

AWP Panel

R181. Unsilencing the Undergraduate Workshop.

(Lisa Page, Sybil Baker, Ira Sukrungruang, Robin Hemley, Leah Huizar) Room 007A, Henry B. González Convention Center, River

Description: Level Undergraduate workshops involve students from diverse backgrounds. Because of this, the traditional workshop model does not always work effectively. As Beth Nguyen states in “Unsilencing the Workshop”: “a system that relies on silencing and skewed power and endurance is a terrible system.” In this panel, experienced teachers will discuss their approaches to teaching undergraduate creative writing, and attendees will leave with practical models and practices to initiate in their classes.

Comments: The traditional Iowa workshop is a good one. However, there are many other effective ways to encourage students to participate and comment on the work of their peers in a Creative Writing Workshop. Among other things under discussion was “the cone of silence” which asks writers to remain silent as his or her work is discussed by the other writers in the class. It was interesting to hear techniques for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry but I was especially interested in prose methods of response besides the cone of silence and the standard letter. I especially liked hearing Ira Sukrungruang’s views on this since we published his memoir (Talk Thai: The Adventures of Buddhist Boy) when I was working in acquisitions at the University of Missouri Press. I’m actually planning on learning more about the “Liz Lerman” artistic method, and perhaps using these alternative method for my intermediate and advanced creative writing students this semester for Short Story 2. Other methods discussed included the Question and Answer Method, The Oprah Method (the writer is in the hot seat and is being asked questions), The Generative Method, and others.