 11:00 AM

**Member: \$75**

**Nonmember: \$85**

## What Makes an Essay an Essay?

with **Natalie Hodges**

What makes an essay an essay? Writers (and writing teachers) are often quick to point out that the form derives its name from the French verb *essayer*, “to try.” But what are essayists trying to do, exactly? And by what means? This craft seminar will serve as an overview of the constraints and possibilities that set the essay genre apart within creative nonfiction, with a particular focus on choosing essay-worthy topics and developing vibrant, complex central questions; the interplay of incongruity and synthesis, narration and analysis across an essay’s structure; and what it means to hone an honest, companionable, “essayistic” voice. The seminar will include a balance of lecture and discussion; participants will come away with a set of new craft tools, several writing exercises, and a diverse reading list of exemplary essays to inspire their own work going forward.

# PANELS

**12:00 to 1:00 PM**

**Member: \$25**

**Nonmember: \$35**

## **Experimental Short Form**

**SATURDAY, JULY 26**

**Panelists:** Bix Gabriel, Nini Berndt, Juan J. Morales, Jeremy M. Davies, Raksha Vasudevan, Richard Froude

From lyric essays to meta fiction, what is it about short forms that make them a playground for experiments? Is it just because they're less of a time commitment than a novel or a memoir—or is there something about the forms themselves that open us up to play? Step into a literary laboratory with a panel of experts on short-form experimentation as they chat about the fun things happening in short forms and what the publishing landscape looks like for folks pushing the boundaries.

## **Does It Need to Be a Book?**

**SUNDAY, JULY 27**

**Panelists:** Andrea Dupree, Jenny Shank, Natalie Hodges

While there are definitely readers who love short forms, it's fairly standard for "success" to be measured in essays and short stories collected in a book. In addition, magazine and journal publications—and even collected works—can often be viewed as a training ground for longer-form writing. In this panel, we'll consider whether a short essay or story is a worthy work of art on its own. Does it have to be part of a larger project? How do writers make the time to focus on short-form writing, which long ago ceased to be a way to make a living? What are the pressures on and opportunities arising from writing short pieces? And is there money in it—or does that even matter?

# AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

**1:30 to 3:30 PM**

**Member: \$75**

**Nonmember: \$85**

## **An Atlas of Everything**

Maps, Unseen Worlds, and Writing

**SATURDAY,  
JULY 26**

with **Samantha Hunt**

A map is a container, an atlas even more so as it includes thousands of routes that interlace and cross. When we write in a cartographic model, we dissolve borders and boundaries. Personhood realizes its plurality. Fernando Pessoa says, "I know myself only as a symphony." This generative lecture will contain gorgeous maps, writing prompts, and a Q&A session to help us consider the cartographic in our writing.

**SUNDAY,  
JULY 27**

**And Then I Woke Up**  
Writing Endings for Short Fiction and Essays

with **Jenny Shank**

Writing endings is tricky! They have to both surprise the reader and satisfy their expectations, and leave readers with an insight, image, or emotion that resonates. Often the first ending we write for our stories or essays falls flat in some way, and we have to go back to the drawing board. In this craft class, we'll look at ending patterns that just might fix our ending problems, including the cosmic comeuppance, the flash-forward, the flashback, the rewind, and the curtain call, as modeled in some excerpts we'll read together. Bring in a story or an essay that didn't stick the landing, and we'll revise it toward a finish with flair.



# EVENING EVENTS

**SATURDAY, JULY 26**

4:30 to 6:00 PM

## Hauntings

An Onstage Reading and Conversation  
with Samantha Hunt and Jenny Shank

**Member:** \$25 | **Nonmember:** \$35

The word essay famously stems from the French *essai*, or “to try”—a poignancy many short form writers can’t help but indulge. Short form writing is, at its core, a series of attempts, and many of the best short stories and essays draw their power from their refusal of closure. Join Samantha Hunt and Jenny Shank, both writers of multiple short forms, as they discuss the magic of short pieces of writing: what they accomplish, and what they refuse. Preceded by a casual happy hour, and followed by an audience Q&A and book signing, we promise you’ll walk away from this event inspired to keep trying.



## EVENING EVENTS

### Secrets from the Slush Pile\*

SUNDAY, JULY 26  
4:00 to 5:30 PM

**\*This event is only available to passholders.**

Submitting an essay, short story, or flash piece for publication often feels like sending your work into a black hole—you don't hear back for months, and when you do, it's rare to receive any kind of feedback. But on the other side of the Submittable button, editors really are reading, discussing, and thinking deeply about every submission they receive. **Secrets from the Slush Pile** is your chance to get the inside scoop on this process directly from the editors themselves. What should you do in the first sentence, paragraph, or page to keep an editor reading? How important are titles, bios, and cover letters? What helps a submission stand out—and what sends it straight into the “no” pile? Visiting editors from *Colorado Review*, *F(r)iction*, and other local lit mags will explore these questions and more in this unique peek into the short-form submission process.

As part of this event, visiting editors will also discuss participant submissions and offer their reactions from an editor's point of view. If you'd like to submit your work for a chance to receive feedback, please email ONE of the following to [info@lighthousewriters.org](mailto:info@lighthousewriters.org) by July 18, using the same formatting you would use to submit to a literary magazine:

- The first page of a short story
- The first page of an essay
- A flash fiction or nonfiction piece (500 words or fewer)

**Please note:** We will not consider submissions received after July 18. Sending us your work does not guarantee that it will be selected for discussion during the event. If submissions are longer than one page, only the first page will be considered for discussion. Please be aware that work being discussed may receive negative feedback in front of other writers (anonymously); we ask that you approach the event with an open mind and a thick skin.

## A LA CARTE PRICING

	MEMBERS	NONMEMBERS
Morning Craft Seminars	\$75	\$85
Panels	\$25	\$35
Afternoon Workshops	\$75	\$85
Evening Event Hauntings	\$25	\$30



**NOTE:** Secrets from the Slush Pile is only available to passholders.

# WEEKEND PASSES

Want the full Short Form Fest experience? Save on seminars, panels, and events with our weekend passes.

The Gold Pass graphic features a light green background with a newspaper clipping at the top. Below it, the words "SHORT", "FORM", and "FEST" are written on overlapping, torn-edge paper scraps in orange, teal, and yellow respectively.

## GOLD PASS

**Member \$380 | Nonmember \$450**

The Gold Pass includes all activities of the Fest: your choice of morning craft seminars each day; both panels; both afternoon workshops; both happy hours; and both evening events.

The Silver Pass graphic features a light blue background with a newspaper clipping at the top. Below it, the words "SHORT", "FORM", and "FEST" are written on overlapping, torn-edge paper scraps in orange, teal, and yellow respectively.

## SILVER PASS

**Member \$245 | Nonmember \$300**

For folks who aren't morning people, the Silver Pass gets you into all afternoon activities of the Fest, including both panels; both afternoon workshops; both happy hours; and both evening events.

The Bronze Pass graphic features an orange background with a newspaper clipping at the top. Below it, the words "SHORT", "FORM", and "FEST" are written on overlapping, torn-edge paper scraps in orange, teal, and yellow respectively.

## BRONZE PASS

For those who can't spare a whole weekend, the Bronze Pass gets you access to one full day of the Fest.

### Saturday Bronze Pass

Member \$180 | Nonmember \$215

- Your choice of morning craft seminar
- Panel: Experimental Short Form
- Afternoon Workshop: An Atlas of Everything with Samantha Hunt
- Evening Event: Hauntings—An Onstage Reading + Conversation with Samantha Hunt and Jenny SHank

### Sunday Bronze Pass

Member \$205 | Nonmember \$240

- Your choice of morning craft seminar
- Panel: Does It Need to Be a Book?
- Afternoon Workshop: And Then I Woke Up with Jenny Shank
- Evening Event: Secrets from the Slush Pile

# FACULTY



## Natalie Hodges

Born and raised in Denver, Natalie Hodges has performed as a classical violinist throughout Colorado and in New York, Boston, Paris, and the Italian Piedmont, as well as at the Aspen Music Festival and the Stowe Tango Music Festival. Her first book, *Uncommon Measure: A Journey Through Music, Performance, and the Science of Time*, was a *New York Times* Editor's Choice selection and was longlisted for the 2022 National Book Award. She graduated from Harvard University, where she studied English and music, and lives in Boulder, Colorado. She's currently at work on a novel.

## Trent Hudley

Trent Hudley is the author of the short story collection *One of These Days*, published by Veliz Books. He currently teaches creative writing courses at the Lighthouse Writer's Workshop in Denver, CO. He has recently been published *The New Feathers Anthology*, The Pandemic Press, *The Welkin: A Magazine of the Fantastic*, and *The Missouri Review*. He is also the recipient of the Peden Award from *The Missouri Review*.



# FACULTY



## Samantha Hunt

Samantha Hunt is the author of *The Unwritten Book*, essays about death and literature; *The Seas* about a girl who might be a mermaid; *The Dark Dark*, short fictions; *Mr. Splitfoot*, a ghost story; and *The Invention of Everything Else* about Nikola Tesla. Hunt's work has been translated into thirteen languages. She is a Guggenheim Fellow. Her short film *The Yellow* was selected for the Toronto International Film Fest. Hunt won a Bard Fiction Prize and was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner. She teaches at Pratt Institute.

## Erika Krouse

Erika Krouse has taught at Lighthouse since 2008; she is a Book Project mentor and a winner of the Lighthouse Beacon Award. Erika's most recent collection of short stories, *Save Me, Stranger*, is out with Flatiron Books in January 2025. It has garnered starred reviews from *Kirkus* and *Booklist*, and praise from Louise Erdrich, Adam Johnson, Ann Beattie, Aimee Bender, and Vauhini Vara.





# FACULTY



## Juan J. Morales

Juan J. Morales is the son of an Ecuadorian mother and Puerto Rican father. He is the author of three poetry collections, including *The Handyman's Guide to End Times*, winner of the 2019 International Latino Book Award. Recent poems have appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *The Laurel Review*, *Breakbeats Vol. LatINEXT*, *Acentos Review*, *Collateral*, *terrain.org*, *Pank*, and *Poetry*. He is a CantoMundo Fellow, a Macondo Fellow, the editor/publisher of Pilgrimage Press, and Professor of English and the Associate Dean of the College of Humanities Arts & Social Sciences at Colorado State University-Pueblo.

## Jenny Shank

Jenny Shank's short story collection, *Mixed Company*, won the George Garrett Fiction Prize and is a finalist for the Colorado Book Award (General Fiction). Her novel, *The Ringer*, won the High Plains Book Award in fiction, was a finalist for the Mountains & Plains Independent Booksellers Association's Reading the West Book Awards, was a Tattered Cover Book Store Summer Reading selection, and was the featured book in the Wheat Ridge Reads community reading program.

Jenny's stories, essays, satire, and reviews have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Los Angeles Times*, among others. She is on the faculty of the Mile High MFA at Regis University in Denver, and she lives in Boulder with her husband, daughter, and son.



# FACULTY



## Chris Vanjonack

Chris Vanjonack is a writer and educator from Fort Collins, Colorado. A recipient of an AWP Intro Journals Award, his fiction and creative nonfiction have appeared or are forthcoming in *One Story*, the Book of the Month Club's *Volume O*, *Barrelhouse*, *Electric Literature*, *Ninth Letter*, *DIAGRAM*, *Shenandoah*, *Quarterly West*, and elsewhere. He holds an MFA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and he has taught creative writing at The Denver School of the Arts as a guest artist, and at The Ohio State University as a Post-MFA Scholar. His debut short story collection, *Out of Body*, is forthcoming from William Morrow in 2026.

## Raksha Vasudevan

Born in India and raised in Canada, Raksha Vasudevan is a journalist and former aid worker. She has reported on issues of race, environmental justice, and housing for *The New York Times*, *VICE*, *The Guardian*, *Outside*, and *High Country News*, where she is also a contributing editor. Her essays and commentary also appear in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Guernica*, *Hazlitt*, *The Washington Post*, and *LitHub*, among others. Her debut nonfiction book following her years as a south Asian aid worker in Africa, and interrogating ideas of solidarity in a post-colonial age, is forthcoming from Graywolf in the US and Knopf in Canada.



# FACULTY



## Jennifer Wortman

Jennifer Wortman is the author of the story collection *This. This. This. Is. Love. Love. Love.* (Split/Lip Press, 2019), named the Denver Westword 2020 pick for best new short-story collection, the 2019 Foreword INDIES bronze winner for short stories, and a finalist for the Colorado Book Awards and the High Plains Book Awards. Her work appears in *TriQuarterly*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *DIAGRAM*, *Electric Literature*, *Best Small Fictions*, W. W. Norton's *Flash Fiction America*, and elsewhere, and has been cited as distinguished in *Best American Short Stories*. A recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and MacDowell, she lives with her family in Colorado, where she teaches at Lighthouse Writers Workshop and serves as the fiction editor for *Colorado Review*.

# CONTACT INFO

## For inquiries related to Short Form Fest

[genna@lighthousewriters.org](mailto:genna@lighthousewriters.org)

## For general Lighthouse inquiries

[info@lighthousewriters.org](mailto:info@lighthousewriters.org)

### Website

[lighthousewriters.org](http://lighthousewriters.org)

### Phone

(303) 297-1185

### Address

3844 York St, Denver, CO

## Parking Map

