

9-28-2006

## Spring 2007 New Writing Series

English Department

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**CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES**  
**GRANT APPLICATION**

PROVIDE 12 (TWELVE) COPIES, INCLUDING THE ORIGINAL.  
PLEASE PLACE A COPY OF THIS COVER SHEET ON TOP OF EACH COPY

I. Applicant/Organization: English Department, National Poetry Foundation

II. a. Responsible Organization Officer: Steve Evans

b. Title: Associate Professor of English, Coordinator of New Writing Series

c. Campus Address (include EMail and Telephone): 304 Neville, 1-3822

III. Summary of program requiring funding (title; featured artist(s); speaker(s); scheduled date (s):

**The New Writing Series • Spring 2007**

To consist of seven events featuring eight writers. Poets: Rosanna Warren, Robert Kelly, Tina Darragh, Brenda Coultas and Allison Cobb. Fiction writers: David Matlin, Steve Tomusula, and Dani Leone. Most readings to take place on Thursday afternoons at the Soderberg Center Auditorium.

IV. Budget Proposal Form must be attached. *Please see attached spreadsheet.*

**Funding for current application is contingent upon submission of reports for any previous grant awards, including final budget and attendance figures.**

Signature of responsible organization officer/date: \_\_\_\_\_

  
SIGNATURE

7/28/06  
DATE

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION TO:      CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES COMMITTEE  
C/O PRESIDENT'S OFFICE  
200 ALUMNI HALL, CAMPUS

\$3500

8/1/06

28 September 2006

Dear Members of the Cultural Affairs Committee,

I write to request the Committee's support for the spring 2007 New Writing Series, an innovative literary arts program sponsored by the English Department and the National Poetry Foundation.

The amount we request, **\$3500**, is less than half of the projected operating budget for the spring Series of \$10,272. The English Department will supply the bulk of the funding for the program (approximately \$5272) and the Honors College has committed the sum of \$1500.

The spring Series is projected to comprise seven events featuring eight writers, including two emerging poets, three established poets, and three fiction writers. One of the poets, Rosanna Warren, has been chosen as the Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Speaker to UMaine for the academic year, the first time in recent memory that a poet has held this prestigious title. Another of our poets, the renowned Robert Kelly, is slated to be the featured writer in the Honors College's Cultural Odyssey for spring 2007. The fiction writer David Matlin brings, in addition to his literary talent, deep experience in the US prison system, in which he taught for a decade and about which he writes with passion and insight. Dani Leone's fiction is rooted in the experience of transsexual identity (Leone is transitioning from male to female). Allison Cobb, a lesbian writer, and Brenda Coultas both use poetry as a tool for historical investigation: Cobb writing about the Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, Coultas about the Bowery (in *A Handmade Museum*) and mid-western identity (in a long poem now in process). Tina Darragh is one of the foremost experimental writers of her generation. And Steve Tomusula has reinvigorated the novel as a form with his Orwell & Pynchon influenced story-telling. (More detailed biographical and bibliographical information about each writer is appended below.) We're excited about this projected lineup and about the contribution these writers will make to the artistic and intellectual life on campus.

So, you might say, the spring lineup looks promising. Why *else* is the New Writing Series deserving of Committee support? We believe there are several compelling reasons.

- **A cutting-edge research university with an institutional commitment to innovation deserves literary arts programming that is diverse, daring, and original.** The New Writing Series is such a program. While all modes and methods of writing fall within its ambit of curiosity, we take care to ensure that writers whose work departs from, and perhaps even challenges, dominant commercial and aesthetic assumptions are given a fair hearing. Our programming is consistently among the most diverse on the campus (and by extension in the

region), foregrounding ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and sexual diversity (see the appended document "About the New Writing Series" for details). And our programming is original: no other institution in Maine, and only a few others in the country, have shown the kind of commitment the New Writing Series has toward the full-range of contemporary literary practice. We seek to confer recognition with our programming, not just to ratify judgments made somewhere up the literary food chain.

- **The New Writing Series does a lot with a little.** For what would be a modest honorarium if paid in a lump sum to a single celebrity on campus for one evening, the New Writing Series creates a coherent sequence of events that adds a distinctive dimension to the intellectual and artistic climate on campus and in the region. The honoraria we offer are low (between \$250 and \$1000) and we economize in every way we can on other expenses (see appended budget). Because the Series has an established identity—in terms of time (Thursday afternoons), place (the Soderberg Center Auditorium), and "look" (MaJo Keleshian's bold designs, echoed in our electronic publicity)—we get more out of each individual event. This has been a key to our successful audience development. Inertia is the enemy of artistic creation: the New Writing Series creates momentum around the act of literary creation, stirring up lively conversations that resonate beyond the cube-like walls of the Soderberg Auditorium.

- **The New Writing Series has a strong local audience, but it also brings national visibility to the University of Maine.** The off-campus publicity for the New Writing Series always spotlights the UMaine (rather than the English Department or the NPF): our goal is to keep Orono on the national map when it comes to the literary arts, and to emphasize that the UMS flagship campus is at the leading edge of literary artistic practice. No other college in the state or campus in the UM system can demonstrate the depth of commitment and ongoing excellence that the New Writing Series, with the Committee's support, has achieved.

- **Literary culture is an essential piece in the "creative economy" puzzle.** A university campus that fails to stay in touch with contemporary literary practice is depriving itself of access to the fresh thinking that writers, often far in advance of their colleagues in other disciplines, bring to the world around us. The literary arts are essential to the creation of an atmosphere of free exploration of any and all aspects of contemporary existence, an atmosphere as decisive in the sciences as in the humanities.

- **The "New" in New Writing Series.** We have been fortunate to receive Committee support for the NWS in the past and we are deeply grateful for it. But the enduring institutional framework of the Series should not mask the fact that we bring new voices and visions to campus with every fresh season of the NWS. We are, in other words, offering "new programming" for the Committee's

consideration, programming that will disappear from the cultural calendar without your support.

I have included a detailed budget (using an Excel spreadsheet in lieu of the supplied form) for the spring New Writing Series. I'll note that we have included \$500 toward local advertising in an effort to better disseminate NWS information off campus (toward this end we have also started a Series-related blog in addition to the official website). Our travel policy allots to invited writers "up to \$500 for travel" (note that airfares even from the Northeast often exceed that sum). We work with individuals to minimize that expense whenever possible. Accommodations are for two nights at the University Inn in Orono at rates of \$52 single, \$62 double. Meal and reception expenses do not factor into our request for Committee support: they are included here for information only. I believe the other items should be self-explanatory, but I am more than happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Evans", written in a cursive style.

Steve Evans

Associate Professor of English  
New Writing Series Coordinator



*Bio-bibliographical Information for Proposed Readers (Alphabetical)*

**ALLISON COBB**

Allison Cobb was born and raised in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and her first book, *Born 2* (Chax, 2004), explores the meaning of that vexed site as a ground for her own imaginative labors. Her work is formally inventive, attentive to history, and moving in its transformations of source text. She has an MFA from George Mason University and is one of the editors of *POM2*. Currently living in New York, Cobb is now at work on a long poem entitled *Green-Wood: A Meditation on the Meaning of America*, organized around the history and present-day ecology of Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, founded in 1838 in one of the last wild areas of the city.

**BRENDA COULTAS**

Lisa Jarrot calls Brenda Coultas "the supreme weaver of tender weird tales for a melancholy democracy. Her rural-urban-lyric-documentary of the human condition is more than astute and more than compelling—think of her as the new breed of great American poet." And Rain Taxi says of Coultas' recent book, *A Handmade Museum* (Coffee House Press, 2003): "[Her] poems sometimes seem to function as an extension of the observational activities by which neighborhoods regulate themselves; in her descriptions of encounters with people on the street and objects found in dumpsters, she preserves the naturally elegant social organization of the Bowery in its original chaos...". Coultas' previous works include *A Summer Newsreel* (2nd Story Books, 1999). She lives and works in New York City.

**TINA DARRAGH**

A longtime member of the Washington, D.C., arts community, Tina Darragh first came to prominence as a "language poet" in the 1970s. Her unique, procedural poems explore habits of perception and patterns of organizing information, usually by developing a set of rules for generating text and then presenting the results alongside a narrative or discussion of the process. The pleasure of these works—collected in several volumes, including *Striking Resemblance* (Burning Deck, 1989), *Dream Rim Instructions* (Drogue, 1998), and *Opposable Dumbs: A Play* (Tangent, 2002)—is due in no small part to their playful inventiveness, which provokes insight into art and art's place in everyday life with uncommon wit and humility.

**ROBERT KELLY - Honors Odyssey Featured Writer**

Robert Kelly was born 24 September 1935, in Brooklyn, New York, the son of Samuel Jason and Margaret Rose (Kane) Kelly. He attended City College, now City College of the City University of New York, (A.B., 1955) and Columbia University (1955-1958). He has been employed as a translator (Continental Translation Service, New York City, 1955-1958), lecturer in English (Wagner College, New York City, 1960-1961) and assistant professor of English (1961-1968) and professor of English (1974-) at Bard

College. He has also been the co-director of the writing program at the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, 1974-). He is a co-founder, with George Economou, of the Chelsea Review (1957-1960) and Trobar (1960--); editor of Matter (1963--); assistant professor of English (1964) at the State University of New York at Buffalo; visiting lecturer in modern poetry (1966) at Tufts University; and conducted a fiction workshop at the New York City Writers Conference, Staten Island (summer, 1967). He has been Poet-in-residence at California Institute of Technology, Pasadena (1971-1972), University of Kansas (1975), Dickinson College (1976), and Naropa Institute (1977--). Kelly has received the Los Angeles Times First Annual Book Award (1980) for *Kill the Messenger Who Brings Bad News* and the American Book Award, Before Columbus Foundation (1991) for *In Time*.

Kelly is the author of countless volumes of poetry, most published by Black Sparrow Press, his publisher since 1967. Recent volumes include *The Time of Voice: Poems 1994-1996*, *Runes*, and *The Garden of Distances*. He has also written several books of fiction, including *Cat Scratch Fever* and *Queen of Terrors*. His work is often anthologized and has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, German and Serbian.

## **DANI LEONE**

Dani "L.E." Leone lives in a shack in the coastal California redwoods, writes a popular weekly column on food and chicken farming for the San Francisco Bay Guardian, and makes and plays steel drums. Leone, a comic fixture in the West Coast music scene and literary landscape, has an MA in fiction writing from the University of New Hampshire, and is currently working on a creative nonfiction book about "his" transition to "herhood," set in burger joints and dive restaurants.

Publications include *The Meaning of Lunch* (short stories; Mammoth Books, 2000) and *Eat This, San Francisco* (creative nonfiction; Sasquatch Books, 1999). Leone's work has appeared in anthologies like *The Italian-American Reader* and *New Stories from the South: The Years Best* (both 1992 and 1993). Work has also appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *The Paris Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, and *the Quarterly*.

## **DAVID MATLIN**

Writer and cultural critic David Matlin teaches in the MFA program at San Diego State University and is the author of numerous works of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, including *How the Night Is Divided* (McPherson & Company, 1993), a novel (chosen by the National Book Critics Circle as one of the ten most notable books of the year), and *China Beach* (Station Hill Press, 1989), a collection of poems. He spent a decade teaching English in a Prison Education Program in upstate New York, an experience that informs his powerful indictment *Prisons: Inside the New America from Vernooyskill Creek to Abu Ghraib* (North Atlantic Books, 2005). His current work in progress weaves together writing in multiple genres (fiction, poetry, creative



nonfiction) and moves through multiple disciplines (history, politics, poetics, anthropology) to create an unusually rich description of American culture at the present moment.

### **STEVE TOMUSULA**

Tomasula holds a doctorate in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago and teaches in the program for writers at the University of Notre Dame. Incorporating narrative forms of all kinds—from comic books, travelogues, journalism or code to Hong Kong action movies or science reports—Tomasula's writing has been called a 'reinvention of the novel,' combining an 'attention to society in the tradition of Orwell, attention to language in the tradition of Beckett, and the humor of a Coover or Pynchon.' His writing often crosses visual, as well as written genres, drawing on science and the arts to take up themes of how we represent what we think we know, and how these representations shape our lives.

Publications include *The Book of Portraiture* (FC2), *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (Station Hill / University of Chicago Press), and *IN & OZ* (Ministry of Whimsy Press). His short fiction has appeared most recently in *The Iowa Review*, *Fiction International*, and *McSweeney's* and in many other publications. Recent criticism and essays are included in *Musing the Mosaic* (SUNY Press); *Data Made Flesh* (Routledge); *Leonardo* (M.I.T. Press); the *New Art Examiner*, and elsewhere. He co-edited the *Word & Image* issues of the electronic book review.

### **ROSANNA WARREN - Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar**

Rosanna Warren was born in Fairfield, Connecticut, in 1953. She earned a BA from Yale University in 1976, and an MA in 1980 from The Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University. She is the author of *Departure* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2003); *Stained Glass* (1993), which was named the Lamont Poetry Selection by the Academy of American Poets; *Each Leaf Shines Separate* (1984); and *Snow Day* (1981). She has also published a translation of Euripides's *Suppliant Women* (with Stephen Scully; Oxford, 1995) and edited several books, including *The Art of Translation: Voices from the Field* (Northeastern, 1989). Her awards include the Pushcart Prize, the Award of Merit in Poetry and the Witter Bynner Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the May Sarton Prize, the Lavan Younger Poets Award from the Academy of American Poets, the Ingram Merrill Foundation Award, the Ingram Merrill Grant for Poetry, a Lila Wallace Readers Digest Award, the Nation/"Discovery" Award, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies. In the fall of 2000, Warren was The New York Times Resident in Literature at the American Academy in Rome. She is a contributing editor of *Seneca Review* and the poetry editor of *Daedalus*. She is Emma MacLachlan Metcalf Professor of the Humanities at Boston University and lives in Roslindale, Massachusetts. In 1999 she was elected a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets.

## About the New Writing Series — A Brief History

The New Writing Series was formally inaugurated in the spring of 2000 when a proposal drafted by Steve Evans in consultation with Benjamin Friedlander and Burton Hatlen received unanimous approval from the English department's Speaker and Special Events Committee, then chaired by Welch Everman. In the fifteen semesters of its existence, it has served as an instrument for investigating the state of contemporary writing here in Maine, in the U.S. and Canada more broadly, and to some extent the world (Nigerian, Australian, Jamaican, English, Chilean, and other writers have come to Orono through the Series). The Series receives primary funding through the English Department's Lloyd H. Elliott fund and has received consistent administrative support from the National Poetry Foundation, matching funds through the Cultural Affairs Committee, and co-sponsorships from a wide variety of departments and programs (the Honors College, Art, Multicultural Programs, Women in the Curriculum, Wilde Stein, Modern Languages & Classics, and others).

The primary objectives of the New Writing Series are (i) to make contemporary poetry and fiction a valued part of the cultural life at the University of Maine, (ii) to broaden the University's local, national, and international reputation as a site of vibrant cultural exchange and creativity, and (iii) to cultivate links within the University as well as between the University and area secondary schools that foster imaginative approaches to thinking about contemporary literary practices. Whereas developing an audience for individual events can be difficult, a Series creates an ongoing context for the exploration of contemporary writing and signals a more serious level of commitment to the inclusion of the literary arts in the cultural repertoire of campus and community life.

Since 2000, the Series has hosted more than 100 events, featuring more than 140 writers, and it has earned a loyal local audience (typical event attendance ranges between 40 and 150 people) as well as a growing national reputation. Extended residencies by Robert Creeley (between 2000-2003) and Alice Notley (2004) have been coordinated in conjunction with the Series, as has a Libra Professorship that brought four African American poets—Jay Wright, Jayne Cortez, Lorenzo Thomas, and Amiri Baraka—to campus in 2001.

A Series weblog was created in the fall of 2006 and numerous materials of archival and pedagogical value (countless hours of sound recordings, videotapes of live readings, forty professional quality digital-video "Poet Profiles" of NWS participants) have been carefully gathered.