

South Coast Writers Conference Schedule

Friday, February 13, 2026

at the Curry Campus of Southwestern Oregon Community College in Brookings

8:30 am-9:00 am	Check-in at the registration desk at the Sprague Commons
9:00 am-4:00 pm	Friday Writing Intensive Workshops
7:00-9:00 pm	Authors' Night - Keynote presentation by Miriam Gershow , “ Turning Rejection into Creative Rejuvenation. ” To be followed by readings and book signing by conference presenters. Free and open to the public.

Saturday, February 14, 2026

at the Curry Campus of Southwestern Oregon Community College in Brookings

8:00 am-8:30 am	Check-in at the registration desk at the Sprague Commons				
8:30 am-9:00 am	Welcome and Introduction in the Sprague Commons, please be prompt.				
Session 1	A. The Mighty Little Chapbook Ken Letko	B. What Makes a Good Mystery G.A. Georgia Cockerham	C. Creative Mindset & Story Structure: From Concept to Publication in the Comic Book Industry Andrew Kafoury	D. Songwriter Workshop Cliff Stansell	
9:00 am-10:30 am					
Session 2	E. The Devil is in the Details Robert Balmer	F. Publish like a Pro—The Fast Track to Author Success Elizabeth Ann Atkins	G. Songwriter Workshop Cliff Stansell	H. Writing Across Genres for Children and Young Adults Melissa Hart	
10:45 am-12:15 pm					

Lunch Break (12:15 pm - 1:30 pm)

Session 3	I. Working with Opposites: a Poetry Workshop Ken Letko	J. Self-publish and Become an Indie Author G.A. Georgia Cockerham	K. Creative Mindset & Story Structure: From Concept to Publication in the Comic Book Industry Andrew Kafoury	L. Creating Complex Characters Miriam Gershow
Session 4	M. What's so Funny?—A workshop about satire Robert Balmer	N. How to Write your Memoir for Legacy, Inspiration & Influence Elizabeth Ann Atkins	O. The Joy of Flash: How Short Writing Can Jumpstart Your Creative Practice Miriam Gershow	P. The Art of the Query Letter: How to Wow Editors and Agents Melissa Hart
5:00 pm-6:00 pm	Closing Activities in the Sprague Commons			

FRIDAY WORKSHOP

February 13, 2026 - 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

The Friday workshops are intended for a more intensive learning and writing experience. Choose from one of three options. Workshops are limited to 25 students. Priority registration for Friday workshops will be given to conference participants planning on attending both days. Priority registration is open through January 30. Those registering for only a Friday workshop will be placed on a waiting list. On February 1, if space is available, registrations for the Friday workshops will be processed from the waiting list in order of the date received. Participants will be notified at the email provided. A one-hour lunch break is included.

1

**Write Your Book in a Day:
The Two Sisters Blueprint for
Fast, Focused Results
How to Write, Publish &
Promote with Power**

Elizabeth Ann Atkins

This transformational 6-hour workshop — based on the new book *Write Your Book in a Day: The Two Sisters Blueprint for Fast, Focused Results* by Elizabeth Ann Atkins and Catherine M. Greenspan — empowers aspiring authors to finally write, publish, and promote the book they've been dreaming of. With high-energy and inspiring, interactive instruction, participants will: blast through fear and writer's block; create a clear outline, publishing plan, and promotion strategy; and leave fully motivated to write a life-changing — and possibly world-changing — book.

2

**What Gets Me Going,
What Keeps Me Going—
Poetry**
Ken Letko

This is a generative workshop through which participants begin two poems and explore the cultural context of self-created poetry mingled with poetry created by others. Participants will explore inclusion in contemporary poetry by taking part in four distinct sessions.

A mix of lecture, interactive discussion, inferential exercises, and hands-on writing. Paper handouts with skeletal outlines, brief notes, and example poems will be provided for participants by the instructor.

Participants are encouraged to bring five to ten of their poems with them.

3

**Tell Your Story: Write
Personal Essays for
Newspapers and
Magazines**

Melissa Hart

Hundreds of magazines and newspapers publish personal essays. In this master workshop, veteran personal essayist Melissa Hart will teach you to identify a wealth of topics for your personal essays and then show you how to craft your ideas into compelling short pieces for readers. We'll talk about the components of personal essays using published examples, and we'll touch on the ethics of writing about friends and family. You'll learn how to submit your work professionally, and how to promote your essays once they're published. Writers will receive a robust bibliography so that you can hit the ground running after the conference!

South Coast Writers Conference

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Curry Campus– Brookings

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SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

February 14, 2026

Come prepared to write and learn. Some workshops will have time for writing and reading of participants' work.

Session 1 - 9:00 am—10:30 am

A. The Mighty Little Chapbook - Ken Letko

This session will introduce beginning and intermediate participants to the chapbook as a means of developing a collection of poems. Using examples, explanation, and discussion, the instructor will emphasize a step-by-step process that leads to incrementally building a short collection of poems through generating, organizing, and completing a chapbook.

B. What Makes a Good Mystery - G.A. Georgia Cockerham

A good mystery needs a compelling protagonist, a complex puzzle with believable suspects and clues, and a tight plot that uses suspense, red herrings, and foreshadowing. It must also deliver a satisfying and earned resolution after unexpected twists and a final confrontation. In this workshop, we'll explore how to plan your mystery, develop the key characters, and create suspense.

C. Creative Mindset & Story Structure: From Concept to Publication in the Comic Book Industry - Andrew Kafoury

Every great story begins with a spark — but how do we develop the creative mindset that carries that spark all the way to a finished project? In this class, we'll explore how to cultivate a sustainable creative process, shape your ideas into a compelling, marketable script, and transform that script into a completed comic book ready for the direct market — with the potential to reach thousands of readers and beyond.

D. Songwriter Workshop - Cliff Stansell

In the songwriting workshop, Cliff will go over his technique or process for writing a song including: how to tell a story and make it rhyme, diversity in styles, the importance of a hook, grammar and slang, different timings and much more.

Session 2 - 10:45 am—12:15 pm

E. The Devil is in the Details - Robert Balmer

Humans are 99% the same. It is the details that distinguish one individual from another. Places have their own story. That story and how it's told often distinguishes one place from another. Discover how to use details to distinguish characters and places. Takeaways include: brands affording insight into a person; personality quirks generating plot, humor, conflict and characters; place as character; and how the mores of a place affect its denizens and visitors. Participants will discuss the pros of cons of "showing" and "telling".

F. Publish like a Pro—The Fast Track to Author Success - Elizabeth Ann Atkins

In this transformational 90-minute session, bestselling author, publisher, and book coach Elizabeth Ann Atkins — who has been published by major New York publishers and now publishes through her hybrid company, Two Sisters Writing & Publishing® — demystifies the publishing world so you can choose your path with power. You'll learn the 3 main publishing options and what publishers look for, leaving with clarity, confidence, and a strategic plan to publish your book — and launch your success.

SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

Session 2 (continued) - 10:45 am—12:15 pm

G. Songwriter Workshop - Cliff Stansell

In the songwriting workshop, Cliff will go over his technique or process for writing a song including: how to tell a story and make it rhyme, diversity in styles, the importance of a hook, grammar and slang, different timings and much more.

H. Writing Across Genres for Children and Young Adults - Melissa Hart

In this fun and lively workshop, you'll learn about all the ways you can write both fiction and nonfiction—longform and short—for children and young adults. We'll study the work of three contemporary kids' authors and demystify picture books, chapter books, middle grade novels, and young adult novels. You'll learn how to approach magazines with short nonfiction pieces to build interest in your book-length work and leave with a detailed bibliography of resources so that you can start writing across genres for kids.

Session 3 - 1:30 pm—3:00 pm

I. Working with Opposites: A Poetry Workshop - Ken Letko

This workshop will illuminate opposites in poetry. Beginning, intermediate, and advanced participants will develop awareness of how a whole includes opposites. Through examples and discussion, the presenter will comment on and engage the audience in a dialog focused on four topics: definitions, history, examples, and implementation.

J. Self-publish and Become an Indie Author - G.A. Georgia Cockerham

Self-publishing allows authors to maintain full creative control and ownership of their work, leading to higher royalty percentages and faster publication timelines compared to traditional publishing. In this workshop you'll learn about all aspects of the publishing process, including writing, editing, formatting, design, marketing, and distribution. In essence, you'll learn how to operate your own small business when you self-publish your book.

K. Creative Mindset & Story Structure: From Concept to Publication in the Comic Book Industry - Andrew Kafoury

Every great story begins with a spark — but how do we develop the creative mindset that carries that spark all the way to a finished project? In this class, we'll explore how to cultivate a sustainable creative process, shape your ideas into a compelling, marketable script, and transform that script into a completed comic book ready for the direct market — with the potential to reach thousands of readers and beyond.

L. Creating Complex Characters - Miriam Gershow

In this hands-on workshop, writers will practice making characters memorable. They will learn how to build a complex character and then take part in hands-on exercises to turn characters from flat to multi-dimensional.

Session 4 - 3:15 pm—4:45 pm

M. What's so Funny?—A workshop about satire - Robert Balmer

Some things are so ridiculous they deserve skewering. Other things are so relentlessly harmful and yet ignored that writers find another way to grab people's attention vis-à-vis the problem. (Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" comes to mind.) Practice writing satire that's funny and tell the truth. Takeaways include: identifying a subject worthy of satire; discerning the difference of knowing what's funny and what's funny with a message worthy of discussion and debate; learning the difference between punching up versus punching down; and ensuring that your satire, even if absurd, makes a salient point.

N. How to Write your Memoir for Legacy, Inspiration & Influence - Elizabeth Ann Atkins

In this high-impact 90-minute workshop, you'll learn insider secrets and time-saving methods from bestselling author, publisher, and book coach Elizabeth Ann Atkins — who has ghostwritten dozens of memoirs for judges, lawyers, surgeons, entrepreneurs, and executives, as well as her own bestselling memoir. You'll discover how to overcome fear, overwhelm, and writer's block, while creating a strategic plan to write, publish, and promote a powerful memoir. You'll leave energized, organized, and ready to finally finish — and share — your story.

O. The Joy of Flash: How Short Writing Can Jumpstart Your Creative Practice - Miriam Gershow

Participants will learn about the basics of flash fiction, read several pieces of flash as inspiration, and draft flash fiction pieces to find the spark in their writing. Everyone will come away with several pieces of new writing.

P. The Art of the Query Letter: How to Wow Editors and Agents - Melissa Hart

A query letter is an audition to convince readers that you're the perfect person for the project you're pitching, whether it's a novel or a nonfiction article, screenplay or book review. Nail those crucial few paragraphs and the gig is yours. Flub them and the reader hits delete. This lively and supportive workshop empowers you to grab the attention of literary agents, editors, and others at magazines, newspapers, publishing houses, and production companies using a concise and vibrant query letter full of story promise, conflict, and surprise.

2026 PRESENTERS

AUTHORS' NIGHT KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Miriam Gershow is the award-winning author of *Closer, Survival Tips: Stories* and *The Local News*. Her writing is featured in *The Georgia Review*, *Gulf Coast*, and *Black Warrior Review*, among other journals. She is the recipient of a Fiction Fellowship from the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing, an Oregon Literary Fellowship, and is a two-time finalist for the Oregon Book Award.

Elizabeth Ann Atkins is a powerhouse book coach who helps aspiring authors across America write, publish, and promote best-selling books. A best-selling author and co-founder of Two Sisters Writing & Publishing®, she's also creator and host of the Goddess Power books, retreats, and podcast, plus an Emmy-nominated TV talk show host, sought-after speaker, retreat leader, and meditation teacher. Elizabeth has written and published more than 60 novels, memoirs, and business books — drawing on her master's in journalism from Columbia University and bachelor's from the University of Michigan — to elevate voices and transform ideas into published success.
<https://twosisterswriting.com/>



Robert Balmer is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in the *Smithsonian*, *Golf Illustrated*, *ZYZZYVA*, the *Oregonian*, the *Seattle Times* and other print media. It has aired on *MarketPlace*, the *Savvy Traveler* and Oregon Public Radio and Television. He has led writing workshops for organizations and conferences on the West Coast since 2016, his bailiwick being humor.

[Linked In: https://www.linkedin.com/in/bob-balmer-662078a8/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bob-balmer-662078a8/)

G. A. Cockerham (Georgia) has authored nine books, including the O'Toole/Starker Oregon Coast Murder Mystery series. She is a retired financial advisor, member and award judge for Killernashville.com, and an Active Member and award judge for Mystery Writers of America. Georgia has taught classes and facilitated presentations for several organizations, including the Killer Nashville Int. Conference. This year she signed and sold books while representing Oregon Authors at the Oregon State Fair. www.colorandwordsbygeorgia.com



Melissa Hart is the author of numerous nonfiction books and novels for children and adults; her latest is *Down Syndrome Out Loud: 20+ Stories of Disability & Determination*. Her short pieces have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Smithsonian*, *The Washington Post*, *Orion*, *CNN*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and numerous other publications. She teaches for the online MFA in Creative Writing program at Southern New Hampshire University. www.melissahart.com

Andrew Kafoury is the publisher and head of story at Battle Quest Comics. He founded the company in 2020 to be a home for like-minded story creatives and artists with a passion for compelling characters and exciting adventures. <https://battlequestcomics.com/>
<https://www.instagram.com/>



Ken Letko has published numerous poems in journals and anthologies, including *North American Review* and *Poetry South*, which have nominated his poems for Pushcart awards. Flowstone Press published his book *Bright Darkness*, 2017. He has also published seven chapbooks, most recently *Beautiful Aches*, Bottlecop Press, 2025. He has served as editor-in-chief of the *Mid-American Review* and currently works as poetry editor for *Cider Press Review*. He holds degrees from University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and Bowling Green State University in Ohio. kenletko.com.

Cliff Stansell was born in Gold Beach, Oregon. His father Bob and aunt Nina were extraordinary musicians. Nina said that as a baby, Cliff would end up in the corner of the house where the musical instruments were. Bob and Nina co-wrote a song, *The Seahawk*, after the 1964 flood carried many boats out to sea. This had a profound effect on Cliff, and he realized, as a teenager, that he could also tell stories through song. He writes about things that his skewed brain notices. Some are serious, some funny, and some sad: avocado rustlers, 1959 Rambler wagon, the relocation of native people, soldier suicides, whales, overpopulation, Cliff's mother Veva, homelessness, letting go, hope, and whatever catches his attention.