

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

DEPARTMENT OF  
**English**

**M.F.A. PROGRAM**









**A**lmost two decades old, the University of Mississippi's M.F.A. Program has been listed as one of *The Atlantic Monthly's* "Top Five Up and Coming Programs" and was ranked 14th out of the top 50 M.F.A. programs by *Poets & Writers Magazine*.

Further strengthening our program, we are extremely pleased to announce that award-winning poet Aimee Nezhukumatathil has joined our faculty. In addition, noted novelist Garth Greenwell will be the 2018–2019 John and Renée Grisham Visiting Writer in Residence. Nezhukumatathil and Greenwell bring added vitality to an already accomplished faculty. Our student to faculty ratio is 3:1, a ratio which fosters close relationships and allows faculty to mentor with insight and attention.

Our program is small and supportive: eight students are accepted with full funding each year. Students benefit from our well-endowed readings series. (In 2017–2018, our visiting writers included Russell Banks, Maggie Smith, Catherine Pierce, and others.) They also reap benefits from interactions with fresh talent, as the John and Renée Grisham Writer in Residence is a yearly appointment for an emerging Southern writer. Our students can take advantage of other opportunities such as participating in our student-run readings series and our literary magazine, *The Yalobusha Review*.

We are located 70 miles from Memphis in Oxford, Miss., home of Faulkner's Rowan Oak, literary conferences, the best bookstore in the South, an active music scene and great restaurants. Oxford is consistently listed as one of the "best small towns in America." *USA Today* names Oxford as one of the "Top Six College Towns in the Nation." Come see why.

## STUDENT STORIES

### *A view from inside the University of Mississippi M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program*



“During my Ole Miss days (2005-2008), I got splendid instruction and warm encouragement from my writing teachers and enjoyed the companionship of writers and musicians in a charming, culturally rich

town. The freedom to participate in workshops outside my primary genre proved a plus: Trying my hand as a ‘fictioneer’ helped me as a poet. Also, taking literature seminars with the University of Mississippi’s seasoned, personable professors fed my creative work. My poetry collection, *Gust*, was published in 2011 by Northwestern University Press. It includes nearly all of my M.F.A. thesis. Ole Miss and Oxford did right by me.”

—Greg Alan Brownderville



“I couldn’t have asked for a more convivial, creative, or challenging place to get my MFA— from the moment I arrived in Oxford the program and the people were on my team in every conceivable way. The work coming out of Mississippi is wonderfully varied and deeply urgent, and my colleagues and teachers made me want to be better, and do better, more responsible, more exciting work every day. I know for certain that, without them, I wouldn’t be half the writer—or the person—that I am, and I credit the University of Mississippi with so much about the life and career I’m lucky enough to have now.”

—Molly McCully Brown

### Books

*The Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded*, 2017  
Persea

“My Ole Miss M.F.A. experience was essential to my development as a poet. As the Grisham Fellow, I was not only given ample time and encouragement to write, I was also afforded the opportunity to coordinate the Grisham Visiting Writers Series and serve as senior editor of *The Yalobusha Review*. While under the guidance of Beth Ann Fennelly and Ann Fisher-Wirth, I published 25 poems in journals such as *Cimarron Review*, *Smartish Pace*, *River Styx* and *Subtropics*.”



—Danielle Sellers

### Book

*Bone Key Elegies*, 2009

### Honors

Phyllis Smart Young Prize, *The Madison Review*  
Semifinalist, “Discovery”/*The Nation Prize*  
Nominated for the AWP Intro Journals Award  
Twice nominated for Best New Poets  
Mona Van Duyn Scholarship, Sewanee Writers’ Conference, 2007  
Walter E. Dakin Poetry Fellow, Sewanee Writers’ Conference, 2011  
Founder and editor of *The Country Dog Review* ([www.countrydogreview.org](http://www.countrydogreview.org))  
[www.32poems.com/blog/1939/danielle-sellers-an-interview-with-serena-m-agusto-cox](http://www.32poems.com/blog/1939/danielle-sellers-an-interview-with-serena-m-agusto-cox) (interview)  
[www.apostrophecast.com/authors/daniellesellers.html](http://www.apostrophecast.com/authors/daniellesellers.html) (reading and interview)

“Early in the second year of my Ole Miss M.F.A., I was writing a lot of bad stories about Americans working in Iraq. After one particularly frustrating workshop, Barry Hannah gave me a lovely handwritten letter with a pirate stamp on top and a message that said, ‘Bring your tales closer to home.’ I’m pretty sure that finding myself a teaching job in Iraq wasn’t what Barry had in mind. But that’s what I did, and I’ll be forever grateful to Barry, Tom Franklin, Jack Pendarvis and the entire UM M.F.A. faculty for not only helping me decide to go but also saving my place in the program and my funding for when I returned.”

—Ryan Bubalo



### Honors

Corinna McClanahan Schroeder’s work appears in *Shenandoah*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Blackbird*, and *Copper Nickel*. While at the University of Mississippi, she received an AWP Intro Journals Award in poetry and was named a Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship finalist. After earning her M.F.A., she accepted an invitation to be the Annenberg Fellow (5 years fully funded, 2 of them from teaching) and is pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Southern California.

“It’s amazing the maturation that three years of serious work and camaraderie with other writers can yield, and I am thankful for the time and generous funding provided by my Grisham Fellowship, which afforded me the opportunity, straight out of college, to put my poetry first. UM’s M.F.A. program isn’t just any program, though. It has the wonderful quality of being big enough to draw Pulitzer Prize-winning authors to give readings but small enough that, on any given night, a professor might join students for dinner after class.”

—Corinna McClanahan Schroeder



“I knew that I’d receive excellent instruction from great faculty. What I didn’t know was that the State of Mississippi would also be an amazing and relentless teacher those three years, and would push me to tackle roles of civic responsibility that I didn’t know I was capable of. A city councilman pointed a gun at me while I was investigating an officer-involved shooting in Columbus, Mississippi for *The Guardian*. I cried when a board room of Oxford police officers and community organizers worked together to ensure the safety of the City’s first Pride Parade. And I left Kiese Laymon’s house frustrated and confused after President Trump’s election, when a group of students and professors collectively tried to reimagine what it meant to be a writer in our new political climate. I’ll end by saying that I never learned what *Hotty Toddy* meant and, while college football still gives me the heebie jeebies, I loved my time in Oxford.”

—Matt Kessler



## STUDENT STORIES



“I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again. The program at Ole Miss made me a writer. I was a mess on the page when I got there: adverbs everywhere, copying every author I admired as if I could channel them without notice. Ole Miss cured me of that. It wasn’t just the workshops, although they were crucial. It was, instead, the community, folks who quickly became friends pushing me to do my best. It was late-night talks on front porches and at the City Grocery bar, classes on Form, Craft and Influence, and the constant stream of great writers coming through Square Books. All in all, I learned what good writing was during my time in Oxford, as well as the lifelong dedication it takes to produce it. And, I also had a hell of a good time.”

—M.O. Walsh

### Books

*The Prospect of Magic* (short story collection), May 2010

*My Sunshine Away* (novel), 2015

### Awards

Winner of 2009 Tartt’s First Fiction Prize

Editor’s Pick for Best Books of 2010 by *Oxford American*

Finalist and Honorable Mention, 2011 Eric Hoffer Award (general fiction)

Short stories anthologized in *Best New American Voices*, *Best of the Net*, *Louisiana in Words*, *Bar Stories*

Million Writers Award (Notable Stories in 2007 & 2010)

Flavorwire (Top 10 Favorite Story of 2010)

See more work in *New York Times*, *Oxford American* and *American Short Fiction*. Contact and info: [www.mowalsh.com](http://www.mowalsh.com)

“It’s a rare thing, at least in my life, to find myself somewhere that has seemed, at every moment from start to present, to be exactly the place I’m supposed to be. The Ole Miss M.F.A. program is that place for me, that Didd-Wah-Diddy where good advice grows on trees, and resources walk up to you, begging to be used. I cannot imagine a program better equipped or more committed to helping me have the writing life of my nearest desired and greatest aspirations.”

—Caroline Williams, co-author with Alice Randell of  
*The Diary of B. B. Bright, Possible Princess*



“I came to Ole Miss from New York with a half-finished documentary film and some very rough short stories, expecting vaguely to improve my fiction. Now, beginning my third year of the M.F.A., the classes I’ve had in fiction and creative nonfiction have offered me far greater fluency in my prose. In my two years here, I’ve published nonfiction and been a finalist in a national fiction contest. I’ve had the time and support to successfully finish my film, which showed at a renowned festival (IDFA) and was signed with a distributor during my second year in the program. Although I am a student in fiction, the faculty have championed my development as a writer across genres, and as a filmmaker. The limited number of students admitted to the M.F.A. and the close community here encourage this kind of individualized mentorship, which seems to me a rare strength of this program.”

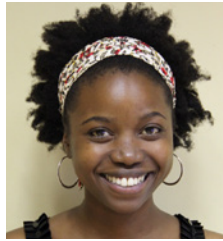


—Rachel Smith

### Honors

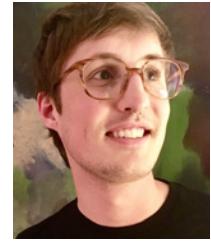
After graduation, Rachel Smith spent a year in China during which she was awarded a two-year Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University.

“The very first reading I went to as a student in the UM MFA program was by Tasmanian writer Richard Flanagan, reading from *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, for which he won a Man Booker Prize weeks after his reading in Oxford. This, the fact that this writer I had just heard read, won a major literary prize, illustrated to me the kind of writers I would have the privilege to encounter during my time in the program, and the seriousness with which the program takes the development of its writers both within and outside the classroom. The discipline and commitment to craft that I was privy to in workshop was invaluable to making me a writer with a more expansive and ambitious vision for the work I want to create. Stories I workshopped during the program were picked up by *A Public Space* and the *Oxford American*. But more than that, the programme gave me a more solid idea of what it means to be a writer. I had never been in a place with so many devoted to writing, where so many of my daily conversations involved discussions about sentences, form, the merits of epiphanies. The necessity, for a writer, of creating community, of generosity and kindness, civic mindedness—these are the most valuable lessons I have taken from my time in Oxford, Mississippi.”



—Gothataone Moeng

“Coming into the MFA program at University of Mississippi, I was producing mediocre epiphanic lyric poems with the vague sense that I wanted to reinvent the way I approached language, form, and sound. In Oxford, I found a generative community with wide-ranging aesthetics—one that pushed me to experiment and re-evaluate my preconceived notions about what poems do, and how. (I wrote my first book, *Kids of the Black Hole*, during my second year in the program.) Through my experiences running *Yalobusha Review*, curating various reading series, and teaching creative writing, I developed a sense of my poetic identity—both in relation to the Oxford literary community, and in a larger sense. I’ll be forever grateful for these experiences.”



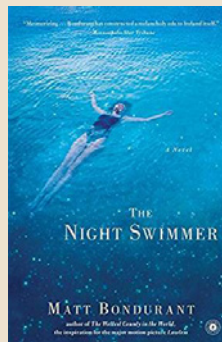
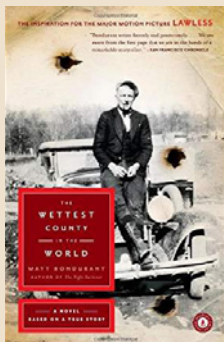
—Marty Cain







## BOOK COVERS



## Matt Bondurant

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF  
ENGLISH AND CREATIVE WRITING

“Through every stage of my writing career there has been someone there who stepped forward and helped me out. From workshop critiques, to book recommendations, to teaching advice, to conversations off campus about literature and the writing life, I benefited from the generosity and sincerity of my mentors and peers. I view my primary duty as an MFA instructor to carry on this tradition; I want to help developing writers the way I was helped, to clear obstacles or perhaps create them, to advise and commiserate, to support them through every stage. Fortunately for me it’s not just a job. Talking with writers about books and writing is what I love to do.”

### Publications

*The Night Swimmer* (novel), 2012

*The Wettest County in the World:*

*A Novel Based on a True Story* (novel), 2008

*The Third Translation* (novel), 2005



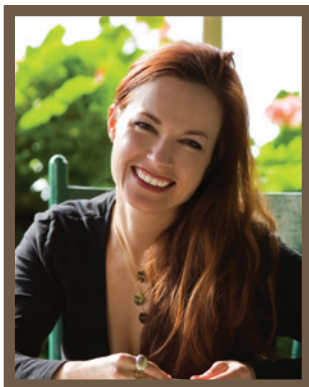
### Education

Ph.D., Creative Writing, Florida State University, 2003

M.A., English, James Madison University

B.A., English, James Madison University

## FACULTY



### Beth Ann Fennelly

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

#### NEA WINNER

“My love for writing is complemented by my love of teaching writing. Having great students makes it rewarding to give your all in the classroom. My students’ successes make me very proud!”

#### Education

Diane Middlebrook Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of Wisconsin, 1999

M.F.A. in Creative Writing, University of Arkansas, 1998

B.A. in English, magna cum laude, University of Notre Dame, 1993

#### Honors

Poet Laureate of the state of Mississippi (2016–2020)

College of Liberal Arts

Outstanding Teacher of the Year, 2011

Mississippi Arts Commission Grant, poetry, 2010, nonfiction, 2005

Fulbright Scholarship to Brazil, 2009

Best American Poetry, 1995, 2005, 2006

United States Artist Grant, 2006

National Endowment for the Arts Award, 2003

BookSense Top 10 Poetry Pick, 2001

Pushcart Prize, 2001

#### Publications

*Heating and Cooling: Micro Essays*, 2017

*The Tilted World* (a novel), 2013

*Unmentionables* (poetry), 2008

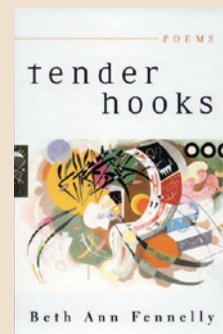
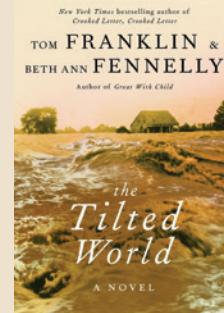
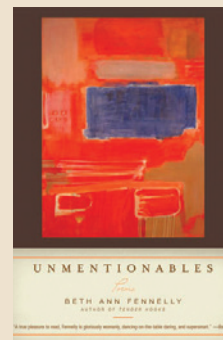
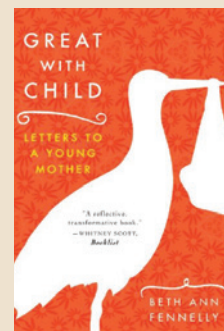
*Great with Child: Letters to a Young Mother* (nonfiction), 2006

*Tender Hooks* (poetry), 2004

*Open House* (poetry), 2002 (winner of The Kenyon Review Prize and the GLCA New Writers Award)

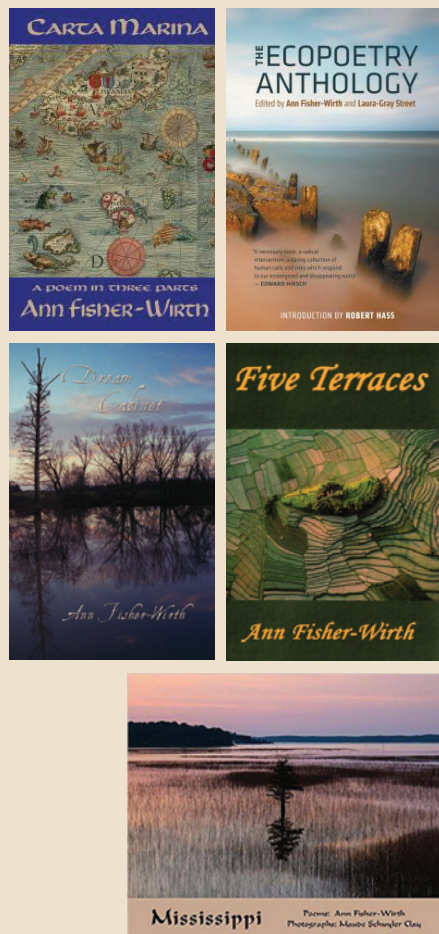
*A Different Kind of Hunger*, 1998 (winner of the 1997 Texas Review Chapbook Breakthrough Award)

#### BOOK COVERS





## BOOK COVERS

*Ann Fisher-Wirth*


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PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND DIRECTOR  
OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MINOR

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**RITA DOVE POETRY AWARD**

“I love to teach, and I’m so pleased to work with our wonderful students. I teach graduate poetry workshops and literature seminars such as The American Long Poem, American Women Poets, and American Ecopoetry. I also teach short-term workshops in creative writing and yoga.”

**Honors**

Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teaching Award, 2014  
 President, Association for the Study  
 of Literature and Environment, 2006  
 Rita Dove Poetry Prize, 2004  
 Poetry Award from the Mississippi Institute  
 of Arts and Letters, 2004  
 Poetry Fellowship from the Mississippi Arts Commission, 2004  
 Malahat Review Long Poem Prize, 2003  
 Fulbright Distinguished Chair in American Studies,  
 Uppsala University, Sweden, 2002-03  
 Fulbright Senior Fellowship, University of Fribourg,  
 Switzerland, 1994-95

**Publications**

*Mississippi*, by Ann Fisher-Wirth and Maude Schuyler Clay, 2018  
*Ecopoetry: A Contemporary American Anthology*, coedited with Laura-Gray Street, 2012  
*Dream Cabinet*, 2012  
*Carta Marina*, 2009  
*Slide Shows* (chapbook), 2009  
*Five Terraces*, 2005  
*Walking Wu Wei's Scroll* (chapbook), 2005  
*Blue Window*, 2003  
*The Trinket Poems* (chapbook), 2003  
*William Carlos Williams and Autobiography: The Woods of His Own Nature*, 1989

**Education**

Ph.D., English and American  
 literature, Claremont Graduate  
 School, 1981  
 M.A., English and American  
 literature, Claremont Graduate  
 School, 1972  
 B.A., English, magna cum laude,  
 Pomona College, 1968

## FACULTY



### Tom Franklin

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

#### L.A. TIMES BOOK AWARD

"I can't even imagine a more supportive environment for writing. ... Knowing there are expectations for me as a writer, as well as a teacher, keeps me on my toes and motivated."

#### Education

M.F.A. in fiction, University of Arkansas, 1998

M.A. in English, University of South Alabama, 1995

B.A. in English, University of South Alabama, 1992

#### Honors

L.A. Times Book Prize, Mystery/Thriller, 2011

Willie Morris Prize for Southern Fiction, 2011

Mississippi Arts Commission Grant, 2010

Mississippi Institute of Arts & Letters, Best Novel, 2003

Guggenheim Fellowship Award, 2001

Edgar Allan Poe Award, short story, 1999

#### Publications

*The Tilted World*, 2013

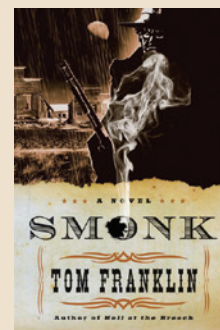
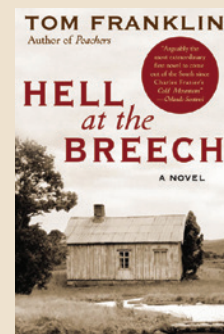
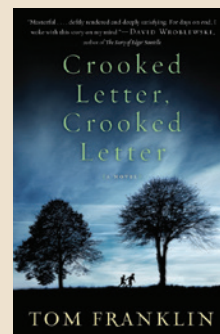
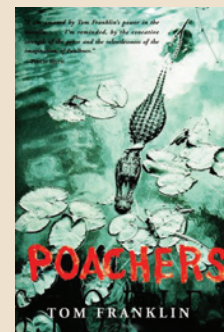
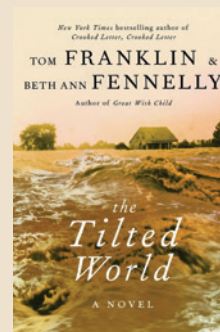
*Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*, 2010

*Smonk*, 2006

*Hell at the Breech*, 2003

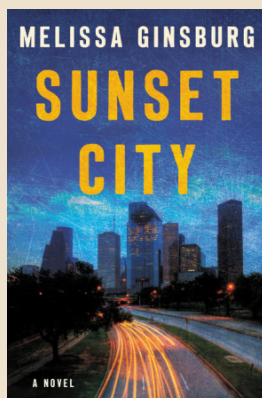
*Poachers: Stories*, 1999

## BOOK COVERS





## BOOK COVERS



## Melissa Ginsburg

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF  
ENGLISH AND CREATIVE WRITING

“In the classroom I try to foster a climate of support and intellectual rigor. I consider it a privilege to work with such an engaged community of talented writers and to see their poems and stories come into being. My students inspire me as a reader and writer, and their work reminds me why I love literature.”

### Publications

*Sunset City* (novel), 2016

*Dear Weather Ghost* (poetry), 2013

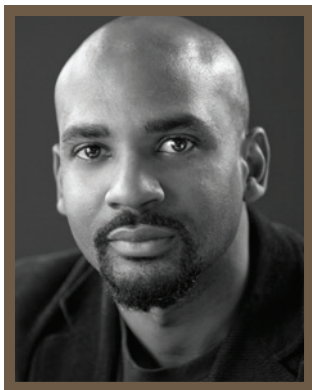


### Education

M.F.A. University of Iowa, 2005

B.A. University of Houston, 2001

## FACULTY



### *Derrick Harriell*

DIRECTOR OF M.F.A PROGRAM  
AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

"I'm interested in producing an environment that fosters creativity and inquiry. For me, teaching is just as rewarding as writing. Our students continue to keep me inspired and informed. It's been wonderful to work and reside in such a close-knit writing community."

### Education

Ph.D. in English, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, 2012  
M.F.A. in Creative Writing, Chicago State University

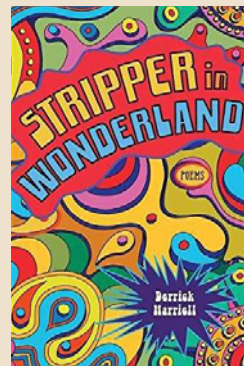
### Honors

Poetry Award from the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters, 2014

### Publications

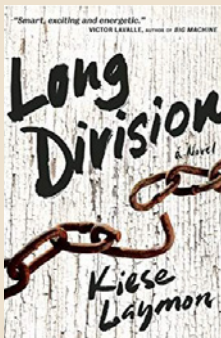
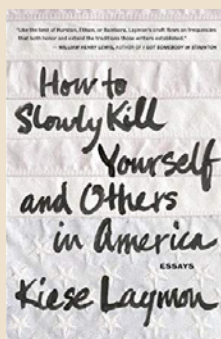
*Stripper in Wonderland*, 2017  
*Cotton*, 2010  
*Ropes*, 2013

## BOOK COVERS





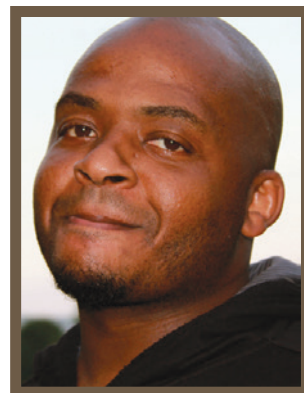
## BOOK COVERS



## Kiese Laymon

OTILLIE SCHILLIG PROFESSOR OF  
ENGLISH AND CREATIVE WRITING

"I try to encourage my students here to dive into texts with their thoughts and their bodies. I want them to implicate themselves in every critique they make. Thankfully, they buy in and often teach me more than I ever imagined."



### Publications

*Heavy: An American Memoir*, 2018

*Long Division* (novel), 2013

*How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* (essays), 2013

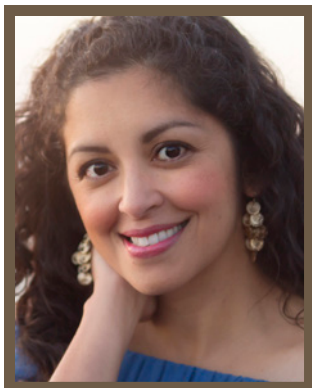
*And So On* (novel), forthcoming

### Education

M.F.A. Indiana University, 1998

B.A. Oberlin College

## FACULTY



### *Aimee Nezhukumatathil*

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH  
AND CREATIVE WRITING

“In my classroom, I hope a sense of wonder is evoked and maintained, and through a keen sense of observation, inquiry, and an ardent pulse to translate nature’s language—students can delight in the possibilities and experiments of what writing could be. I adore the rich back and forth of close readings with students and the push-pull of helping a writer dig and reach to make poems and essays they never thought possible.”

Aimee Nezhukumatathil’s poems and essays have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, *Tin House*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Brevity*, *American Poetry Review*, and *New England Review*.

### Education

M.F.A. in Creative Writing,  
The Ohio State University

### Honors

Pushcart Prize

National Endowment for the Arts  
Literature Fellowship in poetry  
(2009)

### Publications

*World of Wonder* (essays), 2018

*Oceanic* (poetry), 2018

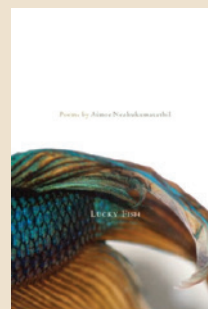
*Lace & Pyrite* (poetry chapbook with Ross Gay), 2014

*Lucky Fish* (poetry), 2011

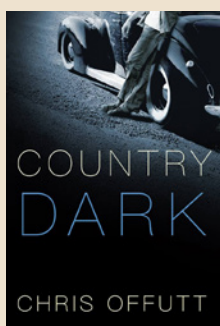
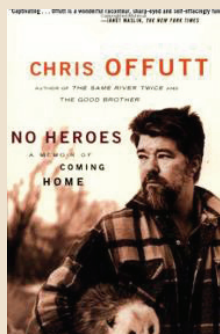
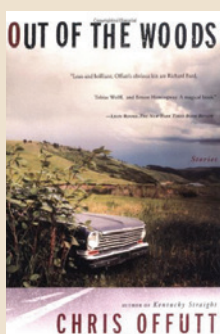
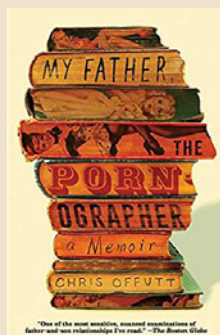
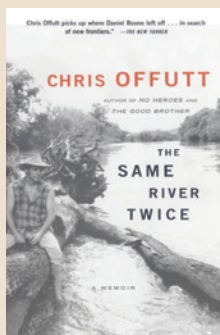
*At the Drive-in Volcano* (poetry), 2007

*Miracle Fruit* (poetry), 2003

### BOOK COVERS



## BOOK COVERS

*Chris Offutt*

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF  
ENGLISH AND SCREENWRITING

**TRUE BLOOD**

"I've spent the last 25 years devoted to writing in various forms, including screenplays, the novel, short story, essay, memoir and comic books. Also, some really bad poetry."

**Publications**

*Country Dark* (novel), 2018  
*My Father, the Pornographer* (memoir), 2016  
*No Heroes* (memoir), 2002  
*Out of the Woods* (stories), 1999  
*The Good Brother* (novel), 1997  
*The Same River Twice* (memoir), 1993  
*Kentucky Straight* (stories), 1992

**Screenplays**

"Treme" 2012  
 "Tough Trade" (various episodes), Lions Gate, 2010  
 "Weeds," Showtime, 2009  
 "True Blood" (episodes 107, 110), 2007, 2008  
 "Out of the Woods," 2004  
 TV pilot for crime series for CBS Film "The Trapper," 2011

**Film**

"The Trapper," 2011

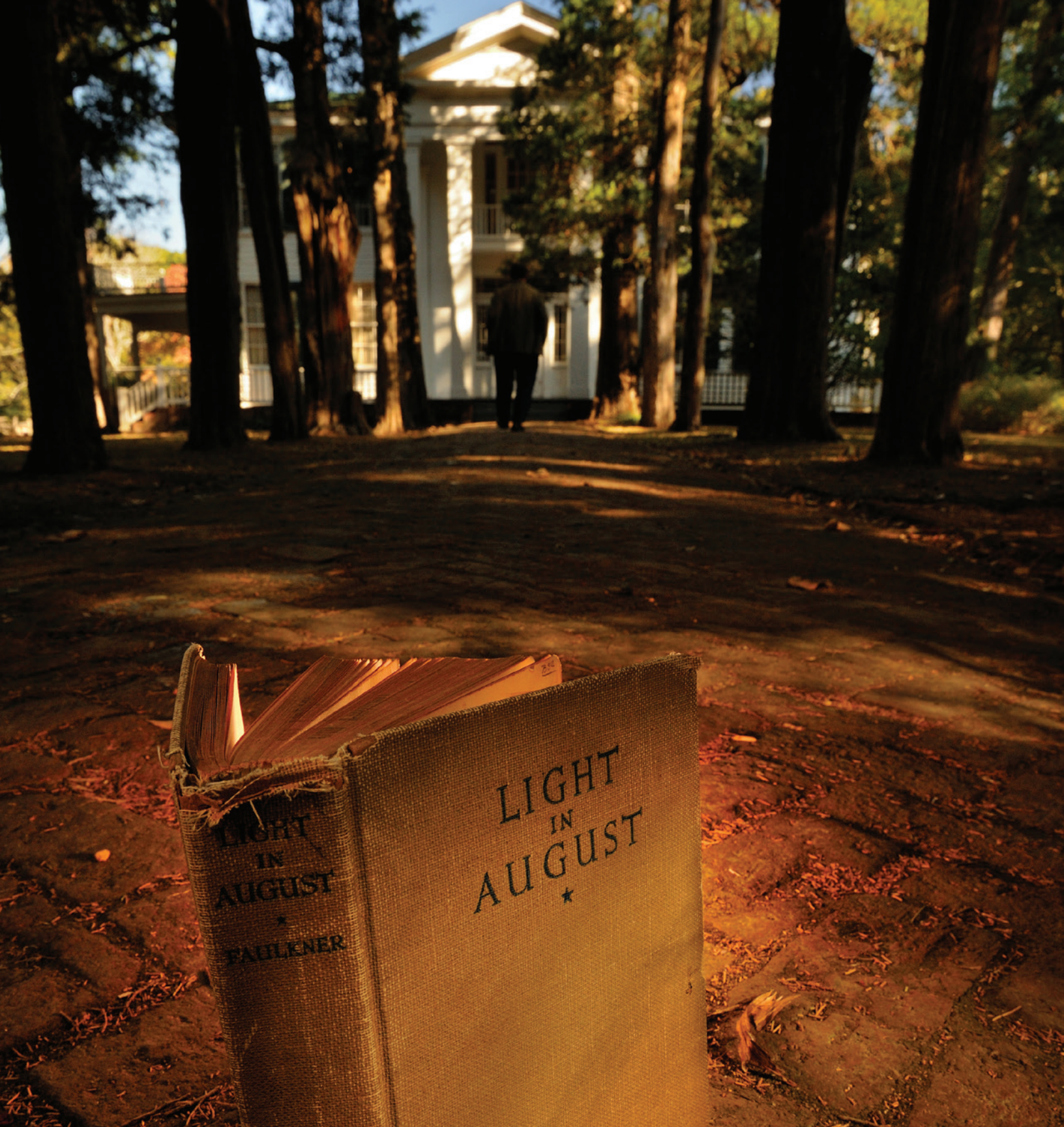
**Education**

M.F.A. in fiction, The University of Iowa, 1990  
 B.A. in theatre, Morehead State University, 1981

**Honors**

Kentucky Literary Award (2017)  
 Pushcart Prize (2017)  
 Best American Short Stories  
 Best American Essays  
 Writers Guild of America Nominee for Best Writing, "True Blood," 2008  
 Lennan Fellowship for Fiction, 2003  
 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship for Fiction, 1996





LIGHT  
IN  
AUGUST  
★

LIGHT  
IN  
AUGUST  
★  
FAULKNER

## JOHN AND RENÉE GRISHAM WRITERS IN RESIDENCE

John and Renée Grisham Writers in Residence are emerging writers selected on the strength of their writing. They are provided with housing and a generous stipend. They teach one class each semester and are provided ample writing time. They have no official duties but frequently become involved in our close-knit M.F.A. community.

**Gill O'Neill**

(2019–20)

**Garth Greenwell**

(2018–19)

**Catherine Lacey**

(2017–18)

**Aimee**

**Nezhukumatathil**

(2016–17)

**Kiese Laymon**

(2015–16)

**Mary Miller**

(2014–15)

**Megan Abbott**

(2013–14)

**Nic Brown**

(2012–13)

**Josh Weil**

(2011–12)

**Jesmyn Ward**

(2010–11)

**John Brandon**

(2009–10)

**James Kimbrell**

(2008–09)

**Jack Pendarvis**

(2007–08)

**LeAnne Howe**

(2006–07)

**Michael Knight**

(2005–06)

**Brad Watson**

(2004–05)

**Janisse Ray**

(2003–04)

**Shay Youngblood**

(2002–03)

**Tom Franklin**

(2001–02)

**Claude Wilkinson**

(2000–01)

**Steve Yarbrough**

(1999–2000)

**Darcey Steinke**

(1998–99)

**Randall Kenan**

(1997–98)

**Tim Gautreaux**

(1996–97)

**Mary Hood**

(1995–96)

**Mark Richard**

(1994–95)

**T. R. Pearson**

(1993–94)





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