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LOUISIANA BOOK FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FACULTY FOR 2023 WORDSHOPS *Celebrated authors to give master classes for aspiring writers*

BATON ROUGE, La. – The Louisiana Book Festival is excited to announce the faculty for the 2023 writing workshops: André Dubus III, John Dufresne, Fatima Shaik, and Genaro Kÿ Lý Smith. The faculty includes an author whose novel was made into an Academy Award-nominated film, a recipient of the Louisiana Writer Award, and writers whose works have been recognized with an Indie Book Award and named Best American Mystery Stories.

The half-day writing workshops, known as WordShops, will be held **Friday, October 27**, at the State Library of Louisiana in Baton Rouge. The courses – including one on flash fiction – are designed for people who write fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. They are open to writers of all levels of experience.

“We try to inspire the next generation of storytellers by bringing together diverse voices and perspectives during the annual WordShops,” said Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. “These workshops nurture a thriving literary community, adding to the literary heritage of Louisiana and beyond.”

“Participating in the WordShops program is a unique way to learn about the art of writing under the guidance of accomplished authors,” said Interim State Librarian Meg Placke. “Whether you are a beginner wondering how to start or an experienced writer who wants to refine your skills, these workshops will provide you with the tools and insights to elevate your storytelling ability.”

Teresa Tumminello Brader’s debut novel, *Letting in Air and Light*, will be featured during this year’s Louisiana Book Festival. She previously attended several WordShops and says the sessions helped her as she worked on her first book.

“Led by successful and generous writers as diverse as Rick Bragg, Julie Kane, Bill Loehfelm, T. Geronimo Johnson, and Steph Post, the workshops were not only of the highest quality, but fun too,” Brader said. “I’ve never hesitated to attend a WordShop that focuses on a genre outside my own. The insights gained from others’ writing practices are immeasurable. Even with my first book out, I wouldn’t hesitate to take another.”

Classes taught by these award-winning and bestselling authors will cover a wide range of topics, including techniques on how character development leads to a story writing itself, how to use the environment around you to write compelling short stories, how research can improve historical non-fiction writing, and how fiction techniques can be used to write poetry and prose.

The WordShops schedule includes two concurrent sessions in the morning and two in the afternoon.

- **9 a.m. – Noon**
 - Flash! Writing the Very Short Story – John Dufresne
 - Bringing History Home – Fatima Shaik

- **1 p.m. – 4 p.m.**
 - Surrendering to the Mystery of Story – André Dubus III
 - What’s Good for Fiction Is Good for Poetry: Show Us, but Please Don’t Tell Us – Genaro Kỳ Lý Smith

Full WordShop descriptions, as well as faculty biographies, can be found below and on the Louisiana Book Festival [WordShops webpage](#).

Registration for each WordShop is \$50; for anyone attending two WordShops, the cost is \$90. Space is limited. Registration payments are due by **October 23**. After that date, registration will be accepted as space allows. To register, call (225) 219-9503 or visit the [WordShops webpage](#).

Each of the instructors will participate in the Louisiana Book Festival on **Saturday, October 28**. For more information about the Book Festival, visit [LouisianaBookFestival.org](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#).

The Louisiana Center for the Book was established in the State Library of Louisiana in 1994. Its mission is to stimulate public interest in reading, books, literacy, and libraries and to celebrate Louisiana’s rich literary heritage. It is the state affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book.



2023 Louisiana Book Festival WordShops
Friday, Oct. 27
State Library of Louisiana

Flash! Writing the Very Short Story
Presented by John Dufresne
9:00 AM – Noon

“So here’s what we’ll be doing,” says Dufresne of his workshop. “We’ll demystify the writing process, which may once have seemed intimidating. Writing is work; it’s a physical, if sedentary, activity. Writers write even when the writing’s not going well—*especially* when the writing’s not going well. We’ll discuss the craft of storytelling, explore the elements and techniques of short fiction, and examine the qualities that make for vivid and compelling flash fiction. You’ll read exemplary short-short stories that will inspire, provoke, and serve as models for your own stories. “You’ll write up a storm following the prompts and exercises. You’ll play with found forms and invent your own. You’ll get writing and you’ll keep writing. You’ll learn that your characters, your settings, and your themes are out there in the world. You’ll learn to look, to listen, to pay attention, and to notice, the fiction writer’s first job. The act of writing itself, you’ll realize, the act of making up people you come to care about, the fun of playing with words and with worlds, is its own reward. And the more you write, the more you’ll want to write.”

John Dufresne is the author of two short story collections, *The Way That Water Enters Stone* and *Johnny Too Bad*, and the novels *Louisiana Power & Light*, *Love Warps the Mind a Little* (both *New York Times* Notable Books of the Year), *Deep in the Shade of Paradise*, and *Requiem, Mass.*, as well as *No Regrets*, *Coyote*, and *I Don’t Like Where This Is Going*. He has written four books on writing fiction, *The Lie That Tells a Truth*, *Is Life Like This?*, *Flash! Writing the Very Short Story*, and *Storyville!: An Illustrated Guide to Writing Fiction*. He is the editor of the anthologies *Blue Christmas*, *Everything Is Broken*, and *Everything’s Broken, Too* and co-editor of *Flash Fiction America*. His short stories have twice been named *Best American Mystery Stories*, in 2007 and 2010. He is a 2013 Guggenheim Fellow in Fiction. He teaches Fiction Writing in the MFA program at Florida International University.

Bringing History Home
Presented by Fatima Shaik
9:00 AM – Noon

“One of the most exciting tasks of writing nonfiction is to create work that is factual and showcases your unique voice,” says Shaik. “Think of the essays of Truman Capote, James Baldwin, Joan Didion, Mark Twain, or Roxane Gay. *Isaac’s Storm* by Erik Larson and *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson address periods in Southern history with a multitude of facts and great style. “The goal for every nonfiction writer is to provide information and entertain readers. Learning this process is not as hard as you think. “Resources for writing about history are endless. They exist in material culture, archives, museums, genealogy sites, and family documents. Once you’ve accessed the research, you must look at it through your memories and perspective. “This workshop will analyze examples of good writing, then address research and writing basics before providing the tools that will distinguish your work. With the means to tell the histories that are closest to you, their universal themes will show.”

Fatima Shaik, the twenty-second Louisiana Writer Award recipient, is the author of seven books. *Economy Hall: The Hidden History of a Free Black Brotherhood* received the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities 2022 Book of the Year award and the American Book Award. *Kirkus Reviews* named *Economy Hall* one of the best nonfiction books of 2021. *The New York Times Book Review* wrote “‘Economy Hall’ is so inviting that the

true depth of its scholarship is revealed only in its bibliography, which lists dozens of archival and other sources. Shaik's monumental book ...is lyrical and mysterious and always captivating." Shaik has written for *The Southern Review*, *Callaloo*, *Tribes*, *The Root*, *In These Times*, and *The New York Times*. She reported for *The Times-Picayune* and *The Miami News*. Shaik is the recipient of grants from the NEH, LEH, and the John Anson Kittredge Fund. Shaik retired in 2020 as assistant professor from Saint Peter's University where she founded its Communication program, now the Communication and Media Culture Department awarding B.A. and M.A. degrees. A former board member of The Writers Room, Shaik was an ex-officio trustee of PEN America.

Surrendering to the Mystery of Story

Presented by André Dubus III

1:00 – 4:00 PM

For writers of fiction or creative non-fiction, Dubus offers, "If I teach nothing else in my writing classes, I teach this: do not outline your novel or novella or short story or essay. Do not think out the plot, the narrative arc, the protagonist's journey, whatever you want to call it. Instead, try to find the story through an honest excavation of the characters' total experience of the situation in which they find themselves. Do that, and I promise the story will begin to write itself, with little need for the controlling hand of the godly, intelligent, well-read, and ambitious author. "But how, precisely, does one go about this "excavation"? And how, technically speaking, can we ignite a story into "writing itself"? Come to this workshop, and I will seek to demystify those writerly tools and skills that time and time again, if they are sharp enough, and if the writer can summon enough daily faith and nerve, can penetrate the mystery of story itself."

Bio:

André Dubus III is the author of *The Cage Keeper and Other Stories*, *Bluesman*, and *The New York Times* bestsellers *House of Sand and Fog*, *The Garden of Last Days*, and his memoir, *Townie*, a #4 *New York Times* bestseller and "Editors' Choice." His work has been included in *The Best American Essays* and *The Best Spiritual Writing* anthologies, and his novel *House of Sand and Fog* was a finalist for the National Book Award, a #1 *New York Times* bestseller, and was made into an Academy Award-nominated film starring Ben Kingsley and Jennifer Connelly. His 2014 novella collection, *Dirty Love*, was listed as a "Notable Book" by *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* and named a *New York Times* "Editors' Choice" and a *Kirkus* "Starred Best Book of 2013." His 2018 novel, *Gone So Long*, was named on many "Best Books" lists, including selection for *The Boston Globe's* "Twenty Best Books of 2018" and "The Best Books of 2018, Top 100," Amazon. His new novel is *Such Kindness* (June 2023), and he has forthcoming a collection of personal essays, *Ghost Dogs: On Killers and Kin*. Dubus has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, The National Magazine Award for Fiction, two Pushcart Prizes, and an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature. His books are published in over twenty-five languages, and he is a Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

What's Good for Fiction Is Good for Poetry: Show Us, but Please Don't Tell Us

Presented by Genaro Kiyó Smith

1:00 – 4:00 PM

"Our natural flaw is 'to tell' rather than 'show,' to show whatever event we deem important to us—whether it uplifts us or scars us—and share it with everyone, with an audience," observes Smith. "Telling these stories or poems is lazy; showing takes a lot of work. The process of showing is both daunting and frustrating. "The workshop will comprise of your writing a short prose piece (telling a story in half a page or thereabouts). Then you will segue into what parts of your 'telling' we can expand 'to show' the incident to make the readers feel they are in the moment, the location, the scene, the experience. I will give feedback and suggestions on the spot, and I encourage others to do so. From there you will extract all the concrete details and whittle them down to a poem of whatever length you wish. Here is the important part: the excess

details you extracted may produce another poem, even a body of poems. 'Please bring a laptop, tablet, or whatever writing medium or tool of your choice.'

Genaro Kỳ Lý Smith was born in Nha Trang, Vietnam in 1968. He earned a B.A. in English from California State University, Northridge, in 1993. He later earned an M.A. and M.F.A. in creative writing from McNeese State University in Lake Charles, LA in 1999. He is the author of *The Land Baron's Sun: The Story of Lý Loc and His Seven Wives*, which won the 2016 Indie Book Award in poetry. His novel, *The Land South of the Clouds*, the second in the trilogy, was released in October 2016. It took second place in 2017 for the Indie Book Award. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, a short story collection, followed in October 2018. Smith's other works of poetry and fiction have been published in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Pembroke*, *Gumbo: An Anthology of African American Writing*, *Asian American Literary Review*, *Xavier Review*, *Northridge Review*, *Amerasia Journal*, *turnrow*, *Scene Magazine*, *dis-Orient*, *Christmas Stories from Louisiana*, *Kartika Review*, and *Blue Lyra Review*. He received the ATLAS grant from the Louisiana Board of Regents for 2013-14. He has earned first place in the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Fellowship competition, is a recipient of both the Louisiana Division of the Arts Artist Fellowship and mini-grant, and his 2008 short story "Dailies" took second place in both the Poets & Writers Exchange Program and the Santa Fe Writers Program. He currently resides in Ruston with his wife, Robyn, and their two daughters, Layla and Naomi. He has been teaching literature, composition, and creative writing at Louisiana Tech University since 1999.