

western connecticut state university

**MFA IN
CREATIVE & PROFESSIONAL WRITING**



winter 2019

Wednesday, January 2nd

New Student Orientation
Vivo's @ The Maron Hotel
3:00-5:00pm

MFA Program Coordinator Anthony D'Aries will meet with new students and provide an overview of the program, the residency schedule, and important deadlines. All new students and peer mentors are required to attend this session.

Welcome Reception & Alumni Reading
The Maron Hotel (Washington Room)
7:30-9:00pm

The official start of the winter 2019 MFA residency! Come hear work from our alumni as well as our featured faculty reader, Oscar De Los Santos, who will read from his latest anthology, *The Living Pulp*.



Thursday, January 3rd

Plotting with an Unreliable Narrator

Jane Cleland

9:00-11:45am

Campus Center (CC) 212/214

There are five categories of unreliable narrators: (1) the innocent, the unknowing, or the misunderstood; (2) the guilty; (3) the emotionally taxed or mentally ill; (4) the incapacitated; and (5) paranormal. An unreliable narrator has to have a credible reason to be unreliable. You can't simply add a character who lies, for example, simply because you want to hide the truth. This workshop delves into the plotting and character-development complexities associated with unreliable narrators.

Lunch

12:00-1:15pm

Vivo's @ The Maron Hotel

Lunch will be served every day of the residency in the Executive Dining Room at Vivo's at the Maron Hotel.

The Lyric Essay

Kateri Kosek

1:30-2:45pm

CC212/214

In today's genre-bending literary landscape, the lyric essay is one form that has emerged; with one foot in poetry and the other in prose, it has qualities of both. A lyric essay is a mash-up that works by the accumulation of fragments and the juxtaposition of discrete threads, with a strong focus on language and implicit connections. What constitutes a lyric essay? Are there rules of the form, structural and otherwise, that everyone agrees on? We will discuss the qualities of a lyric essay, the advantages of writing them, and sample the range of work in the genre, from writers such as Eula Biss, Maggie Nelson, Lia Purpura, John D'Agata, Annie Dillard, and Anne Carson. Students will sketch out ideas for possible lyric essays, and perhaps transform a poem or essay that isn't quite working. Pertinent to students of both poetry and nonfiction.

Life in the Trenches: Crime Fiction Authors Talk about Process
Moderator: Jane Cleland
Panelists: Christopher Knopf, Linda Landrigan, and Neil Nyren
3:00-5:00pm
CC Ballroom North

Do you need to be a cop or do a ride-along to write a police procedural? If you're not a forensics expert can you write a series with a medical examiner as the protagonist? Should you write a thriller or a cozy? Young adult or middle grade? How do you decide? Does writing in the genre require writing to a formula? These crime fiction authors and editors discuss their approaches and strategies.

Dinner
5:00-7:00pm

Students and faculty are welcome to explore local restaurants for dinner. This time may also be used for mentor meetings.

Victoria Chang: Housatonic Book Award Winner in Poetry
7:30-9:00pm
Westside Classroom (WS) 218



Victoria Chang's fourth book of poems, *Barbie Chang* was published by Copper Canyon Press in 2017. *The Boss* (McSweeney's) won a PEN Center USA Literary Award and a California Book Award. Her other books are *Salvinia Molesta* and *Circle*. She also edited an anthology, *Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation*. Her poems have appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, *American Poetry Review*, *POETRY*, *Believer*, *New England Review*,

New England Review, *VQR*, *The Nation*, *New Republic*, *VQR*, *Tinhouse*, *Best American Poetry*, and elsewhere. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Sustainable Arts Foundation Fellowship in 2017, along with a Poetry Society of America Alice Fay di Castagnola Award in 2018 for her manuscript-in-progress, *OBIT*. She also received a Pushcart Prize for a poem published in *Barbie Chang*. She is a contributing editor of the literary journal, *Copper Nickel* and a poetry editor at *Tupelo Quarterly*.

Her children's picture book *Is Mommy?* (Simon & Schuster), was illustrated by Caldecott winner, Marla Frazee and was named a *NYT* Notable Book. She lives in Los Angeles with her family and her wiener dogs, Mustard and Ketchup and teaches within Antioch University's MFA Program. She also serves on the National Book Critics Circle Board.

Friday, January 4th

Syntax in Poems: Exploring Parataxis, Hypotaxis, and Inverted Syntax

Victoria Chang

9:00-11:45am

CC212/214

This workshop will focus on a few elements of syntax in poems—specifically, parataxis, hypotaxis, and inverted syntax. We will go through some definitions, some grammar, and we will read a few poems together through the lens of syntax. Poems include “Border Patrol Agent” by Eduardo Corral, “The Colonel” by Carolyn Forché, a poem by Ben Lerner, “Where You Go When She Sleeps” by TR Hummer, and “Cut Grass” by Phillip Larkin. Hopefully, you’ll walk away from this talk with a better understanding of syntax in general and of these specific kinds of syntax. We will also do a writing exercise at the end of the session.

Let's Write About Sex, Baby: The Art of Writing Erotica

Brian Centrone

1:30-2:45pm

CC212/214

From classic texts like *Lysistrata* to contemporary novels such as *Fifty Shades of Grey*, literary works across all genres have long featured sex. But writing about sex doesn’t come easy, and this skill hasn’t come without criticism. Erotic works tend to be looked down upon and viewed as trash or smut, but this isn’t or doesn’t have to be true. Erotica can be very literary. On the flip side, literary authors can miss the mark when trying to incorporate a sex scene into their novels, making for awkward, cheesy, or poorly written prose. “Let's Write about Sex, Baby” will guide writers at all levels and in all genres in crafting the perfect prose, whether it’s for an erotic short story, a sex scene in a novel or memoir, or even to add a touch of romance or sensuality to the story. This workshop will also challenge perceptions about writing about sex, examine the language of sex, and explore the difference between building sex into a story rather than building a story around sex.

Selling Yourself (And Your Writing) Online

Libby Cudmore and Nick Mamatas

CC315

The Internet has changed the economy of freelance writing forever. Where once even relatively small print magazines would pay handsomely for short features, essays, and even fiction, today the online economy has driven down the price of writing—an article that might once pay \$1 a word can now rate \$40 on a blog post...if you hustle for it.

At the same time, the Internet has given every writer a platform from which to demonstrate their expertise and skill. Social media can be monetized, but generally only indirectly. Libby and Nick will discuss how freelance writing has changed, and how to work as a writer in the new environment of blog posts, clickbait, and viral tweets.

Enrichment Project Presentations

3:00-5:00pm

CC212/214

Students will present their enrichment projects for the MFA community. Come support your fellow writers!

Dan Pope in Conversation with William Giraldi

7:30-9:00pm

WS218



Dan Pope is a 2002 graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop. He has published two novels, *In the Cherry Tree* (Picador, 2003) and *Housebreaking* (Simon & Schuster, 2015). His short stories have appeared in numerous print journals, including *The Gettysburg Review*, *McSweeney's*, *Iowa Review*, *The Bellevue Review*, *The Bennington Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Harvard Review*, *Witness*, *Crazyhorse*, as well as many anthologies, including *Best New American Voices* 2007 (Harcourt).



William Giraldi is author of the novels *Busy Monsters* and *Hold the Dark* (now a Netflix film), the memoir *The Hero's Body*, and a collection of criticism, *American Audacity*. He is also an editor for the journal *AGNI* at Boston University, and lives in Boston with his wife and sons.



Saturday, January 5th

Pitch Perfect: Preparing Your Manuscript for Submission

Gwen Jones

9:00-11:45pm

CC212/214

The Summer Residency is drawing near, and you've just been given a chance to meet with a literary agent or editor. You've been told you need to prepare a *proposal*, which includes something called a *query* and a *synopsis*, which you will submit for editor/agent review before the residency. Because at the residency, you will actually sit down and pitch your book to that literary agent or editor in person.

Pitch? In *person*? But how do I do that? I haven't the faintest idea what to do!

Then you need to attend Pitch Perfect, a hands-on workshop designed to get you ready to sell your book. Specifically timed for the Winter Residency, Pitch Perfect covers writing the query letter and synopsis, how to put together an effective proposal packet, researching agents to find the right one, "blurb" writing, meeting etiquette, do's and don'ts, what NOT to wear, relaxation techniques, and how to survive rejection and keep pitching. Pitch Perfect shows you how to use the months in between to prepare not only for the agent/editor meeting, but techniques to use throughout your writing career.

Pitch Perfect is for writers of fiction and non-fiction, with some pre-work involved as well as classroom writing. Attendees should plan on having a finished manuscript to pitch at the time of the agent meeting.

PREWORK:

- * Bring an encapsulation of your work in 100 words or less
- * Bring first page of your work
- * Dress for the workshop according to how YOU think you should dress for an editor/agent appointment.

Alumni Group Meeting

3:00-5:00pm

CC Ballroom North

All students and alumni are encouraged to attend this session to discuss ways to promote the MFA program, foster community through events and readings, and share information about the Housatonic Book Awards.

Mentor Meetings

3:00-5:00pm

Main Ballroom

This time is set aside for mentor meetings. Students and mentors are welcome to meet in the Main Ballroom or any of the other spaces on campus.

Dick Lehr: Housatonic Book Award Winner in Young Adult/Middle Grade Literature

7:30-9:00pm

WS218



Dick Lehr is an author and professor of journalism at Boston University. He previously wrote for *The Boston Globe*, where he was a member of the *Globe's* Spotlight Team, a special projects reporter and a magazine writer. While at the *Globe*, he was a Pulitzer Prize finalist and won numerous national and local journalism awards. His most recent book, *Trell*, is his first work of

fiction. His nonfiction book, *The Birth of a Movement: How Birth of a Nation Ignited The Battle for Civil Rights*, was the basis for a PBS documentary, narrated by Danny Glover, that received an Emmy nomination for Best Historical Documentary. Lehr is the author of five other books, including coauthoring *Black Mass: Whitey Bulger, the FBI and a Devil's Deal*, and its sequel, a biography titled *Whitey: The Life of America's Most Notorious Mob Boss*. *Black Mass* was a *New York Times* bestseller and Edgar Award Winner in the Best Fact Crime category. The Warner Bros. film adaptation, directed by Scott Cooper and starring Johnny Depp, premiered worldwide in September 2015. His other books include two finalists for the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime: *The Fence: A Police Cover-up Along Boston's Racial Divide*, and *Judgment Ridge: The True Story Behind the Dartmouth Murders*. Lehr

has degrees from Harvard College and the University of Connecticut School of Law. He was a Visiting Journalist at the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University and a John S. Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford University.

Sunday, January 6th

Writing Realistic YA Fiction

Dick Lehr

9:00-11:45am

CC212/214

This session will focus on the importance of research and reporting in writing realistic YA fiction. We will look at where and how a writer goes about finding information – just as a journalist might – and discuss the kind of interviews writers should pursue to supplement and enhance their research. We will consider some writers known for producing realistic adult fiction and write a fictional scene based on real records.

Writing with an Authentic YA Voice

Sarah Darer Littman

1:30-2:45pm

CC212/214

Actual email from a reader of my books:

“I was just wondering, how do you know EXACTLY what teenage girls think, in the present day? I know you were once one too but there wasn't all of these electronics... and I wanted to say that you have really captured the inner thoughts of a teenage girl! Thank you for writing this!! :)”

How does a person of a certain age know EXACTLY what teenagers think, and write in a voice that will ring true to a teenage audience? This interactive workshop will involve mining the essential truths of our own teen experience to find an authentic YA voice.

The Trouble with I

James Chesbro

1:30-2:45

CC 315

When writing in the first-person point of view, at some point, writers can feel overwhelmed carrying the dramatic weight of the narrative through this singular perspective. Especially when we are traversing through emotionally traumatic material, we can lose our way, become lost in a digression or find ourselves too far from the compelling tension we sensed from the idea that pulsed with energy in our heads before we brought it onto the page.

This seminar will seek to name ways we can advance our first-person narratives. We will identify different ways to see ourselves as fully dimensional characters by owning our flaws, exhibiting compassion, and being humble without self-flagellation. Trouble is good. We need trouble on the page. We'll discuss ways to free your narrator to tell their story.

Blogging vs. "Blah-ging"

Laura Hayden

3:00-5:00pm

CC212/214

What is the difference between blogging and "blah-ging"? This session will introduce writers to what a blog is - and isn't, how to focus on a variety of approaches in their areas of interest or expertise, how to start a blog on WordPress, how to increase the visibility of their blog by using SEO (Search Engine Optimization), and how to find free photos to use on their blogs. All very practical stuff, especially for the emerging writer!

Reading: James Chesbro and Daniel Asa Rose

7:30-9:00pm

WS 218



James M. Chesbro's work has appeared in *The Washington Post*, *America*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Brain*, *Child Magazine*, *Essay Daily*, and *The Huffington Post*. His essays are notable selections in *The Best American Essays* series 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2018, as well as *The Best American Sports Writing 2014*. His collection of essays, *Lion in the Snow*, was published in the fall of 2018. He teaches at Fairfield College Preparatory School.



Daniel Asa Rose is an award-winning American author (memoirs, novels, short stories, essays, reviews, poems, travel, humor), journalist, and editor. His most recent book, *Larry's Kidney: Being the True Story of How I Found Myself in China With my Black Sheep Cousin and His Mail-Order Bride, Skirting the Law to Get Him a Transplant ... and Save His Life*, was named "one of the top

nonfiction books of the year" by *Publishers Weekly* and is slated to be made into a movie directed by Richard ("Boyhood") Linklater.



Monday, January 7th

How Podcasts Can Help You Reach the Readers You Want

Pedro Rosado

CC212/214

You hear breathless talk these days of a “Podcast Renaissance” and how online radio has returned triumphantly from the abyss, like a phoenix rising from the ashes.

Podcasts are indeed hotter than ever with mainstream audiences — and advertising executives — but the plain, unvarnished truth is that they never really stopped being passionately sought-after content.

Pedro Rafael Rosado, founder and content director at HeadStepper Media, was part of the team that created the mega-hit podcast ‘The Daily’ for The New York Times. Pedro was a senior staff editor and senior producer at the Gray Lady for 23 years and joins us for a conversation about why investing in audio never stopped making sense for anyone looking to connect more deeply with their audience, expand their platform, or just have fun.

Go Small AND Go Home: How Intimacy and Spatial Constrictions Can Amplify Tension and Hook Readers

Matthew Quinn Martin

1:30-2:45

CC212/214

This is an investigation of why readers are turning away from the mile-a-minute thrillers with their cardboard heroes and outlandish plot lines, and heading in droves to commercial fiction that deals with more intimate issues regardless of genre (ex. *Gone Girl*, *Wool*, *The Road*, etc.). This session will present tools that writers can use to “raise the stakes” in ways that don’t involve having a literal “ticking clock” hooked up to a literal bomb.

Thesis Q&A

3:00-4:00pm

CC212/214

Anthony D’Aries will share information about thesis submission and approval process. Students are welcome to ask any questions regarding their thesis. Students are strongly encouraged to invite their thesis advisors to attend this session as well.

Wrap-Up Meeting

4:00-5:00pm

CC212/214

Residency wrap-up meeting with Anthony D'Aries. All students who attended residency are expected to attend this meeting to complete evaluation forms, to discuss what worked and didn't work well at the residency, and to discuss future residencies and the direction of the program.

Graduate Student Reading

7:30-9:00

WS218

Recent MFA graduates will read their work. Come support your fellow writers! Reading is open to the public and friends and family are welcome to attend.

Bios



Anthony D'Aries is the author of *The Language of Men: A Memoir* (Hudson Whitman Press, 2012), which received the PEN/New England Discovery Prize and Foreword's Memoir-of-the-Year Award. His essays have appeared in *Boston Magazine*, *Solstice*, *The Good Men Project*, *Shelf Awareness*, *The Literary Review*, and have been finalists for *Fourth Genre's Michael Steinberg Essay Prize* and the *Diana Wood's Memorial Creative Nonfiction Award*. In 2011, Anthony was selected as Randolph

College's Emerging Writer-in-Residence. He has served on the board of PEN/New England as a member of the Freedom-to-Write Committee, leading writing workshops in prisons, shelters, hospitals, and residential care facilities, and co-chairing the inaugural PEN Writing and Trauma Conference. Anthony received the 2014-15 Writers' Room of Boston's fellowship in nonfiction. In 2016, he was selected as the Lighthouse Writers Workshop's Fort Lyon writer in residence, where he taught writing workshops for homeless veterans. He currently directs the low-residency MFA in Creative and Professional Writing at Western Connecticut State University.

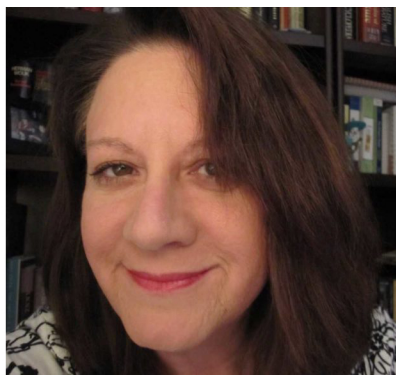


Laura B. Hayden writes for Crain Communications. She is the 2016 recipient of the BMI Woody Guthrie Foundation Fellowship. Laura's memoir *Staying Alive: A Love Story* (Signalman, 2011) has been recommended by the American Institute of Health Care Professionals. Follow her work at lhayden.blogspot.com.



Jane K. Cleland writes the multiple award-winning and IMBA bestselling and long-running *Josie Prescott Antiques Mystery* series, all published by St. Martin's Minotaur and Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine. Jane's bestseller about the craft of writing, *Mastering Suspense, Structure & Plot*, from Writer's Digest Books, won the Agatha Award for Best Nonfiction 2016. Next up is *Mastering Plot Twists*, also from Writer's Digest Books. She also writes articles for Writer's Digest Magazine. She

is a member of the fulltime faculty at Lehman College, where she is also the director of the Program for Professional Communications. More information is available at <http://janecleland.com>



Gwen Jones, MFA, is the author of the HarperCollins Avon FRENCH KISS series, *Wanted: Wife, Kiss Me, Captain*, and *The Laws of Seduction*, and her work has appeared in *Writer's Digest*, *The Kelsey Review*, and *The Connecticut River Review*. She is a mentor in Western Connecticut State University's Master in Creative and Professional Writing program, an Associate Professor of English at

Mercer County College, in West Windsor, NJ, and Vice President of the tri-state writers' organization, Liberty State Fiction Writers. She lives with her husband, Frank, near Trenton, NJ. Visit gwenjoneswrites.com, Facebook www.facebook.com/gwenjones-writes/ or Twitter @gwenjones25



Kateri Kosek, a graduate of the MFA program at WCSU, is a poet and essayist whose work has appeared in such journals as *Orion*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Catamaran*, *Terrain*, and *Northern Woodlands* magazine. Locally, she has written for *Berkshire Magazine*, *The Berkshire Edge*, *Winsted Journal*, and *Poughkeepsie Journal*. Her poetry has recently been a runner-up in contests at *Flyway*, *Writers at Work*, *Rosebud*, and *Arts & Letters*. Kateri has been a resident at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts in Nebraska. She lives in the Berkshires and teaches English at Northwestern CT

Community College.



Sarah Darer Littman is the critically acclaimed author of young adult novels, *Anything But Okay*, *In Case You Missed It*, *Backlash*, (Winner of the Iowa Teen Book Award) *Want to Go Private?*; *Life, After and Purge*; and middle grade novels, *Fairest of Them All*, *Charmed*, *I'm Sure*, and *Confessions of a Closet Catholic*, winner of the Sydney Taylor Book Award. As well as writing novels, she teaches in the MFA program at Western Connecticut State University and the Yale Summer Writers' Conference. She is also an

award-winning opinion columnist.

Visit Sarah online at <http://sarahdarerlittman.com>, and on Twitter/Instagram @sarahdarerlitt.



Libby Cudmore is the author of the critically-acclaimed debut novel *The Big Rewind*, which received a starred review from Kirkus and praise from USA Today, Booklist, Library Journal and Publisher's Weekly. Her short fiction has been published in *PANK*, *The Stoneslide Corrective*, *The Big Click*, *Beat To a Pulp*, as well as the Locus-award nominated anthology *Hanzai Japan*. As a music journalist, she is a frequent contributor to the blogs at *Vinyl*

Me Please and *Yacht Rock*, as well as essays in *Pop Matters*, *Classic Album Sundays* and *The Collapsar*. She writes for the Hometown Oneonta/the Freeman's Journal newspaper.



Nick Mamatas is the author of several novels, including *I Am Providence* and *Hexen Sabbath*. His short fiction has appeared in *Best American Mystery Stories*, *Year's Best Science Fiction & Fantasy*, *New Haven Review*, and his essays and reportage in *In These Times*, *Village Voice*, *The Smart Set* and other venues. As an anthologist, Nick co-edited *Haunted Legends* with Ellen Datlow, *The Future is Japanese* and *Hanzai Japan* with Masumi Washington, and the hybrid cocktail/fiction book *Mixed Up* with Molly Tanzer. His work has been nominated for the Hugo, World Fantasy, Bram Stoker, and Locus Awards.



Neil Nyren retired at the end of 2017 as the Executive VP, associate publisher and editor in chief of G.P. Putnam's Sons. He is the winner of the 2017 Ellery Queen Award from the Mystery Writers of America.

Among his authors of crime and suspense were Clive Cussler, Ken Follett, C.J. Box, John Sandford, Robert Crais, Jack Higgins, W.E.B. Griffin, Frederick Forsyth, Randy Wayne White, Alex Berenson, Ace Atkins, and Carol O'Connell. He also

worked with such writers as Tom Clancy, Patricia Cornwell, Daniel Silva, Martha Grimes, Ed McBain, Carl Hiaasen, and Jonathan Kellerman. He is currently writing a monthly publishing column for the MWA newsletter *The Third Degree*, as well as a regular ITW-sponsored series on debut thriller authors for BookTrib.com; and is an editor at large for *CrimeReads*.



Back Lash, Chris Knopf's seventh Sam Acquillo Mystery Series published in 2016, received a starred review from *Booklist*. It followed *Cop Job* in 2015. *The Last Refuge* (2005) was a finalist for *The Connecticut Book Award*. In 2007, *Two Time* was one of thirteen mysteries listed in the Recommended Summer Reading column in *The New York Times Book Review*. *Head Wounds* won the 2008 Benjamin Franklin Award for Best Mystery. *Dead Anyway* featuring off-the-grid sleuth Arthur Cathcart received starred

reviews from *Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, *Kirkus*, and *Library Journal* and was named a Best Crime Novel of 2012 by the *Boston Globe* and won the 2013 Nero Award. The sequels, *Cries of the Lost* and *A Billion Ways to Die*, were released in 2013 and 2014. His short story, *Kill Switch*, was shortlisted for the 2016 Derringer Award. Other stories are slated to appear in the Akashic Noir Series and *Alfred Hitchcock Magazine*.



Linda Landrigan is the editor-in-chief of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. She edited the commemorative anthology *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine Presents Fifty Years of Crime and Suspense* (2006), and the e-anthology *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine Presents Thirteen Tales of New American Gothic* (2012). Before assuming the role of editor of *AHMM*, Linda served as the associate editor of the magazine under Cathleen Jordan for five years.



Matthew Quinn Martin was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania and raised in New Haven, Connecticut. It wasn't until he moved to Manhattan that he realized he was a writer. He is the author of the *Nightlife* series (Pocket Star/Simon & Schuster) as well as the writer of the original script for *Slingshot* (Bold/Weinstein Co.)...and some other stuff. He lives on a small island off the North Atlantic coast of the United States

where it gets quiet in the winter...perhaps too quiet.



Brian Centrone is an author, editor, and publisher. His fiction, poetry, drama, and essays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. His debut novel, *An Ordinary Boy*, was published in 2013. Three of his literary short fiction stories have been collected in the chapbook, *I Voted for Biddy Schumacher: Mismatched Tales from the Mind of Brian Centrone*, while his complete gay, erotic short stories can be found in the anthology, *Erotica*, both by New Lit Salon

Press. In addition, Brian teaches literature and creative writing at SUNY/Westchester Community College, and the popular workshop, "Let's Write about Sex, Baby: The Art of Writing Erotica" for the Writing Institute at Sarah Lawrence College. Find out more about him at briancentrone.com.