

FEATURED AUTHORS:

Jonathan Alter
Hernan Diaz
Lois Lowry
Natalie Merchant
m.s. RedCherries
Roger Rosenblatt



FEATURED EVENTS:

Albany Book Festival 2026
Burian Lecture on Life in the Performing Arts
Creative Life Series
Marathon Reading of William Kennedy's *Roscoe*
Telling the Truth 2026

FALL EVENTS 2026



GREETINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR

I've been feeling especially grateful to the University at Albany lately, in part because this fall marks the 45th anniversary of my arrival on campus as a graduate student in English. More importantly, I am honored to be among the recipients of the 2026 Citizen Laureate Awards to be recognized at the October 22 gala. I only wish my parents were still alive to see this.

I am a blue-collar kid and a first-generation college graduate from Tacoma, Washington. My trajectory changed dramatically at UAlbany, the only graduate program that matched its rhetoric with a crucial investment in me – a tuition waiver and graduate assistant stipend. An Ivy League school in New York City offered nothing but a mountain of student debt. I packed my bags, boarded

a train, and four days later arrived in Albany. I am eternally grateful that UAlbany chose me, supported me, and changed the trajectory of my life.

“The very first person I met on an empty UAlbany campus Saturday of Labor Day weekend in 1981, was William Kennedy.”

The very first person I met on an empty UAlbany campus, on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend in 1981, was William Kennedy. He was working on a novel in his English Department office. His was the only light at the end of a darkened hallway in the

Humanities building. I've come to believe things happen for a reason.

And so here we are. The great world spins. The years add up. I am 67. Bill is 98. The Writers Institute is 43. America is 250. We're living in an age of uncertainty and profound divisions. What to make of all this?

When in doubt, reach for a book. Reading is a tonic in troubled times. Books transport us, expand our world view, open our hearts, and deepen our empathy. Writers Institute events foster conversations and a chance to find common ground. This fall season brings another stellar lineup and diverse range of authors with compelling voices that command our attention. The Writers Institute has been a beacon of lifelong learning and a safe harbor in troubled times for me for 43 years. It can be for you, too.

Among our more than 30 events this season, we're proud to feature five UAlbany alumni: **Yours truly (Oct. 13)**, **Frank Whaley (Oct. 16)**, **D.B. Woodside (Nov. 4)**, **Kristen McCallum (Nov. 5)** and **Sharon Liese (Nov. 7)**. It is a gratifying homecoming to a university that invested so much in us.

Paul Grondahl

Opalka Endowed Director, NYS Writers Institute



FALL 2026 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

EVENT GUIDELINES

Events are free and open to the public and take place on the University at Albany's Uptown Campus, unless otherwise noted. All events are subject to change. Refer to page 24 for information on free on-campus parking for events.

DISCOVER MORE EVENTS:

To sign up for email updates, visit www.nyswritersinstitute.org

SEPTEMBER

The Creative Life

A Conversation Series at UAlbany

Produced by the New York State Writers Institute in collaboration with WAMC Northeast Public Radio, this series features leading figures from a variety of artistic disciplines in conversation with WAMC's "Roundtable" host Joe Donahue about creative inspiration, craft, and career.

Natalie Merchant

September 2 (Wednesday)

**7:30 p.m. – Conversation/ Q&A,
with WAMC's Joe Donahue**

**Main Theatre, UAlbany Performing Arts Center,
Uptown Campus**



Photo: Joe Mazza, Brave Lux inc.

Natalie Merchant, one of the defining singer-songwriters of her generation, discusses her new album and multimedia collaboration,

Cabinet of Wonder, an ambitious educational project based on traditional Mother Goose nursery rhymes and original songs. The project grows out of Merchant's experience as a teaching artist at a Head Start preschool in Upstate New York, and is the culmination of her 40 years of involvement in children's arts, education, and community work.

Natalie Merchant is celebrated as much for the poetry of her lyrics as for the distinctive sound and emotional richness of her voice. Born in Jamestown, New York, Merchant joined the alt rock band 10,000 Maniacs in 1981, serving as lead singer and primary songwriter. Five of the band's songs became top ten hits on *Billboard's* Modern Rock Track music chart, including the #1 hit, "These Are Days." She became a solo artist in 1993, releasing nine acclaimed albums, including *Tigerlily*, *Ophelia*, *Motherland*, *Natalie Merchant* and *Paradise Is There*. Her top ten hit singles include the all-time classics, "Carousel," "Wonder" and "Jealousy."



CHINA'S POST-90'S GENERATION

September 3 (Thursday)

M Lin

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Multi-Purpose Room, Campus Center
West Addition, Uptown Campus

M Lin is an award-winning Chinese writer living in the US. Born and raised in Beijing, she writes in English, but she favors her mother tongue, Mandarin, for everyday speech. Her first book is the story collection, *The Memory Museum* (2026).



Photo: Guo Guo

Gish Jen said in advance praise, “Deeply felt and grounded in an intimate acquaintance with contemporary China, these wide-ranging stories portray villagers, protesters, artists, and petty thieves alike with empathy and grace. Nothing is easy for them, and the questions they raise are not easy for us. What an absorbing, probing debut!” Tony Tulathimutte said, “M Lin can seemingly take any form, genre, or style and make it do whatever she wants, always something unexpected.”

Cosponsored by the English Department’s Creative Writing Program and Young Writers Project, UAlbany’s Writing & Critical Inquiry Program (WCI), and the Honors College.



MILLENNIAL FICTION

September 8 (Tuesday)

Andrew Martin

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Multi-Purpose Room, Campus Center
West Addition, Uptown Campus

Andrew Martin, fiction writer, is “a leading chronicler of millennial ennui in contemporary America” (*Kirkus*). His books include the “slacker classics,” *Early Work: A Novel* (2018), and *Cool for America: Stories* (2020). On the “PBS

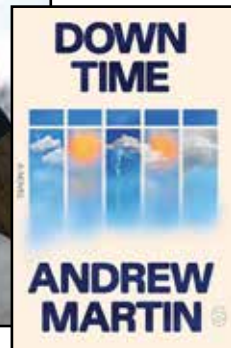


Photo: Caroline Martin

NewsHour,” Ann Patchett said, “*Early Work*... is really dirty... It’s a book about young graduate students who drink a lot, read a lot, have a lot of sex, and somehow, it’s just mesmerizing... terrific.” His new novel is *Down Time* (2026), about five friends in their ‘30s, “growing older, if not always up.” In the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Adam Straus said, “The pleasure of this book comes from reading perfectly rendered sentence after perfectly rendered sentence... Endlessly entertaining.”

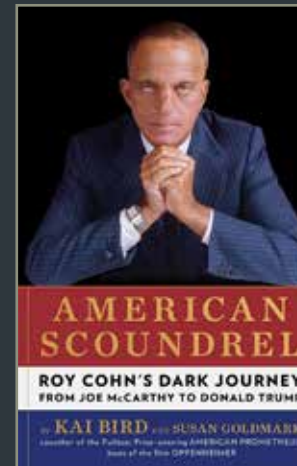
With support from the Bernard F. Connors Fund and cosponsored by the English Department’s Creative Writing Program and Young Writers Project, UAlbany’s Writing & Critical Inquiry Program (WCI), and the Honors College.

AMERICAN SCOUNDREL Kai Bird and Susan Goldmark

September 14 (Monday)

7:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Page Hall, 135 Western Avenue, Downtown Campus



Kai Bird, Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer, is the coauthor (with his wife, Susan Goldmark) of *American Scoundrel: Roy Cohn's Dark Journey from Joe McCarthy to Donald Trump* (2026). In praise, Jon Meacham called it “powerful and illuminating”; Stacy Schiff called it, “a propulsive mind-boggling read”; and Ken Auletta called it, “an extraordinary up-close view of Cohn’s internal wiring.” With Martin Sherwin, Bird shared the Pulitzer for *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (2005), a #1 *New York Times* bestseller that inspired the Oscar-winning blockbuster, *OPPENHEIMER* (2023).

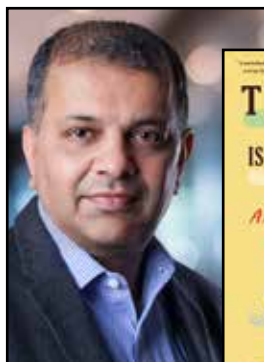
Susan Goldmark, coauthor of *American Scoundrel*, has spent her career advancing economic and social

development in more than 75 countries through consulting, nonprofit leadership, and the World Bank. She has managed multibillion-dollar social, infrastructure, and environmental portfolios, launched carbon trading and poverty reduction initiatives, and served as the World Bank’s Country Director in Nepal and later in multiple Latin American nations. Married to Kai Bird for more than 50 years, Goldmark also led the research for *American Scoundrel*.

Cosponsored by the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, College of Arts and Sciences, and the History Department at UAlbany.



Photo: Mission Studios Ltd.



AN IMMIGRANT'S MANIFESTO

September 17 (Thursday)

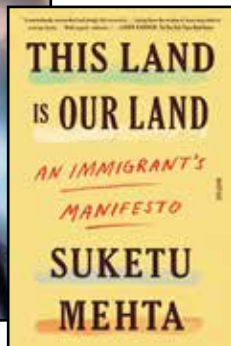
Suketu Mehta

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Recital Hall, UAlbany Performing Arts Center, Uptown Campus

7:30 p.m. – Talk, Opalka Gallery, Russell Sage College, 140 New Scotland Ave.

Suketu Mehta is the author of *This Land Is Our Land: An Immigrant's Manifesto* (2019), a compelling argument for why the United States would benefit from accepting more



immigrants. Salman Rushdie said, "Written 'in sorrow and anger,' this is a brilliant and urgently necessary book, eloquently making the case against bigotry and for all of us migrants— what we are not, who we are, and why we deserve to be welcomed, not feared." He was a Pulitzer finalist for his 2004 book, *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. An active journalist and NYU Journalism professor, Mehta writes frequently about New York City, its immigrants, and the rise of Zohran Mamdani.



Cosponsored by the University at Albany's Great Dane Dialogue series and Sage Colleges in honor of Constitution Day and America's 250th Celebration.



A.I. & SOCIETY CONVERSATION SERIES

September 22 (Tuesday)

Francine Berman

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A with WAMC's Joe Donahue

Recital Hall, UAlbany Performing Arts Center, Uptown Campus

Francine Berman, trailblazing computer scientist, is the author of *Better Tech: Putting People First in Cyberspace* (2026). Addressing the riskiest new technologies, *Better Tech* provides an actionable



playbook of responsible design, development, use, and regulatory strategies to protect and benefit humanity. Jill Lepore said, "Thank goodness for this book.... *Better Tech* is an essential, commonsense guide to making emerging technologies answerable to the public interest." A pioneer of digital data preservation and cyber-infrastructure, Berman has been celebrated for her work by the Library of Congress. She currently serves as Director of Public Interest Technology at UMass Amherst and Faculty Associate at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society.

Cosponsored by the AI & Society College and Research Center, and the Honors College.



FILM SCREENING

September 18 (Friday)

BROWNSVILLE BRED

7:00 p.m. — Screening with commentary by writer-director Elaine Del Valle / Q&A

Page Hall, 135 Western Avenue, Downtown Campus

(2025, 94 min., U.S., Rated PG-13) Written and directed by Elaine Del Valle. Starring Nathalia Lares, Javier Muñoz, Karina Ortiz and Summer Rose Castillo

A Nuyorican coming-of-age story set in 1980s Brownsville, Brooklyn, this new film follows Elaine, a girl on the cusp of becoming a teenager, as she navigates the challenges of a chaotic family and a tough and unpredictable neighborhood. *BROWNSVILLE BRED* was the only U.S. Latina-directed live-action narrative to earn Oscar eligibility in 2025.

Elaine Del Valle, multifaceted writer and filmmaker, transmutes her Brooklyn Puerto Rican girlhood into an astonishing variety of works of art: a one-woman show, award-winning short, TV show, YA novel, and now a feature film. "From Girlhood Trials to Onstage Triumph" proclaimed the *New York Times* in its 2010 review of her same-titled play. The YA novel, *Brownsville Bred*, was a finalist for *Publishers Weekly's* 2020 BookLife Prize.

Cosponsored by the University at Albany's Department of Africana, Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies in honor of National Hispanic Heritage Month.

Photo: Zalo Castillo



The 9th Annual

Albany Book Festival

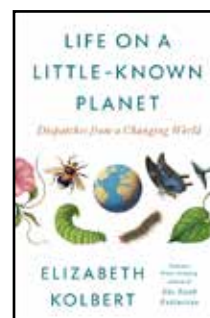
Saturday, September 26, 2026
University at Albany
10:30 am - 5:00 pm

JOIN US FOR:

- Bestselling and award-winning authors
- Book signings
- Children's Room with authors and fun activities
- Online how-to workshops for aspiring authors

 NYS WRITERS INSTITUTE & UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
ALBANY book FESTIVAL

PANEL TOPICS:



LIFE ON A LITTLE-KNOWN PLANET
Elizabeth Kolbert
Life on a Little-Known Planet

IRAN, IRANIANS, AND IRANIAN-AMERICANS

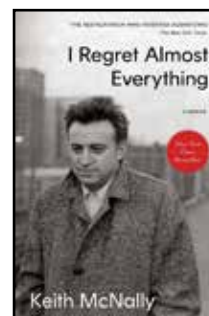
Arash Azizi
What Iranians Want
Porochista Khakpour
Tehrangles: A Novel
Amir Ahmadi Arian
Then The Fish Swallowed Him



IRISH AND IRISH-AMERICAN FICTION
Megan Nolan
Ordinary Human Failings
Terry Golway
Terror From America



BAD GIRLS
Carol Gilligan
Solstice
Gish Jen
Bad Bad Girl



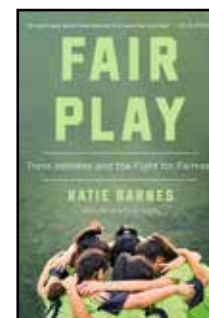
MEMOIR
Keith McNally
I Regret Almost Everything
Kelly McMasters
The Leaving Season

THRILLERS

John Katzenbach
The Architect
Canwen Xu
Boring Asian Female



TONI MORRISON
Namwali Serpell
On Morrison



TRANS ATHLETES
Katie Barnes
Fair Play
Brianna Brinker
Skating Out of the Vault



AMERICA IN POETRY

September 29 (Tuesday)

Joshua Bennett

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Multi-Purpose Room, Campus Center
West Addition, Uptown Campus

Joshua Bennett, “one of the most impressive voices in poetry today” (*Dissent*), is the author of a major new work, *We (The People of The United States)* (2026), a book-length poem about America, past, present and future.

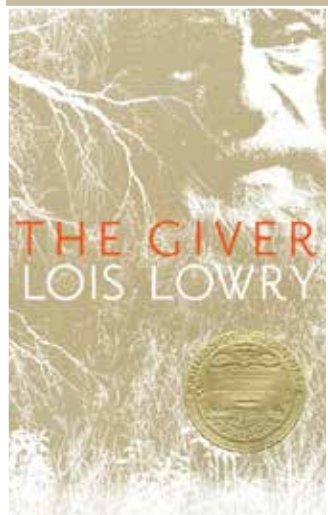


Bennett addresses an astonishing range of subjects, including The Beach Boys, Gwendolyn Brooks, the invention of the typewriter, Zora Neale Hurston, Sun Ra, life on Mars, Robert Frost, experimental physics, and The Jackson 5. *Booklist* called it, “An essential addition to the American poetic canon.” Bennett’s previous books include *Being Property Once Myself* (2020), *Owed* (2020), *The Study of Human Life* (2022), and *Spoken Word: A Cultural History* (2023). He serves as professor of literature and Distinguished Chair of the Humanities at MIT.



Cosponsored by the University at Albany’s Great Dane Dialogue series in honor of America’s 250th Celebration.

OCTOBER



October 5 (Monday)

THE GIVER

By Lois Lowry

Performed by Aurea Tomeski
Adapted and Directed by Elise Thoron

7:00 p.m. — Stage Presentation, Main Theatre,
UAlbany Performing Arts Center, Uptown Campus

[TICKETS REQUIRED]

Visit www.nyswritersinstitute.org
Advance tickets: \$15 general public • \$10 students,
seniors & UAlbany faculty-staff.
Day of show tickets: \$20 general public
• \$15 students, seniors & UAlbany faculty-staff.



AGING THE RIGHT WAY

October 7 (Wednesday)

Roger Rosenblatt

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Main Theatre, UAlbany Performing Arts
Center, Uptown Campus

Roger Rosenblatt, journalist and long-time essayist for *Time* and the “PBS NewsHour,” published his national bestseller *Rules for Aging* more than 25 years ago. His follow-up, published at age 85, is *More Rules for Aging: Making the*



Most of Your Ridiculous, Wondrous Life (2026). Alice McDermott called it, “a delightful companion to anyone in need of consolation, wisdom, and maybe a good get over yourself laugh as the years pile up.” Rosenblatt is also the author of five *New York Times* Notable Books, and three *Times* bestsellers. Among his many honors are two George Polk Awards and a Guggenheim Fellowship; as well as Emmy and Peabody Awards for his video essays on the “PBS NewsHour.”

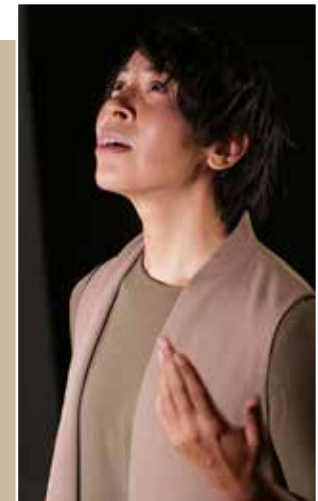
Cosponsored by Albany Guardian Society and the School of Social Welfare’s Internships in Aging Project (IAP) at the University at Albany.

LITERATURE TO LIFE®

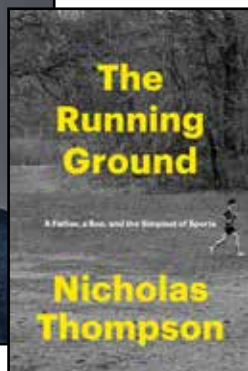
At the age of twelve, Jonas, a young boy from a seemingly utopian, futuristic world, is singled out to receive special training from The Giver, who alone holds the memories of the true joys and pain of life. In the process, Jonas is forced to question everything in his ideal world: a world without conflict, poverty, unemployment, divorce, injustice, or inequality. Lois Lowry’s Newbery-Award winning bestselling book has become the gold standard for the young adult genre. Told with deceptive simplicity, it’s a provocative story of a boy who experiences something incredible and undertakes something impossible.



Presented in association with
Lois Lowry’s visit to UAlbany on
Wednesday, October 28, with her
new book *Building 903*.



RUNNING'S LIFE LESSONS



October 9 (Friday)

Nicholas Thompson

7:00 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Recital Hall, UAlbany Performing Arts Center, Uptown Campus

Nicholas Thompson, journalist and CEO of *The Atlantic*, is— at age 51— one of America's fastest runners in the over-40 category. In 2019, at age 44, he set an astonishing personal record for the marathon of 2:29:12.

Thompson is also the American record

holder in the 50K for both the 50-54 age group and the 45-49 age group. In 2025, he published a national bestseller about the many life lessons that running can teach us: *The Running Ground: A Father, a Son, and the Simplest of Sports*. Anna Wintour called it, "Endlessly surprising, revelatory, and heart-rending." Adam Grant said, "This is not just an engaging memoir about running. It's a meditation on what it takes to marshal and maintain motivation."

Cosponsored by the Albany Running Exchange (ARE), a community-based running organization founded as a student club at the University at Albany in 2002 by UAlbany alum Josh Merlis.

EXPLORING MATERNAL HERITAGE



October 15 (Thursday)

Kristen Millares Young

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Campus Center West Boardroom (1st Floor), Uptown Campus

Kristen Millares Young, journalist and novelist, is the author of a new feminist memoir, *Desire Lines* (2026), an exploration of her Cuban and Spanish matrilineal heritage, and a meditation on selfhood, motherhood, the feminine divine, and the

Photo: Chona Kasinger

possibilities for women's liberation. Luis Alberto Urrea called it an "explosive and daring collection." Melissa Febos said, "Young brings a searching, generous, and unrelenting gaze to every subject she writes on, most of all herself." Her 2024 novel *Subduction*, about a Latina anthropologist who becomes enmeshed in the life of an indigenous whaling community in Washington State, was named a staff pick by *The Paris Review*, and was a finalist for two International Latino Book Awards.

Cosponsored by the University at Albany's Department of Africana, Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies in honor of National Hispanic Heritage Month, and by the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

A LUCKY LIFE

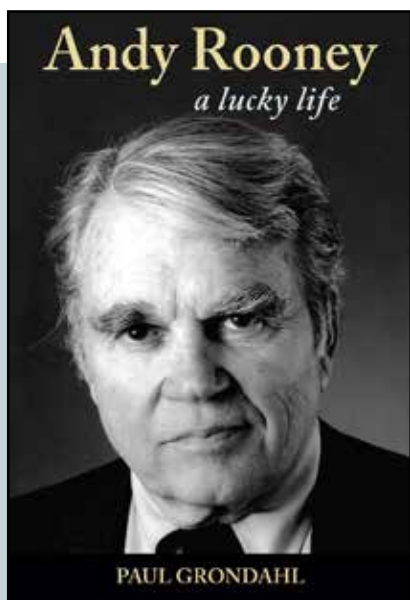
October 13 (Tuesday)

Paul Grondahl

7:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Page Hall, 135 Western Avenue, Downtown Campus

Paul Grondahl, long-time journalist for the *Times Union*, UAlbany alum, and the Opalka Endowed Director of the New York State Writers Institute, is the author



of *Andy Rooney: A Lucky Life* (2026). Born and raised in Albany, Rooney was a beloved curmudgeon, journalist, and author best known for his acerbic, incisive commentaries he read at the close of "60 Minutes" from 1978 to 2011. Ken Auletta said, "Grondahl paints a delicious picture of this amazing character— an uncompromising man who would not bend to flatter his bosses or his audience." Sam Tanenhaus said, "Grondahl's superb biography is as vivid and crisp as one of Rooney's own monologues."

Cosponsored by SUNY Press to mark its 60th anniversary, and by the University at Albany Alumni Association.



Photo: Patrick Dodson

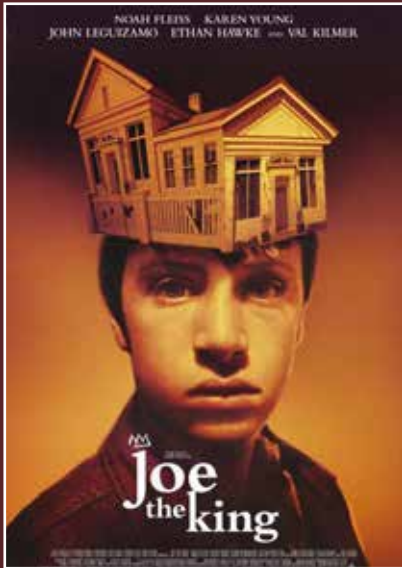
THE GLEN TROTINER ENDOWED LECTURE IN FILMMAKING

October 16 (Friday)

JOE THE KING

7:00 p.m. – Screening with commentary by director Frank Whaley/Q&A

Page Hall, 135 Western Avenue, Downtown Campus



(1999, 93 min., U.S., Rated R), Starring Noah Fleiss, Karen Young, Val Kilmer. Written and directed by Frank Whaley.

UAlbany graduate Frank Whaley (B.A., class of 1987) won the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at Sundance and received a Grand Jury Prize nomination for this film based on his Upstate New York boyhood in the 1970s. Noah Fleiss portrays a young boy navigating family dysfunction, neglect and physical abuse. Val Kilmer plays the alcoholic father.

Frank Whaley, writer-director, is also an acclaimed character actor in many Hollywood films. He debuted as the young Francis Phelan in the 1987 film *IRONWEED*, based on William Kennedy's novel. Significant supporting roles include Brett in

PULP FICTION (1994), Jim Dodge in *CAREER OPPORTUNITIES* (1991), young Archie "Moonlight" Graham in *FIELD OF DREAMS* (1989), Steve Bushak in *THE FRESHMAN* (1990) starring Marlon Brando, and Guy in *SWIMMING WITH SHARKS* (1994). He has also worked with director Oliver Stone in several films including *BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY* (1989), *THE DOORS* (1991), *JFK* (1991), and *WORLD TRADE CENTER* (2006).

Presented by The Glen Trotiner Endowed Lecture in Filmmaking fund in memory of Glen Trotiner '78, MS '79, a highly regarded filmmaker and a distinguished UAlbany alumnus. Cosponsored by the University at Albany Alumni Association.

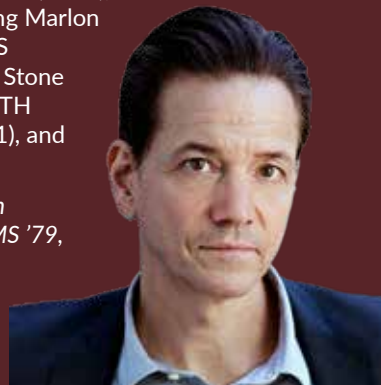


Photo: Barb Danielson



POETRY: RECONNECTING

October 20 (Tuesday)

m.s. RedCherries

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Multi-Purpose Room, Campus Center West Addition, Uptown Campus

m.s. RedCherries, poet and citizen of the Northern Cheyenne Nation, won the American Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Award in Poetry for her debut poetry collection, *mother* (2024). The book's poems tell the story of a young Native American,

adopted by white parents, as she comes to reconnect over time with her tribe, family, culture and ancestral land. Tommy Orange said, "This is an incredibly powerful book of poetry that is also fiction, but it is so real, and singular, as to defy definition, and I defy anyone to read it and come away unchanged." Xochitl Gonzalez said, "RedCherries has rendered an intimate portrait of inheritance— from the spiritual to the genetic— that is, ultimately, a testimony of empowerment."

Cosponsored by the English Department's Creative Writing Program and Young Writers Project, UAlbany's Writing & Critical Inquiry Program (WCI), and the Honors College.



FIGHTING TYRANNY WITH BOOKS

October 28 (Wednesday)

Lois Lowry

7:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Page Hall, 135 Western Avenue, Downtown Campus

Lois Lowry, one of the all-time greatest writers of fiction for young people, will present her new novel, *Building 903* (2026), the story of a brother and sister struggling to survive in a near-future America ruled by a narcissistic dictator who has outlawed books and

basic human freedoms. A two-time Newbery Medal winner and author of more than 30 books, Lowry is known for work that explores tyranny, racism, terminal illness, murder, and the Holocaust. She is best-known for two widely acclaimed classics of YA literature, *The Giver* (1993), about a dystopian world of "sameness," in which strong emotions are suppressed by the prescription of daily pills; and *Number the Stars* (1989), a historical novel about a Jewish family in Nazi-occupied Denmark.

Cosponsored by the Capital District Library Council (CDLC).



AWAKENING, REBELLION, AND SURVIVAL

October 29 (Thursday)

Loubna Mrie

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Recital Hall, UAlbany Performing Arts Center, Uptown Campus

Loubna Mrie, Syrian Arab journalist, is the author of *Defiance: A Memoir of Awakening, Rebellion, and Survival in Syria* (2026), an astonishing true story of revolt and non-conformity from a young woman raised to be loyal to a brutal regime— at unimaginable cost.

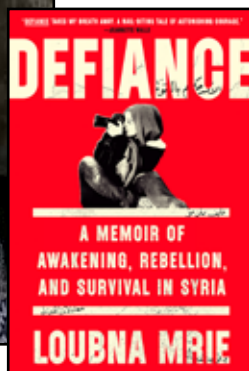


Photo: Eldredge Morrissey

Javier Zamora called it, an anthem against patriarchy and authoritarianism everywhere.” Jeanette Walls said, “*Defiance* takes my breath away. A nail-biting tale of astonishing courage.” Lawrence Wright called it, “a literary triumph that marks the beginning of an exciting career. Every page is marked by blood and tears. It’s unforgettable.” As a journalist, photographer, and frequent commentator on Syrian and Middle Eastern affairs, Mrie has published in *The Atlantic*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The Nation*, *The New Arab*, and elsewhere.

Cosponsored by the Journalism Program of the University at Albany’s Department of Communication.



HEARTACHE AND HOPE

November 5 (Thursday)

Kristen McCallum

4:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Multi-Purpose Room, Campus Center West Addition, Uptown Campus

Kristen McCallum, UAlbany alum (B.A., 2013, M.A., 2025), is the founder of SafeWordSociety, a creative initiative celebrating the depth and beauty of historically marginalized communities. As a consultant and thought partner, she has consulted for the Obama



Foundation, PeopleMover, and other organizations. Her debut novel is *Free Girls* (2026), an LGBTQ YA romance about a teenager who must overcome many challenges when she rejoins high school after leaving juvenile detention. Bestselling YA author Sonido Reyes said, “This one is for all the labeled ‘bad kids’ who need someone to see the good in them. Full of heartache but never short on hope.”

Cosponsored by the University at Albany Alumni Association, English Department’s Creative Writing Program and Young Writers Project, UAlbany’s Writing & Critical Inquiry Program (WCI), Honors College, Justice & Multiculturalism in the 21st Century Project of the School of Criminal Justice, and the LGBTQ+ Advisory Council.

NOVEMBER



BURIAN LECTURE ON LIFE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

November 4 (Wednesday)

D.B. Woodside

7:30 p.m. – Burian Lecture

Recital Hall, UAlbany Performing Arts Center, Uptown Campus

Photo: Kris Qua

D.B. Woodside, star of television, film and stage, earned his B.A. in Theatre from the University at Albany in 1991. His best-known roles include U.S. Secret Service Agent Erik Monks in *The Night Agent*; Wayne Palmer, the White House Chief of Staff, in the thriller series *24*; High School Principal Robin Wood in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; businessman Malcolm Franks in *Single Ladies*; the angel Amenadiel, “God’s favorite son,” in *Lucifer*; and bass singer Melvin Franklin in *The Temptations*. On stage, he made his New York theater debut as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in “The Conscientious Objector,” and earned an NAACP Award for Best Lead Male in Dominique Morisseau’s “Skeleton Crew.” He delivered UAlbany’s Commencement Address in 2023.

Presented by the UAlbany Theatre Program and the Jarka and Grayce Burian Endowment in collaboration with the NYS Writers Institute. Cosponsored by the University at Albany Alumni Association.



FILM SCREENING

SEIZED

November 7 (Saturday)

The Palace Theatre, 19 Clinton Avenue, Albany
[REGISTRATION REQUIRED] Visit www.nyswritersinstitute.org

2:00 p.m. – Screening and panel discussion with filmmaker Sharon Liese, *Marion County Record* editor/publisher Eric Meyer, and additional panelist TBA.

(2026, 94 min., U.S., color). Directed by Sharon Liese.

A 2023 police raid on the *Marion County Record*, a small-town weekly newspaper, ignites a fierce debate about freedom of the press, bringing national and international attention to the tiny rural community of Marion, Kansas. Joan Meyer, the 98-year-old co-owner of the paper with her son, Eric Meyer, died one day after experiencing the emotional trauma of the raid. The Sundance Institute called it, “a must-see documentary about a small-town crisis.”

Sharon Liese, filmmaker and UAlbany alum (Class of 1981), is the director of *SEIZED*. Her previous film as co-director was the Emmy Award-winning short documentary, *THE FLAGMAKERS* (2022), featuring the stories of immigrant and refugee employees at the largest American flag factory in the nation.

Eric Meyer, publisher of the *Marion County Record*, began working at the paper in the fifth grade, and purchased it together with his parents in 1998. A retired professor of Journalism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he served formerly as associate dean of the university's College of Media.

Cosponsored by the Times Union, University at Albany Alumni Association, and the UAlbany Journalism Program.

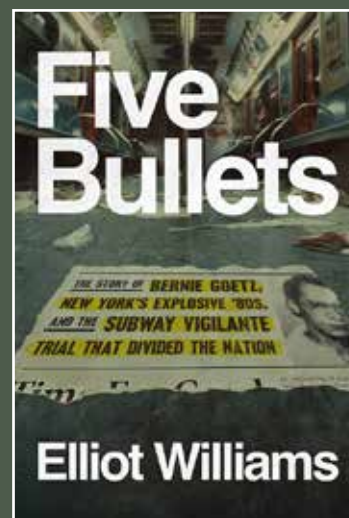
RACE, VIOLENCE AND NYC IN THE 1980'S

November 9 (Monday)

Elliot Williams

7:30 p.m. – Conversation / Q&A

Page Hall, 135 Western Avenue, Downtown Campus



Elliot Williams is a CNN legal analyst and regular guest host on SiriusXM and WAMU, NPR's Washington, DC, station. A sought-after commentator on electoral justice, civil rights, race relations, and other political, legal and cultural issues, he is also the author of the new book, *Five Bullets: The Story of Bernie Goetz, New York's Explosive '80s, and the Subway Vigilante Trial That Divided the Nation* (2026). Preet Bharara said, “Read this book to understand human nature,” and Anderson Cooper called it, “An amazing story, well told.” The Brooklyn-

born son of Jamaican immigrants, Williams served formerly as a federal prosecutor and later as a senior official at the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security.

Cosponsored by the Journalism Program of the University at Albany's Department of Communication, and the Justice & Multiculturalism in the 21st Century Project of the School of Criminal Justice.



Photo: Kyo Morishima



A.I. & SOCIETY CONVERSATION SERIES

November 12 (Thursday)

William Alexander

4:30 p.m. – Presentation / Q&A

Multi-Purpose Room, Campus Center
West Addition, Uptown Campus

William Alexander, Cuban-American science fiction and fantasy author, won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature for his first novel, *Goblin Secrets* (2012), about a boy's search for his missing



Photo: Alice Dodge

brother in a steampunk fairy tale world. In praise, the late Ursula K. Le Guin said, "I wish I could have read it when I was eleven." Alexander's debut science fiction novel for adults is *Sunward*, a finalist for the 2026 Philip K. Dick Award, and a *Library Journal* Best Book of the Year. The new novel follows the story of a human space traveler charged with mentoring "baby bots," juvenile AI who are developmentally in their teens, training them how to interact within society, and essentially becoming their foster mom.

Cosponsored by the AI & Society College and Research Center, UAlbany's Writing & Critical Inquiry Program (WCI), and the Honors College.



THE EMPIRE STATE ARCHIVES
& HISTORY AWARD

November 12 (Thursday)

Douglas Brinkley

7:00 p.m. – Ceremony/Conversation
with host Harold Holzer

Lewis A. Swyer Theatre, The Egg,
Empire State Plaza, Albany

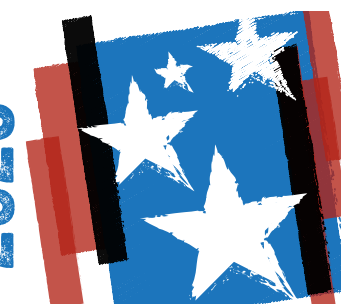
[TICKETS REQUIRED] Visit
nysarchivestrust.org for ticket information.

Douglas Brinkley, eminent scholar of American history and CNN Presidential Historian, will receive the 2026 Empire State Archives and History Award of the New York State Archives Partnership Trust. Brinkley is the author of more than 35 books, including most recently, *Silent Spring Revolution: John F. Kennedy, Rachel Carson, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and the Great Environmental Awakening* (2022); *American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy and the Great Space Race* (2019), winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal; *Rightful Heritage: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America* (2016); and *Cronkite* (2012). Six of his books have been named *New York Times* "Notable Books of the Year" and seven became *New York Times* bestsellers.

Presented by the New York State Archives Partnership Trust.

telling the

TRUTH 2026



November 13 (Friday)

7:00 p.m. – Panel Discussion

Page Hall, 135 Western Avenue, Downtown Campus

Join us for a conversation about politics in America and the prospects for an enduring democracy. Panelists will include: Jonathan Alter and Devlin Barrett.

TELLING THE TRUTH 2026 PANELISTS

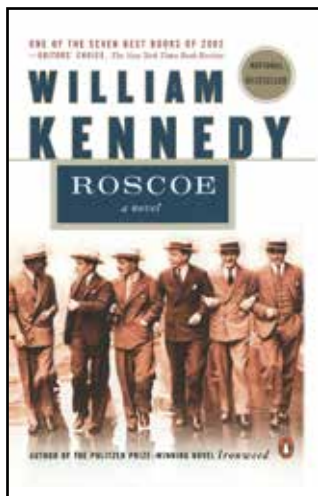


Photo: Molly Alter

Jonathan Alter is an influential columnist, bestselling author, presidential historian, and Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker. His newest book is *American Reckoning: Inside Trump's Trial—and My Own* (2024), a vivid and deeply personal eyewitness account of the historic first criminal trial of a U.S. president and a *cri de coeur* for American democracy. *The Washington Monthly* said, "Alter's fine, indispensable book offers an understanding of the presidency worthy of Robert Caro and a legal account of a celebrity trial that would have enthralled Dominick Dunne. It is a must-read." Alter is the author of three *New York Times* bestsellers about American presidents and covered the Trump felony trial for *NYTimes Opinion*, *The Washington Monthly*, and *Old Goats*, his Substack newsletter.



Devlin Barrett, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who grew up in Troy, NY, is the author of *The Department of Revenge: How Trump Took Control of American Justice* (2026), a book that "pulls back the curtain on President Trump's Justice Department and the way he has used it as a tool to settle political scores" ("PBS NewsHour"). Barrett is a staff reporter for the *New York Times* where he covers the Justice Department and FBI. He previously worked for *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Associated Press*, and the *New York Post*. He has been part of four Pulitzer Prize-winning reporting teams, winning for Public Service, National Reporting, Investigative Reporting, and Breaking News Reporting.



MARATHON PUBLIC READING

November 17 (Tuesday)

Roscoe by William Kennedy

11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Albany Distilling Co. Bar and Bottle Shop
75 Livingston Avenue, Albany

[RESERVATIONS REQUIRED for reading slots]
Visit www.nyswritersinstitute.org to register

Join us for a celebration of William Kennedy's landmark novel of Albany politics, circa 1945, in all its crooked splendor: the backroom dealings and no-bid contracts, the patronage and no-show jobs, the vote buying and bags of cash, the kickbacks, bribes and assorted inducements, not to mention the city-sanctioned gambling halls and prostitution rings! Bring your favorite ward heeler, crooked judge, or any friend

or relative looking for a place on the payroll!

In previous seasons, we've hosted marathon readings of Kennedy's novels, *Ironweed* in 2023, *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* in 2024, and *Legs* in 2025.

Our cosponsor, **Albany Distilling Co.**, maker of Ironweed whiskey, is located in the North Albany neighborhood where William Kennedy grew up, and where some of the fictional scenes in the Depression-era narrative take place.

Donations will be collected at the door to benefit the food pantry and free meal outreach at Sacred Heart Church, 33 Walter St. in Albany, which was Kennedy's childhood parish.

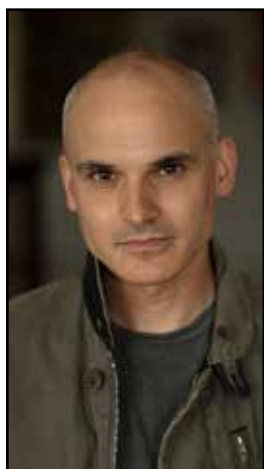


Photo: Pascal Perich

NEW DYSTOPIAN FICTION

November 19 (Thursday)

Hernan Diaz

4:30 p.m. — Conversation / Q&A

Multi-Purpose Room,
Campus Center West Addition, Uptown Campus

Hernan Diaz, major contemporary fiction writer and former UAlbany faculty member in the Spanish language program, will present his new novel, *Ply* (2026), one of the most anticipated books of the year. Set in a capitalist dystopia of "haves" and "have-nots," *Ply* is an epic work of

DECEMBER

UAlbany POET-IN-RESIDENCE

December 1 (Tuesday)

Anna Moschovakis

4:30 p.m. — Conversation / Q&A
and Poetry Reading

Multi-Purpose Room, Campus Center
West Addition, Uptown Campus

Anna Moschovakis, poet, novelist and translator, joins us as the new Poet-in-Residence in the University at Albany English Department. With French Senegalese novelist David Diop, she shared the 2021 International



Photo: Heather Phelps Lipton

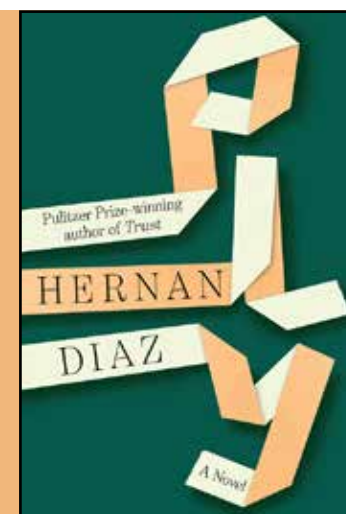


Booker Prize for her translation of Diop's novel, *At Night All Blood Is Black*, about the experiences of French African troops amid the carnage of World War I. Her poetry collections include *You and Three Others Are Approaching a Lake* (2011), winner of the James Laughlin Award of the Academy of American Poets; and *They and We Will Get into Trouble for This* (2016), named a best book of the year by *The New Yorker*. Moschovakis will present selections of her own work, as well as work by UAlbany students and NYSWI Community Workshop poets.

Cosponsored by the English Department's Creative Writing Program and Young Writers Project.

science fiction that questions the role of technology in the American experiment. Diaz won the Pulitzer Prize for the novel *Trust* (2022), the story of a Wall Street tycoon and his wife at the time of the 1929 market crash and Great Depression. His first novel, *In the Distance* (2017), was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Born in Argentina and raised in Sweden, Diaz is an internationally recognized scholar of the work of Jorge Luis Borges.

Cosponsored by UAlbany's Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, the English Department's Creative Writing Program and Young Writers Project, UAlbany's Writing & Critical Inquiry Program (WCI), and the Honors College.





LIFE AND HOW TO BEAR IT

December 2 (Wednesday)

Rachel Eliza Griffiths

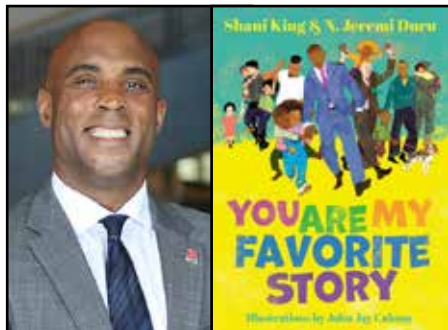
7:30 p.m. — Conversation / Q&A

Huxley Theater, New York State Museum, 222 Madison Avenue, Albany

Rachel Eliza Griffiths is an award-winning poet, visual artist, and novelist. Her newest book is *The Flower Bearers* (2026), a memoir of two tragedies that occurred within a year of each

other: the unexpected death of her closest friend, the poet Kamilah Aisha Moon, and the near-fatal attack on her husband, Sir Salman Rushdie. Geraldine Brooks said, “*The Flower Bearers* is a memoir of duality, of intoxicating love and excruciating loss. Here is a poet plying her tools in the service of literature’s most vital work: describing life and how to bear it.” Griffiths is the past recipient of the Hurston/Wright Foundation Legacy Award and the Paterson Poetry Prize, and was a finalist for a NAACP Image Award.

Cosponsored by the Capital District Library Council (CDLC).



OF FATHERS AND CHILDREN

December 9 (Wednesday)

Shani King

6:30 p.m. — Conversation / Q&A

Alice Moore Black Arts and Cultural Center, 135 South Pearl Street, Albany

Shani King, children’s book writer and Vice Dean of Rutgers Law School, is the author of *You Are My Favorite Story* (2026), a heartfelt celebration of the bonds

between fathers and children, coauthored with N. Jeremi Duru, and illustrated by John Jay Cabuay. In a starred review, *Kirkus* called it “an excellent choice for story time and an emotional conversation starter,” and said, “King and Duru encourage dads to be emotionally available: to affirm love, pain, fright and nervousness, and embrace the imperfection of fatherhood.” An expert on juvenile justice and refugee law, King is also the author of the children’s books, *Have I Ever Told You* (2019) and *Have I Ever Told You Black Lives Matter* (2021).

Professor King will spend the day visiting elementary schools in Albany, and will speak about juvenile justice and writing children’s books at the Alice Moore Black Arts and Cultural Center in the evening.

Major support and funding provided by the Carl E. Touhey Foundation. Cosponsored by the Alice Moore Black Arts and Cultural Center (AMBACC).

The Creative Life

A Conversation Series at UAlbany



Photo: Jessica Chappe

Melissa Auf der Maur

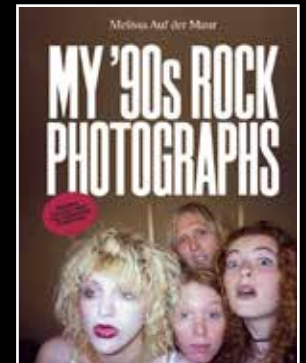
December 15 (Tuesday)

7:30 p.m. — Conversation / Q&A with Joe Donahue, Main Theatre, UAlbany Performing Arts Center, UAlbany Uptown Campus

Melissa Auf der Maur is best-known as the bassist for Hole and Smashing Pumpkins, two alt-rock bands that helped define the music and popular culture of the 1990s. She spent much of her free time during that decade documenting the rock world with her camera— on tour, backstage, onstage, and in the crowd. Her new book is *My '90s Rock Photographs* (2026), a visual love letter to the

last “analog decade.” Courtney Love said that the collection, “Cycles through rage, loss, ecstasy, sex, death, poetry, filth, childbirth, the forest, the river the sea the sea ... & ends with love.” At the event, many of her startling photos will be projected on a screen for discussion. Auf der Maur is also the author of the national and international bestseller, *Even the Good Girls Will Cry: A '90s Rock Memoir* (2026).

Produced in collaboration with WAMC Northeast Public Radio.



SAVE-THE-DATE - MAY 1, 2027 (Saturday)

selected SHORTS
Let us tell you a story.

Performance — 7:00 p.m.

Main Theatre, UAlbany Performing Arts Center, Uptown Campus

Advance tickets: \$15 general public • \$10 students, seniors & UAlbany faculty-staff. Day of show tickets: \$20 general public • \$15 students, seniors & UAlbany faculty-staff. For tickets, visit nyswritersinstitute.org

To sign up for email updates and for additional information on events, video clips, and literary news, visit our website at:

www.nyswritersinstitute.org and follow us on **Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Bluesky, and Twitter (X).**

On Campus Parking:

Courtesy parking for Writers Institute events on the Uptown Campus will be available in the **State Quad Student Parking Lot** one hour prior to and one hour after events.

Visitor Parking lots are also available for \$5 per vehicle, though parking spaces are very limited.

For Downtown Campus events, courtesy parking will be available in the **Thurlow Student Parking lot** on Western Avenue. **Handicapped entrances available:** Milne Hall (from Washington Avenue) and Richardson Hall (Page Courtyard, Western Avenue).

For maps of the campuses including parking lots, visit:
www.albany.edu/map

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