

eighth annual  
 spring  
*Literary Festival*  
 March 22  
 – March 25  
 '10



## About the Festival

Western Carolina University's Visiting Writers Series, the oldest such series in North Carolina, has a long tradition of bringing the best of both established and emerging literary talent to the mountains of Western North Carolina. Over the years, the series has hosted such distinguished regional writers as Fred Chappell, Lee Smith, Kathryn Stripling Byer, and R.T. Smith; well-known American writers Pat Conroy, Li-Young Lee, Thomas Lux, Linda Hogan, Carolyn Chute, Leslie Silko, Ntozake Shange, Karen Shepard, Luis Rodriguez, Maxine Kumin, Sherman Alexie, and Clifton Taulbert; as well as internationally renowned authors such as Eavan Boland, Miroslav Holub, and Welsh poets Menna Elfyn, Iwan Llwyd, and Nigel Jenkins.

For the past several years, WCU's Visiting Writers Series; the Visiting Scholars Fund; the English Department; the Lectures, Concerts, and Exhibition Series; and the Office of the Chancellor have sponsored the Spring Literary Festival. The festival reflects Western's commitment to providing the best humanities education possible to its students and to bringing the best of the arts to the mountains.

**All events are free and open to the public.**  
**Authors will sign works after each reading.**

## Getting Here

Western Carolina University is located in the scenic mountains of Cullowhee, N.C. For directions to campus, go online to [www.wcu.edu/directions.html](http://www.wcu.edu/directions.html). For a downloadable map of the WCU campus, go online to [www.wcu.edu/546.asp](http://www.wcu.edu/546.asp). All events of the literary festival except Thursday's reading with Patricia Smith take place in the theater of WCU's University Center (#31 on the campus map).

At WCU's main entrance, stay in the left lane to drive left around the traffic circle. Take Memorial Drive, and look for parking behind the University Center (#31 on the campus map).

The University Center theater is on the third floor of the UC (one flight up if you enter the center from Memorial Drive, two if you enter the building from the center of campus).

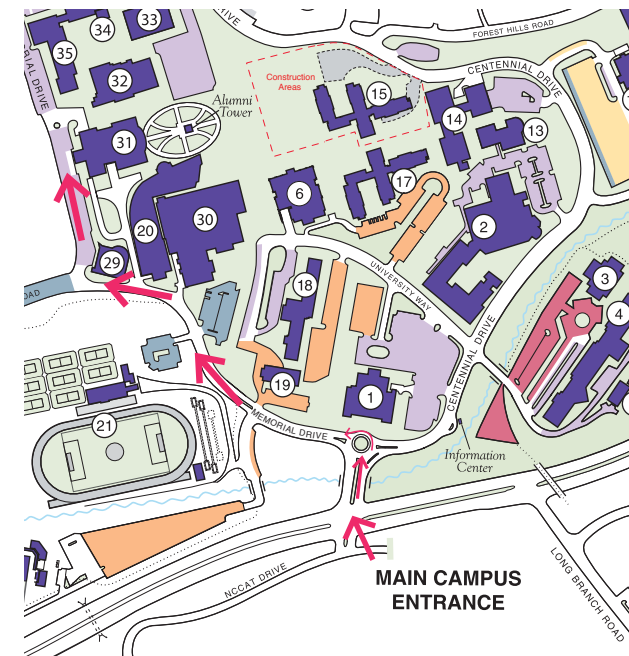
Thursday evening's festival event, the reading with Smith, will take place in Coulter Auditorium (#32 on the campus map), on the second floor of Coulter or street level if you enter from Memorial Drive.

## Parking

Visitors may park in student or faculty/staff spaces (marked with white or yellow) that are not designated as a special-use space, reserved space, handicapped space, loading zone, etc. Though visitors sometimes have trouble parking near the University Center and Coulter, they may find spots near the Ramsey Regional Activity Center (#9 on campus map, not shown) and the Fine Arts Center (#2 on campus map). Cat-Tran, a shuttle bus to the center of campus, stops every 15 minutes at outlying parking areas. Find a shuttle map online at [www.wcu.edu/9018.asp](http://www.wcu.edu/9018.asp).

University Police do not ticket for evening events, but they do occasionally ticket for daytime events. Visitors who receive a parking citation for no registration may have it waived by filling out the back of the citation and bringing it to the English Office or a Lit Festival staff person or by mailing it to the Traffic Office.

## WCU campus map



On the cover – Herman Goustin, American, 1923-1997. "Frames", black and white photograph, Circa 1970s Collection of Fine Art Museum, Western Carolina University Gift of the Herman Goustin Estate.

# Featured Writers

All programs in the University Center Theater except \*Patricia Smith, Coulter Auditorium\*

www.LitFestival.org

## Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poets | Monday, March 22 – 12 p.m.

Catherine Carter, Distinguished Poet for the western region, presents the work of three emerging poets. The Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet Series supports the mission of the North Carolina Poetry Society to foster the reading, writing, and enjoyment of poetry across the state. Three Distinguished Poets, one each from the east, central, and west regions of North Carolina, mentor a middle-school, a high-school, and a college or university student.



## John Amen | Monday, March 22 – 4 p.m.



John Amen is the author of three collections of poetry: *Christening the Dancer* (Uccelli Press 2003), *More of Me Disappears* (Cross-Cultural Communications 2005), and *At the Threshold of Alchemy* (Presa 2009), and he has released two folk/folk rock CDs, *All I'll Never Need* and *Ridiculous Empire* (Cool Midget 2004, 2008). He founded and continues to edit the award-winning literary bimonthly, *The Pedestal Magazine* (www.thepedestalmagazine.com).

## Susan Davis | Monday, March 22 – 4 p.m.

Susan Davis was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan and graduated from Reed College in Portland, Oregon and the creative writing program at The University of Houston in Texas. Her poetry has been featured in several literary journals, including *The Paris Review*, *The Antioch Review*, and *The Boston Review* and on National Public Radio. She is the author of the poetry collection *Gathering Sound* (Fairweather Books 2006). She is the co-editor with Gina Hyams of the anthology *Searching for Mary Poppins: Women Writers on the Intense Relationship Between Mothers and Nannies in America* (Hudson Street Press 2006), and a contributor to the anthology *My Father Married Your Mother: Writers Talk about Stepparents, Stepchildren, and Everyone in Between* (Norton 2006), and *About Face: Women Write about What They See When They Look in the Mirror* (Seal Press 2008). She has had a long career in public radio, working for Marketplace and NPR. Currently, she is the senior producer of *The State of Things* on North Carolina Public Radio WUNC.



## Carole Boston Weatherford | Monday, March 22 – 4 p.m.

*New York Times* best-selling author Carole Boston Weatherford has thirty-five books of poetry, nonfiction, and children's literature, including *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom*, winner of an NAACP Image Award, Caldecott Honor Medal, and Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration. *Becoming Billie Holiday* and *Before John Was a Jazz Giant* both won Coretta Scott King Honors; *Birmingham, 1963* won the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award and the Jefferson Cup; *The Sound that Jazz Makes* won the Carter G. Woodson Award from National Council for the Social Studies; and *Remember the Bridge: Poems of a People* and *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-ins* both won North Carolina Juvenile Literature Awards. Her books have been short-listed by the International Reading Association, National Council for the Social Studies, and Bank Street College of Education and have been named best books of the year by the American Library Association, *School Library Journal*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and New York Public Library. Weatherford teaches at Fayetteville State University.



## Jill McCorkle | Monday, March 22 – 7:30 p.m.

Jill McCorkle is a professor in the creative writing program at N.C. State. A member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, McCorkle has the distinction of having published her first two novels on the same day in 1984. Since then, she has published three other novels and three collections of short stories. Five of her eight books, which include *The Cheer Leader*, *July 7th*, *Tending to Virginia*, *Ferris Beach*, *Carolina Moon*, *Going Away Shoes*, *Crash Diet*, and *Final Vinyl Days*, have been named *New York Times* notable books. Her award-winning fiction has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Ploughshares*, *Oxford American*, *Southern Review*, and *Bomb Magazine*, among others. Her story "Intervention" is in the



most recent edition of the *Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*. McCorkle has received the New England Book Award, The John Dos Passos Prize for Excellence in Literature, and the North Carolina Award for Literature. Aside from published fiction, her essays and reviews have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Washington Post*, *The News & Observer*, *Southern Living*, *Real Simple*, and *the American Scholar*.

## Silas House | Tuesday, March 23 – 4 p.m.

Silas House is the author of three novels: *Clay's Quilt*, *A Parchment of Leaves*, and *The Coal Tattoo*; a play, *The Hurting Part*; and *Something's Rising*, a creative nonfiction book about social protest co-authored with Jason Howard. His fourth novel, *Eli the Good*, was published in fall 2009 by Candlewick Books. A new play, *Long Time Traveling*, premiered in April 2009. House serves as Writer-in-Residence at Lincoln Memorial University, where he also directs the Mountain Heritage Literary Festival. He is a contributing editor for *No Depression* magazine, where he has done long features on such artists as Lucinda Williams, Nickel Creek, Buddy Miller, Kelly Willis, Darrell Scott, Delbert McClinton, and many others. He is also one of Nashville's most in-demand



press kit writers, having written the press kit bios for such artists as Kris Kristofferson, Kathy Mattea, and Leann Womack. House is a two-time finalist for the Southern Book Critics Circle Prize, a two-time winner of the Kentucky Novel of the Year, the Appalachian Book of the Year, the Chaffin Prize for Literature, the Award for Special Achievement from the Fellowship of Southern Writers, and many other honors.

## Dennis Covington | Tuesday, March 23 – 7:30 p.m.

Dennis Covington is the author of five books, including the novel *Lizard* and the memoir *Salvation on Sand Mountain*, which was a finalist for the 1995 National Book Award. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, *Vogue*, *Esquire*, *Redbook*, *Georgia Review*, *Oxford American*, and many other periodicals. It has been widely anthologized in this country and translated into eight languages abroad. His most recent book is *Redneck Riviera: Armadillos, Outlaws, and the Demise of an American Dream*. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, he currently makes his home on the high plains of west Texas, where he teaches in the creative writing program at Texas Tech University.



## Cleopatra Mathis | Wednesday, March 24 – 4 p.m.



Cleopatra Mathis was born and raised in Ruston, Louisiana, of Greek and Cherokee descent. Her first five books of poems were published by Sheep Meadow Press. A sixth collection, *White Sea*, finalist for the Texas Institute of Letters Award, was published by Sarabande Books in 2005. Cleopatra Mathis's work has appeared widely in anthologies, textbooks, magazines and journals, including *The Best American Poetry, 2009*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Tri-Quarterly*, *The Southern Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Made Thing: An Anthology of Contemporary Southern Poetry*, *The Extraordinary Tide: Poetry by American Women*, and *The Practice of Poetry*. Various prizes for her work include two National Endowment for the Arts grants; the Jane Kenyon Award for Outstanding Book of Poems; the Peter Lavin Award for Younger Poets from the Academy of American Poets; two Pushcart Prizes; The Robert Frost Resident Poet Award; The May Sarton Award; and four Individual Artist Fellowships in Poetry from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts and the New Jersey State Arts Council. Cleopatra Mathis is the Frederick Sessions Beebe '35 Professor of the Art of Writing at Dartmouth College, where she has taught since 1982.

## Chitra Divakaruni | Wednesday, March 24 – 7:30 p.m.



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's work has been published in over fifty magazines, including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*, and her writing has been included in over fifty anthologies, including *Best American Short Stories*, *The O'Henry Prize Stories*, and the *Pushcart Prize* anthology. Her works have been translated into seventeen languages. Divakaruni's recent books include *Palace of Illusions*, a retelling of the ancient Indian epic *The Mahabharat*; *Queen of Dreams*; *The Conch Bearer*, a children's novel; *Vine of Desire*, a sequel to *Sister*

*of My Heart* (made into a movie in India); her latest novel, *One Amazing Thing*, about nine people trapped in an earthquake; and her latest collection of short stories, *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*. She has also written several books of poetry. Her first book of short stories, *Arranged Marriage*, won critical acclaim and the 1996 American Book Award, the Bay Area Book Reviewers award, and the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles award for fiction. Her many awards include four PEN Syndicated Fiction awards, an Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award, and two Pushcart Prizes. She serves on the advisory board of an organization that fosters literacy and two boards that help women in domestic violence situations.

## Nahid Rachlin | Thursday, March 25 – 4 p.m.

Of Nahid Rachlin's recent memoir, *Persian Girls* (Penguin), Matt Beynon Rees, contributing editor to *Time*, praises, "Through the touching story of two sisters, *Persian Girls* unfolds the entire drama of modern Iran... If you want to understand Iran, read Nahid Rachlin." Rachlin has also written four novels, *Jumping Over Fire*, *Foreigner*, *The Heart's Desire*, and *Married to a Stranger*, which, says the *New York Times Review of Books*, "shows us not only the tranquil inner courtyards with sweets and gossip exchanged by the fishpond, the flower bedecked bridal chamber, but also the political, social and religious factions contending for primacy in the streets outside." She has published a collection of short stories, *Veils*. Her individual stories have appeared in more than fifty magazines. She has written reviews for *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Newsday*. While a student she held a Doubleday-Columbia fellowship and a Wallace Stegner Fellowship (Stanford). Her many grants and awards include the Bette Cerf Award, PEN Syndicated Fiction Project Award, and a National Endowment for the Arts grant. She teaches at the New School and at a variety of summer writers conferences, abroad and in the U.S.



## Patricia Smith\* | Thursday, March 25 – 7:30 p.m.



Patricia Smith is the author of five acclaimed poetry volumes, including *Blood Dazzler*, a finalist for the 2008 National Book Award, which chronicles the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Katrina; *Teahouse of the Almighty*; *Close to Death*; *Life According to Motown*;

and *Big Towns, Big Talk*. She is the winner of the *Chatauqua* Literary Journal Award in poetry and a Pushcart Prize for the poem "The Way Pilots Walk." The *American Book Review* called the poems of *Blood Dazzler* "blessings that will move like white light through your veins." A four-time individual champion of the National Poetry Slam—the most successful slammer in the competition's history—Smith has also been a featured poet on HBO's Def Poetry Jam and has performed three one-woman plays, one produced by Nobel Prize-winner Derek Walcott. In addition to her poetic works, Smith is also the author of *Africans in America*, a companion volume to the groundbreaking PBS documentary, and the children's book *Janna and the Kings*, which won Lee & Low Books' New Voices Award. She has served as a Cave Canem faculty member, a Bruce McEver Visiting Chair in Writing at Georgia Tech University, and writer-in-residence at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. Smith was inducted into the National Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent. In 2008 she was awarded a Lannan Foundation residency in Marfa, Texas.