

2025 Year-Long Creative Nonfiction Writing Project

The Loft Literary Center

Project Leader: Sun Yung Shin

Via Zoom | all times listed in US Central Time

Year-Long Creative Nonfiction Project Schedule - January 2025 Start Cohort

Meeting dates

(Calendar is subject to adjustment; specific class dates listed after the workshop description)

YLWP Access Funds Application Window

October 1-November 15, 2024

Loft Access Fund committee chooses top 2-4 candidates; TA ranks recipient and runner-up

Year-Long Writing Project Orientation

Wednesday, January 29, 2025 | 6–7:30 p.m

Online/Zoom

Year-Long Writing Project Registration

November 6 for friends; November 7 for general public

10:00 AM Central Time via website, phone, or email

Final Reading:

Tuesday, January 6, 2026 | 7-8:30 PM

[Cohort Dates](#)

Winter/Spring Term 2025 | 6-9 CST | 12 meetings

Monday, February 3, 2025

Monday, February 10, 2025

Monday, February 17, 2025

Monday, February 24, 2025

Monday, March 03, 2025

Monday, March 17, 2025

Monday, March 24, 2025

Monday, March 31, 2025

Monday, April 07, 2025

Monday, April 14, 2025

Monday, April 21, 2025

Monday, April 28, 2025

Note: No meetings scheduled in May (students are expected to do independent study during this time with ***one-on-one meetings at the beginning and end of the summer***)

Summer Term 2025 | Mondays at 6-9 PM CST | Saturdays at 10 AM-12 PM CST | 8 meetings

1. Monday, June 9, 2025

2. Monday, June 16, 2025

Skip June 30 (office closed)

3. Monday, July 14, 2025

4. Monday, July 28, 2025

5. Saturday, August 2, 2025

6. Monday, August 11, 2025

7. Saturday, August 16, 2025

8. Monday, August 25, 2025

Note: No meetings scheduled in August 16-September 15, 2025 (students are expected to do independent study during this time with one-on-one meetings at the beginning and end of the summer)

Fall Term 2025 | Mondays at 6-9 PM CST | 12 meetings

Monday, September 15, 2025
Monday, September 22, 2025
Monday, September 29, 2025
Monday, October 6, 2025
Monday, October 13, 2025
Monday, October 20, 2025
Monday, October 27, 2025
Monday, November 3, 2025
Monday, November 10, 2025
Monday, November 17, 2025
Skip Nov 24 (no classes that holiday week)
Monday, December 1, 2025
Monday, December 8, 2025

Course Description

Join me to follow that inner voice that says it's time for you to write your book manuscript! Creativity needs support, skills, and containers in order to fulfill its potential. If you are ready to spend time giving shape to your stories and ideas—with a supportive, knowledgeable mentor, and a friendly community of like-minded people—then this is the project for you.

No matter the goals of your project, you will be supported in writing based on a mixture of personal and collective memory and research that may include reportage, interviews, archival ephemera and more. We will learn and make use of many of the artistic craft techniques that fiction writers and poets have been using since the beginning of oral language—and that continue to evolve in exciting ways in our time.

You will greatly expand your “toolbox” of writing skills in this writing “makeshop.” We will focus on freely and adventurously generating material on the page as we learn how to think about and use types of memory, types of time, storytelling structure, archetypes, and much more.

The project will be responsive to *your* individual goals! Throughout the year, there will be the right amount of time for your questions and considerations, both during group meetings and in 1x1 meetings with your mentor.

Once the project begins, we will dig in and write from prompts and models during every meeting. We will study the work of a wide variety of successful and compelling contemporary published writers.

Through reading, writing, discussion, lecture, workshopping, and revision, you will have the opportunity to define your project's purpose, discover your audience, and develop (more) craft skills: POV, structure, exposition, scene, sequel, characterization, imagery, mood, pacing, setting, dialogue, interiority, rhythm, style, revision, and much more. Your instructor always uses teaching tools such as slide presentations, visuals, videos, worksheets, and shares all documents with you.

We will be visited by thoughtful and engaging authors, agents, and publishing professionals to learn from their insights regarding living the writer's life by sustaining a creative practice amid life's many non-art demands, plus develop a deeper understanding of how writers pursue publishing in today's various markets.

Syllabus

Workshop Structure

We will engage in two workshops of each student's work during winter/spring term and again during fall term. During summer term, we will spend less time in class. Most of your time during the summer will be spent working on the bulk of your manuscript. I encourage you to meet in pairs or small groups outside of class to give each other support and feedback. Each student will also have at least one conference with the instructor during the summer.

FEEDBACK/COMMENTS ON STUDENT WORK

In preparation for student workshops you will all read each other's manuscripts and provide a written critique. Learning to offer descriptive feedback to your peers' work is a key part of being in a writing community; it also enables you to see your

own work more clearly. I will provide worksheets to help us with our workshops. We will have ongoing discussions on providing useful feedback, and Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew, author of *Living Revision* will visit our class for a workshop on revision.

FINAL REVISION

A complete revision of 100-300 pages of material written over the course of the year is due to me at our final class meeting on December 14. This should be a significant revision of the work submitted for workshops throughout the course. These pages should be polished enough that you could submit them for publication if you chose to. The teaching mentor will read and provide written and verbal feedback on the manuscript pages turned in on December 14 (not to exceed 300 double spaced pages or approximately 90,000 words); whatever is turned in on this date is the final submission. No late submissions of more pages will be accepted. The final one to one meeting to discuss this final critique will take place no later than February 28, 2026, and will be scheduled according to student and teaching mentor convenience.

Cohort Meetings/Discussion Etiquette

You've done your reading and understand it or have interesting questions about it. You don't dominate our discussions, but contribute in relevant ways. You're respectful to your peers. You're a good listener. You don't take up all the oxygen in the room. You respect the work in front of you, and think less about your immediate emotional response to it than about how it works, and why the writer created it in the form s/he/they did.

A Note About Difficult Material

Writers write about what haunts them. They write about their wounds. They write about difficult and controversial issues. Some of the material you'll be reading in class (assigned reading and classmate's work) may cause distress for some readers, especially if you are a trauma survivor. If this applies to you, please do what you can to take care of yourself so that you can engage effectively with course material and participate in class. If you need to skip a reading assignment and/or step outside during a discussion or the reading of someone's work, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may do so without penalty but you should talk with me about how to make up the time and/or material. If you work with a

therapist, by all means contact them. You may also want to consider the Loft's Resource List.

Confidentiality Agreement

This class is built upon the shared expectation of trust and respect. An essential aspect of the course is the ability to share works-in-progress, thoughtful criticism, and new ideas in an open manner for constructive feedback and assessment. Candid exchange is premised upon an understanding that the ideas and materials will not be disseminated beyond the confines of our classroom. In addition, pre-publication use of another classmate's work could harm the potential for that work, even if such use was otherwise protected by copyright fair use. To protect the integrity of the course and the ability of students to submit their ideas and materials, students may not directly or indirectly disclose, disseminate, publish, or use the ideas, materials, submissions of any other student submitted as part of this course other than in classroom discussion, assignments, or on closed classroom discussions.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

In keeping with the Loft's mission and values, this class will be an inclusive learning community, respecting differing backgrounds and beliefs. As a community, we will be respectful to all citizens in this class, regardless of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity or gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, marital or parental status, status with regard to public assistance, or veteran status. In addition, we will gladly honor any requests to address you by an alternate name. Please feel free to share the appropriate pronoun that you would like the class to use when referring to you. Through my teaching and the content of this course, I aim to affirm people of all gender expressions and gender identities.

CNF/Memoir Writing Project Books

Participants will be assigned four recent memoirs or longform creative nonfiction works to read and learn from throughout the year:

- *The Body Papers* by Grace Talusan, Restless Books, 2019, 272 pages
- *Crazy Brave* by Joy Harjo, W.W. Norton, 2012, 173 pages
- *The Late Homecomer* by Kao Kalia Yang, Coffee House Press, Second Edition, 2012, 312 pages

- *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon, Scribner, First Edition, 2018, 248 pages

CNF/Memoir Writing Project Visiting Guests

Throughout the year, 4–6 visiting writers and publishing professionals will meet with your cohort as special guests (**subject to change**):

- Kao Kalia Yang, memoirist, novelist, children's book author, anthology editor
- Michael Kleber-Diggs, memoirist, essayist, critic, and poet
- Shannon Gibney, memoirist, novelist, children's book author, anthology editor, and scholar
- Jennifer Thompson, literary agent

Updated Bio (if needed)

Sun Yung Shin is a Korean-born creative nonfiction writer, freelance arts journalist, fiction writer, poet, editor, and children's book author. She is the author of the new experimental poetry/prose book *Six Tones of Water* co-authored with Vi Khi Nao; *The Wet Hex*, which won the Society of Midland Author's Award in Poetry and was a finalist for a 2023 Minnesota Book Award; *Unbearable Splendor*, a book of essays/poems which won a Minnesota Book Award in 2017; and two other acclaimed books of poetry. She is the editor/co-editor of three anthologies of essays including *What We Hunger For: Refugee and Immigrant Stories on Food and Family* (2021); *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota* (2016); and *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption* (2006/2021). She is also the author of two illustrated books for children—most recently the co-authored *Where We Come From*, a finalist for the 2022 Minnesota Book Award. She has been awarded fellowships from the Bush Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and the MacDowell Foundation, as well as an Asian American Literary Award. Forthcoming books include a picture book about legendary Detroit civil rights activists James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs, and other projects. She has been teaching creative writing in community spaces, public school, and colleges and universities for two decades; with poet Su Hwang she is the co-founder of Poetry Asylum. She lives in Minneapolis with her family.