

49TH ANNUAL ODU LITERARY FESTIVAL

Make Room for Wonder

ODU.EDU/LITFEST

OCT. 4-8, 2026



ODU MASTER OF FINE ARTS CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM

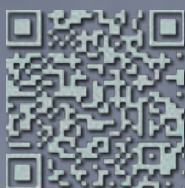
*Where great writers of the future connect
with the great writers of our time.*

We read because we wonder about ourselves: who would I have been in that body, that country, that century, and what would I have done when the soldiers came, or the diagnosis, or the flood. Wonder is also the astonishment when a book answers. This festival, the longest-running in the United States, has been making room for both since 1978, when it began as an Arts Reunion built on the premise that “every person is potentially an artist.” Forty-eight years later the premise holds. Five days of readings and conversation, free and open, everyone welcome.

The theme is drawn from a line in “On Learning to Dissect Fetal Pigs,” the poem by Renée Good (1988–2026) that won the 2020 Academy of American Poets Prize at Old Dominion University. We dedicate this festival to her memory.

—John McManus and Michael Weber
Co-directors, 49th Annual ODU Literary Festival

ROOM TO WONDER: A GAME JAM



Room to Wonder is a competitive, literary-themed game jam hosted by the Monarch Institute for Game Design and Development. Participants have two weeks to design story-based games that correspond to the theme of the game jam. Prizes will be awarded for the best games in each category. For more information or to sign up, visit: <https://itch.io/jam/room-to-wonder>.



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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

SUNDAY, OCT. 4

4:00 P.M. Opening Reception, *The Green Onion*, 1603 Colley Ave.

MONDAY, OCT. 5

2:00 P.M. Local Authors Reading: Nicole Glover and Kimbra Drake, *University Theatre*.

4:00 P.M. Professors Emeriti Reading: Joe Jackson and Michael Patrick Pearson, *University Theatre*.

7:00 P.M. Edith & Forrest P. White Writer-in-Residence Reading: Hanif Abdurraquib, *University Theatre*.

TUESDAY, OCT. 6

12:00 P.M. Workshop: Coptic Bookbinding with Luisa A. Igloria, *MPark*, BAL 9024.

2:00 P.M. M.F.A. Faculty Reading: Jane Alberdeston and Julia Johnson, *University Theatre*.

4:00 P.M. Scott McClanahan, *University Theatre*.

6:00 P.M. Reception in honor of Chris Adrian, *EVMS: Lester Hall lobby*.

7:00 P.M. Chris Adrian, *EVMS: Lester Hall, Room 135*.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 7

10:00 A.M. Workshop: Narrative Medicine with Chris Adrian, *EVMS: Waitzer Hall, Room 133*.

12:00 P.M. Bread + Puppet Theater: Sculpture in Action, Curator's Tour with Jasper Waugh-Quasebarth, *The Baron and Ellin Gordon Art Galleries*.

2:00 P.M. Virginia Poetry Database Reading: Lesley Wheeler, Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, and Luz Schweig, *ODU Perry Library*.

5:00 P.M. Screening from Naro Video @ ODU Libraries: *Once*, *The Slover Library*, 235 E Plume St.

7:00 P.M. Siobhan Fallon, *The Slover Library*, Community Engagement Room 650, 235 E Plume St.

THURSDAY, OCT. 8

12:30 P.M. Workshop: A Conversation on Craft with Mecca Jamilah Sullivan, *Burgess Room*, BAL 9024.

2:00 P.M. Alumni Reading: Emma Comery, Bob Kunzinger, Richard Leise, and Caleb True, *University Theatre*.

4:00 P.M. Launch Party for Brackish Waters & Constellate anthologies, *ODU Perry Library*.

6:00 P.M. Room to Wonder: A Game Jam, *Monarch Hall*, Room 2116.

7:00 P.M. Mecca Jamilah Sullivan, *University Theatre*.

Presenter Bios



HANIF ABDURRAQIB is a poet, essayist, and cultural critic from Columbus, Ohio. His poetry has been published in *Muzzle*, *Vinyl*, *PEN American*, and various other journals. His essays and music criticism have been published in *The FADER*, *Pitchfork*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*. He is a recipient of the MacArthur Foundation "Genius" grant and the author of *There's Always This Year*, a *New York Times* bestseller and winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award; *A Little Devil in America*, winner of the Carnegie Medal and a National Book Award finalist; *The Crown Ain't Worth Much*; *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us*; *Go Ahead in the Rain*; and *A Fortune for Your Disaster*, winner of the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. He is a graduate of Beechcroft High School.



CHRIS ADRIAN is the author of four novels: *Gob's Grief* (2000), *The Children's Hospital* (2006), *The Great Night* (2011), and *The New World* (2014). In 2008, he published *A Better Angel*, a collection of short stories. His short fiction has also appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Zoetrope*, *Ploughshares*, *McSweeney's*, *The New Yorker*, *The Best American Short Stories*, and *Story*. Adrian completed his Bachelor's degree in English from the University of Florida in 1993. He received his M.D. from Eastern Virginia Medical School in 2001.



JANE ALBERDESTON teaches creative writing at Old Dominion University. Her work is published in various anthologies and journals, such as *Callaloo*, *Hanging Loose Magazine*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Sargasso: A Journal of Caribbean Literature*, *Skinny Poetry Review*, *The Acentos Review*, *Rock and Sling: A Journal of Witness*, *Louisiana Literature Review*, among others. Her post-apocalyptic novel, *Colony 51*, is soon to be released by Jade Ibis Press. In 2025 she was the recipient of the Robin L. Hixon Award for her critical research on third-spaces in contemporary Puerto Rican poetry. Currently, she is developing a new speculative novel.



EMMA COMERY is a multidisciplinary writer and the recipient of the Cantrell Poetry Prize and the Col. Darron L. Wright Memorial Writing Award. Her work has appeared on *Poets.org* and in *Arts & Letters Journal*, *Line of Advance*, *The Bend Magazine*, and *Military Families Magazine*. *Have You Landed? Military Love Stories In Essays* is her debut essay collection.



KIMBRA DRAKE is the acclaimed author of *Where the Heart Meets the Sea*, creating emotional, character-driven narratives centered on heritage, healing, and northern European landscapes. She is also a certified book coach and developmental editor. She lives and writes in Virginia and Ireland. When not crafting stories, some of her passions include traveling, hiking in nature, photography, and watching gigs and readings at indie bookstores. *Where the Heart Meets the Sea* is currently being developed as a feature film with producer, writer, and actress Hélène Cardona. The novel is inspired by Kimbra's time living in Lyngør, Norway.



SIOBHAN FALLON is the author of the PEN Center USA Literary Fiction Award-winning short story collection, *You Know When the Men Are Gone*, which was a Best Book Pick of 2011 by *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Public Library*, *Self Magazine*, and *The New York Times*, as well as the novel, *The Confusion of Languages*. Siobhan's essays and stories have been featured in *The New York Times Modern Love*, *Washington Post Magazine*, *NPR's Morning Edition*, *Woman's Day*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Stars and Stripes*, *The Huffington Post*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Guernica*, the anthology *Fire & Forget: Short Stories from the Long War*, among others. Her current work is inspired by real events and explores the many controversies surrounding the Battle of the Little Bighorn. As a woman and Army spouse, she tackles unique perspectives of this violent chapter in American history.



NICOLE GLOVER is the author of the acclaimed historical fantasy series, *Murder and Magic*, which includes *The Starseekers*. Her books have received rave starred reviews for their unique blend of mystery, history, and fantasy and have been featured in *NPR*, *En Forme*, and *The Virginian-Pilot*. She's been a Library Reads pick, made the *Locus* bestseller list, and most recently won The Webster Award. She lives and works in Virginia plotting her next fictional murder.



LUISA A. IGLORIA is a poet, essayist, translator, and bookbinder with a growing interest in watercolor and collage. She is the author of *Caulbearer* (Immigrant Writing Series Prize, Black Lawrence Press; 2024), *Maps for Migrants and Ghosts* (Co-Winner, 2019 Crab Orchard Open Poetry Prize) (Southern Illinois University Press, 2020), *The Buddha Wonders if She is Having a Mid-Life Crisis* (Phoenicia Publishing, Montreal, 2018), twelve other books, and four chapbooks. She was the inaugural recipient of the 2015 Resurgence Poetry Prize, UK—the world's first major award for ecopoetry (now known as the Ginkgo Prize). She is lead editor of the ecopoetry anthology *The Nature of Our Times* (Paloma Press, 2025) and lead editor of *Dear Human at the Edge of Time* (Paloma Press, September 2023). Luisa is Eminent Scholar and Louis I. Jaffe Professor of English and Creative Writing in the M.F.A. Program at Old Dominion University. During her term as 20th Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia (2020–22), Emerita, the Academy of American Poets awarded her one of twenty-three Poet Laureate Fellowships in 2021. Her website is www.luisaigloria.com.



JOE JACKSON is the author of seven works of nonfiction and a novel. His last work, *Black Elk: The Life of an American Visionary*, was released by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in 2016 and chronicles the life of Oglala Lakota holy man Black Elk, best known for his 1932 *Black Elk Speaks*. The biography received the following honors: Winner of the PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography; Winner of the Society of American Historians' Francis Parkman Award; Best Biography of 2016, *True West* magazine; Winner of the Western Writers of America 2017 Spur Award, Best Western Biography; Finalist, National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography; and One of the Best Books of 2016 from *The Boston Globe*. He has been the writer-in-residence at the James Thurber House and the Mina Hohenberg Darden Endowed Professor of Creative Writing in the M.F.A. in Creative Writing program at Old Dominion University. His newest book, *Splendid Liberators*, was released by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in October 2025. His website is www.joejacksonbooks.com.



JULIA JOHNSON grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana. She received her B.A. from Hollins College and her M.F.A. from the University of Virginia, where she was a Henry Hoyns Fellow. She is the author of the poetry collections *Subsidence*, *The Falling Horse*, and *Naming the Afternoon*. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Tin House*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Poetry International*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology*, *Conduit*, *Smartish Pace*, *Sixth Finch*, *The Afterlives of the New York School of Poets: An Anthology*, and numerous other journals and anthologies. She edited the collection *New and Collected Poems of Jane Gentry Vance* and served as editor of *The Mississippi Review*, including a special issue, *The Prose Poem*, and 30: *The Mississippi Review*, an anthology marking the journal's thirty years of publication. Johnson was Professor of English at the University of Kentucky, where she founded and directed the M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program and served as Director of the Creative Writing Division.



CAROLYN KREITER-FORONDA served as Poet Laureate of Virginia from 2006–2008. She has co-edited three anthologies, co-authored a poem-play, and published nine books of poetry, including *The Embrace: Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo*, winner of the international Art in Literature: The Mary Lynn Kotz Award. She is the recipient of five grants from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and has won the Ellen Anderson Award, a Virginia Cultural Laureate Award, first place awards from the Chesapeake Bay Branch of the National League of American Pen Women, a resolution of appreciation from the Virginia Board of Education, an Edgar Allan Poe Poetry Award, six Pushcart Prize nominations, as well as other awards. Her poems, along with those of other Virginia poets laureate, are featured in two permanent art installations in Northern Virginia as part of the Washington Metropolitan Area Authority, Art in Transit. Her poem, "In the Comfort of Light," is included in *The Polaris Anthology*, which landed on the Moon on March 2, 2025, on the Firefly Blue Ghost Lunar Lander.



BOB KUNZINGER is the author of twelve volumes of non-fiction, including the recent memoir, *Curious Men: Lost in the Congo*. His work includes the critically acclaimed *The Iron Scar: A Father and Son in Siberia*, *A Third Place*, and *Penance*, and has been celebrated by authors Tim O'Brien and Sharon Dilworth, S.E. Hinton, actor/author Martin Sheen, Jackie Lyden of NPR, *Yahoo Entertainment* and more. His essays have appeared in many publications, and several have been noted by *Best American Essays*. He has taught English, Humanities, Art, and Creative Writing in Hampton Roads since 1989, and is currently an adjunct professor in the English department at Old Dominion University. He lives on the Middle Peninsula.



RICHARD LEISE writes and teaches outside Ithaca, NY. A Perry Morgan Fellow from Old Dominion University's M.F.A. program, and recipient of the David Scott Sutelán Memorial Scholarship, his fiction and poetry is featured in numerous publications. His debut novel, *Being Dead*, was published Fall 2023.



SCOTT McCLANAHAN is the author of *Crapalachia*, *The Sarah Book*, *Fights!*, and the *Stories of Scott McClanahan*. He lives in West Virginia.



MICHAEL PATRICK PEARSON was, for many years, a professor of creative writing and literature in Virginia. He has published essays and reviews in *The Boston Globe*, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Southern Literary Journal*, *Shenandoah Review*, *Chautauqua*, *The Morning News*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *The New York Journal of Books*, and others. He is the author of many books, among them *Imagined Places: Journeys into Literary America* (1991, a *New York Times* Notable Book), *Dreaming of Columbus: A Boyhood in the Bronx* (1999), *Shohola Falls* (2003), and *Innocents Abroad Too* (2008). His new book, about the nature of pilgrimage in the modern world, *The Road to Croagh Patrick*, follows his journeys in America and Europe. Willie Morris, the former editor of *Harper's Magazine*, said, "Michael Pearson is one of our nation's finest memoirists."



LUZ SCHWEIG (she/her/ella) is the editor of the award-winning *Somos Xicanas* anthology which sparked a revival of published work by Xicana/Mexican American women. Her poetry collection *The Half That Runs* (Mouthfeel Press, March 2026), was selected by Juan Felipe Herrera as first runner-up for the 2024 Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize. Luz was raised in Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and now lives by the Powhatan River, on occupied Tsenacommacah territory.



MECCA JAMILAH SULLIVAN, Ph.D., is the author of three books: *Big Girl*, a *New York Times* Editors' Choice and winner of the Balcones Fiction Prize and the Next Generation Indie Book Award for First Novel; *The Poetics of Difference: Queer Feminist Forms in the African Diaspora*, winner of the William Sanders Scarborough Prize from the MLA; and the short story collection, *Blue Talk and Love*, winner of the Judith Markowitz Award from Lambda Literary. She holds a Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Pennsylvania, an M.A. in English and Creative Writing from Temple University, and a B.A. in Afro-American Studies from Smith College. Mecca is Professor of English at Georgetown University, where she teaches courses in African American poetry and poetics, Black queer and feminist literatures, and creative writing. She lives in Washington, D.C.



CALEB TRUE is a writer, editor, critic, musician, and podcaster. He holds an M.A. in History from the University of Massachusetts and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Old Dominion University. He is the author of the novel *RANA* (University of Tampa Press, forthcoming Fall 2026), *On Ruben Slikk: A Manifesto on the Purpose of Art and the Value of Transgression* (Dynamo Verlag, 2024), and *Chansons Russes* (Quetzalcoatl, 2016), a historical triptych of stories set in Soviet Russia. He has published short stories and essays in the *Sonora Review*, *Faultline*, *Yemassee*, *Whiskey Island*, and many others. He is the founder and managing editor of Dynamo Verlag (est. 2015), a boutique publishing house specializing in textual work demonstrating genius, eclecticism, and originality.



JASPER WAUGH-QUASEBARTH is Director and Curator of the Gordon Art Galleries at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. His work has appeared in publications of the *Smithsonian Institution*, *The American Anthropological Association*, *The American Folklore Society*, *The University of Illinois Press*, *The University of Indiana Press*, *West Virginia University Press*, and *Cambridge University*. His 2023 book *Finding the Singing Spruce: Musical Instrument Makers and Appalachia's Mountain Forests* (West Virginia University Press) was a finalist for the Weatherford Book Award for Best Nonfiction book about Appalachia.



LESLEY WHEELER, Poetry Editor of *Shenandoah*, is the author of six poetry collections, most recently *Mycocosmic*, which appeared on *Lit Hub's* list of Notable Indie Books of 2025. Her other books include the hybrid memoir *Poetry's Possible Worlds* and the novel *Unbecoming*. Wheeler's work has received support from the Fulbright Foundation, Bread Loaf Environmental Writers, and the Sewanee Writers Workshop; their poems and essays have appeared in *Poets & Writers*, *Orion*, *Poetry*, *Ecotone*, and *Massachusetts Review*. She teaches in Lexington, Virginia.

READINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY.

The Old Dominion University Annual Literary Festival is the premier event of our M.F.A. Program in Creative Writing and one of the many reasons to study the writer's craft with us at ODU. Learn more at odu.edu/mfa. For more information, go to odu.edu/litfest or email mfagpdassistant@odu.edu. Follow the Literary Festival on Facebook @ODULitFest and on Instagram @olddominionmfa.

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