

11-21-2005

Spring 2006 New Writing Series

English Department

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

PROVIDE 10 (TEN) COPIES, INCLUDING THE ORIGINAL.
PLEASE PLACE A COPY OF THIS COVER SHEET ON TOP OF EACH COPY

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

- II. a. Responsible Organization Officer: Steve Evans
b. Title: Associate Professor of English, New Writing Series Coordinator
c. Campus Address (include EMail and Telephone): Steven.Evans@umit.maine.edu, 581-3809

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

New Writing Series • Spring 2006

Six events featuring seven contemporary writers: Pierre Joris, Mary Caponegro, Alison Bundy, Fred Wah, Carla Harryman, Hoa Nguyen & Dale Smith

Most events on Thursday afternoons at the Soderberg Auditorium. All events free & open to the public.

Expand in fuller detail, a supporting statement with detailed, itemized budget. Funding for current application is contingent upon submission of detailed budget and attendance report for any previous years' grants.

IV. a. Total funding required for program:	\$ 9,403
b. Amount committed by applicant organization:	\$ 3,903
c. Amount committed by Honors College	\$ 1,500
d. Amount requested from other funding sources	\$ 0
e. Amount requested of Cultural Affairs/DLS Committee:	\$ 4,000

Signature of responsible organization officer/date: _____

SIGNATURE

DATE



11/21/05

\$ 3000

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

21 November 2005

Dear Members of the Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the English Department and the National Poetry Foundation to seek the Committee's continued support of the New Writing Series.

The \$4,000 I am requesting for the spring term of 2006 represents less than one half of the Series' projected operating budget of \$9,403 (please see attached budget). The remainder of the required funding will be provided by the English Department, largely through the Lloyd H. Elliott fund, and by anticipated collaborations with the Honors College and the Canadian-American Center.

I have provided a detailed budget for the spring Series, along with brief biographical statements about the writers we would like to invite and a descriptive statement about the history and objectives of the New Writing Series. I have also appended a report on the successful fall 2005 Series.

The spring New Writing Series schedule features the internationally known poet, translator, and anthologist Pierre Joris. It also includes talented writers like Mary Caponegro, Alison Bundy, and Carla Harryman, all involved in exploring the boundaries between poetry and fiction. The Asian-Canadian poet Fred Wah is back on the schedule after being forced to cancel in the fall, as are Hoa Nguyen and Dale Smith.

The Series schedule was vetted by the English Department's Speakers and Special Events Committee prior to submission to your committee. It received unanimous support from that Committee and also has the approval of the Department Chair, Margaret Lukens.

In designing the spring schedule we have worked hard to keep honoraria low. We have also shifted our travel policy in light of the rising costs of flying people into Bangor International Airport. Our standard invitation for out of state, U.S.-based writers now speaks of covering "up to \$500 of travel expenses." We then work with writers to arrange for the least costly itineraries that can be identified. Accommodation expenses are estimated on the basis of a two-night stay at the University Inn near campus (between January and May, \$52 for a single, \$99 for a suite). In keeping with Cultural Affairs Committee policy, no meal or reception expenses are included in this budget.

In the event that one or more of the writers here proposed proves unable to accept our invitation, the New Writing Series will select a writer of comparable accomplishments to fill the slot in conformity with the budget outlined in this application, as has been our practice in the past.

If I can provide any further information to the Committee, I hope you will not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steve Evans', with a stylized, flowing script.

Steve Evans
Associate Professor of English
English Undergraduate Studies Coordinator
Coordinator of the New Writing Series
581-3809

BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON INVITED WRITERS

Pierre Joris - (suggested Honors College Collaboration)

Noted poet, prolific translator and editor. Professor at University of Albany. Poasis: Poems 1986-1999 published by Wesleyan in 2001. A Nomad Poetics: Essays published in 2003, also with Wesleyan. Co-editor of Poems for the Millennium (two volumes from the University of California). Translator of many poets, notably Paul Celan.

Carla Harryman - (suggested by Carla Billitteri)

Harryman, a native of California, is identified with the formation of the Bay Area language school of the 1970s and is widely acknowledged as an innovator in poetry, prose, and interdisciplinary performance works. Her work often addresses perspectives and politics of childhood. A 2004 recipient of the award in poetry from The Foundation for Contemporary Performing Arts, she is the author of twelve books, including, most recently, Gardener of Stars, an experimental novel (Atelos, 2001). Her most recent volume, Baby, was published by Adventures in Poetry in May of 2005.

Mary Caponegro - (suggested by David Kress)

Richard B. Fisher Family Professor in Literature and Writing at Bard. Contributing editor, Conjunctions. Author of four short story collections: Tales from the Next Village, The Star Café, Five Doubts, and The Complexities of Intimacy. Contributor to publications including Review of Contemporary Fiction, Epoch, Conjunctions, Sulfur, Gargoyle, and Iowa Review.

Alison Bundy - (Bangor born fiction writer carried over from earlier invitation)

Author of three books of prose: A Bad Business (Lost Roads Press), Tale of a Good Cook (paradigm press), and DunceCap (Burning Deck). She has also published in numerous journals. She lives in Providence, RI.

Fred Wah - (Asian Canadian poet carried over from fall 2005 invitation; potential collaboration with Can-Am Center)

Born in Swift Current, Saskatchewan in 1939, but he grew up in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia. He studied music and English literature at the University of British Columbia in the early 1960's where he was one of the founding editors of the poetry newsletter TISH. After graduate work in literature and linguistics at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and the State University of New York at Buffalo, he returned to the Kootenays in the late 1960's where he taught at Selkirk College and was the founding coordinator of the writing program at David Thompson University Centre. He now teaches at the

University of Calgary. He has been editorially involved with a number of literary magazines over the years, such as Open Letter and West Coast Line. He has published seventeen books of poetry. His book of prose-poems, *Waiting For Saskatchewan*, received the Governor-General's Award in 1986 and *So Far* was awarded the Stephanson Award for Poetry in 1992. *Diamond Grill*, a biofiction about hybridity and growing up in a small-town Chinese-Canadian cafe was published in 1996 and won the Howard O'Hagan Award for Short Fiction. He also critiques contemporary Canadian and American literature.

Hoa Nguyen & Dale Smith - (Austin based poets and editors carried over from fall 2005 invitation)

Hoa Nguyen lives in Austin, Texas where she teaches creative writing. She co-edits the magazine *Skanky Possum* (available from Small Press Distribution) with Dale Smith. Her work has appeared in various journals and in *An Anthology of New (American) Poets* (Talisman House, 1998). A chapbook, *Parrot Drum*, is from Leroy (2000), & *Your ancient see through* was published in 2002 by Subpress.

Dale Smith edits *Skanky Possum* with Hoa Nguyen. His poems, essays and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Poker*, *House Organ*, *Chicago Review* and *New American Writing*. Selections from his book *American Rambler* (2000) appeared in the *Best American Poetry 2002*. *The Flood and the Garden: A Daybook* (2002) was released by First Intensity and his election year contribution to both parties, *My Vote Counts (effing)*, was recently published to the scorn of Republicans and Democrats everywhere. He lives in Austin, Texas, and was born on the Day of the Dead, 1967.

About the New Writing Series

The New Writing Series was inaugurated in the spring of 2000 when a proposal by Steve Evans received unanimous formal approval from the department's Speaker and Special Events Committee, then chaired by Welch Everman. In the twelve 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 steady 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 90 events, featuring more than 120 writers, and it has earned a steady 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 website is in the works 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. While all modes and methods of writing fall within its ambit of curiosity, care is taken to ensure that writers whose work departs from, and perhaps even challenges, dominant commercial and aesthetic assumptions are given a fair hearing.

REPORT ON THE FALL 2005 NEW WRITING SERIES

The two events remaining in the fall 2005 New Writing Series involve creative writing faculty members who receive no additional compensation for their performance. It is therefore possible for me to present a report on that portion of the Series that received the Cultural Affairs Committee's generous support last spring.

The fall Series consisted of five events spotlighting seven writers. Average event attendance was very healthy at just above seventy, with a high of 105 for the lead-off reading by Joan Retallack and a low of forty-five for the event featuring the poets Peter Culley and David Perry. Both Harryette Mullen and Anne Waldman drew diverse audiences of seventy-five people or more. In addition to their public readings, all of the writers met with students and community members in a variety of settings.

While scheduling conflicts forced the postponement of visits by several of the writers discussed in the initial proposal, we were fortunate to be able to replace them with major figures such as Beat legend Anne Waldman and the African American poet Harryette Mullen (whose *Sleeping with the Dictionary* was a finalist for the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize).

As the appended spreadsheet shows, the total operating expenses for the fall Series came in at just under \$12,000 (excluding meals and reception expenses). External support from the Honors College and the Office of Multicultural Programs totaled \$2000. The Cultural Affairs Committee provided \$5000 and the English Department and National Poetry Foundation covered the remainder.

Documentation for the expenses summarized in the spreadsheet is available upon request.

*New Writing Series Spring 2006
Final Report to Cultural Affairs Committee
Submitted by Steve Evans on behalf of the New Writing Series*

In November of 2005, the New Writing Series requested \$4000 from the Cultural Affairs Committee in support of its spring 2006 programming. It was granted \$3000. The spring series, projected to consist of six events featuring seven writers, was reduced to five events featuring six writers in keeping with the reduction in funding.

The series opened on 23 February with a reading by the poet and dramatist Carla Harryman before an audience of 30 people in the Soderberg Auditorium. Asian-Canadian poet Fred Wah read before an audience of 35 people one month later on 23 March. Our Honors Odyssey event for the spring featured poet, translator, and anthologist Pierre Joris, who read to 110 people on 6 April. The experimental fiction writer Mary Caponegro read two stories to an audience of 40 people on 20 April. And the French poets and translators Emmanuel Hocquard and Juliette Valéry concluded the series with a bilingual reading before an audience of 40 people on 27 April.

In all, approximately 260 people attended New Writing Series readings in the spring of 2006 (an average of 52 per event). This number increases when class visits, talks, and related activities are factored in. Digital videotapes were used to document the formal events of the New Writing Series, thus extending the potential audience beyond the real-time events.

For the semester, the Series expended \$3,600 in honoraria, \$2128 in travel expenses, \$738 in accommodations, and \$585 in fixed expenses (publicity, event documentation), for a total of **\$7,051** (excluding \$404 in meal expenses). The Honors College contributed \$1,214 toward the Pierre Joris visit. The \$3000 in Cultural Affairs support was used principally in support of honoraria and travel expenses. The English Department funded the remaining \$3,541.

It should be noted that the fiction writer, translator, and MacArthur "genius grant" recipient Lydia Davis declined our invitation to read in the spring 2006 New Writing Series, citing the inadequacy of the honorarium we were able to offer. Our offer of \$1000 plus travel and local expenses were apparently well below her usual starting honorarium of \$3000 plus travel and all expenses. As we strive to incorporate fiction into our literary arts programming, similar responses to our very low honoraria are unfortunately to be expected.