



Events upcoming January – March, 2021

Due to COVID-19 and our uncertainty regarding in-person meetings, the locations and times of the following events are currently TBD. If we cannot assemble in person, the events will be presented on Zoom. Final determination will be posted on our website, poetrysocietyvsc.org, as each event date nears.



These events are supported by SC Humanities, a non-profit organization; inspiring, engaging, and enriching South Carolinians with programs about literature, history, culture, and heritage.

January 8 – Annual Poetry Showcase

Each January, we begin the new year with our annual open mic showcase for members. This year the Showcase will be via Zoom. To obtain the link, register through [our website](#). Sign-up information for those participating as readers will be published in the January Newsletter. You must be an active member to participate. Now is a good time to join us or renew your membership.

January 23 – Poetry Workshop with Len Lawson, “A Poetics of Place”

What are the elements that define our places and, in turn, define ourselves? Poets can define a location, city, or region with intricate detail or intense emotion by intimately acquainting us with their experiences. Through the poetry of Phillip Levine, bell hooks, and others, this workshop will examine the elements of place in poetry and guide participants in developing or even redefining places as their own.



Len Lawson received a B.S. in Business Administration from Winthrop University, an M.A. in English from National University, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in English Literature & Criticism at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, earning the 2020 IUP Outstanding Doctoral Student Award. He is the author of *Chime*, the chapbook *Before the Night Wakes You*, and co-editor of *Hand in Hand: Poets Respond to Race*. His poetry has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. He has received fellowships from *Callaloo*, Vermont Studio Center, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Weymouth Center for the Arts.

February 12 – Poetry Reading by Joy Priest

February 13 – Poetry Workshop with Joy Priest, “Writing Place: The Autobiographical Landscape”

Recently, the poet Ocean Vuong gave a “mini-essay” on metaphor via Instagram. In those essay-posts they wrote that figurative language was their “favorite literary device,” because it can create, what they called, “the DNA of seeing,” which they expounded on to say, “a strong metaphor can enact the autobiography of sight. For example, what does it say about a person who sees the stars in the night sky—as exit wounds?” In this workshop, we will discuss this mini-essay and the function of figurative language. We will read together poems of place and discuss some craft strategies for writing the emotional landscape. From our tour through these strategies, we will generate a series of prompts that we can use during and after the workshop to develop our figurative autobiographies.



Joy Priest is the author of *HORSEPOWER* (Pitt Poetry Series, 2020), winner of the Donald Hall Prize for Poetry. She is the recipient of the 2020 Kunitz Prize and her work has appeared in the Academy of American Poets’ Poem-a-Day, *APR*, *The Atlantic*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Poets & Writers*, among others. She is currently a doctoral student in Literature & Creative Writing at the University of Houston.

February 20 – Poetry Workshop with Leslie Sainz, “Collapse & Surprise: Letting Uncertainty ‘Steer’ Your Poems”

In this workshop, we will lean into what Fanny Howe refers to as a poetics and ethics of "bewilderment" to examine how granting ourselves permission to let our poems remain unknown to us strengthens our relationship to language and music, and ceremonially brings us into the presence of our readers. The work of Samiya Bashir, Lucie Brock-Broido, and Hoa Nguyen will be our guides.



Leslie Sainz is a first-generation Cuban-American, born and raised in Miami, Florida. A 2019 National Poetry Series Finalist, she received her MFA in poetry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she was the Editor-in-Chief of *Devil's Lake*. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *AGNI*, *jubilat*, *Narrative*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *The Journal*, and others. She has received scholarships, fellowships, and residencies from CantoMundo, The Miami Writers Institute, *The Adroit Journal*, and The Stadler Center for Poetry at Bucknell University.

March 12 – Poetry Reading by Valerie Neiman

March 13 – Poetry Workshop with Valerie Neiman, “Poetry – Behind the Mask”

Each day we go about our routine lives, but inside we are superheroes or explorers, pirates or rock stars, hiding our secret identities behind the mask of our unassuming face and daily clothes. One way to enter this secret world is to write a persona poem – persona meaning mask – in which we give a voice to an alternate identity. Join Valerie Nieman, author of *Leopard Lady: A Life in Verse*, for an exploration of hidden realms of the self.



Valerie Neiman is a Professor of English at North Carolina A & T. She earned her BA in journalism from West Virginia University and an MFA from Queens University of Charlotte. A writer of both poetry and fiction, her awards include the Eric Hoffer Prize for *Blood Clay*, the Greg Grummer from *phoebe* magazine, the Nazim Hikmet Prize from the Nazim Hikmet Poetry Festival, and the Byron Herbert Reece Prize from the Georgia Poetry Society. In addition, Ms. Nieman has held fellowships from the North Carolina Arts Council and the NEA and been the recipient of major grants in West Virginia and Kentucky.

March 20 – Poetry Workshop with Michele Reese, “The Art of the Line”

There are many ways to think about the poetic line, but I've always liked James Longenbach's statement—“poetry is the sound of language organized in lines.” With that in mind, this workshop will play with sounds and rhythms to create line endings. We will employ the strategies of syllabics, meter, and rhyme to experiment with published poems and to complete writing exercises. Through this attention to sound, our goal will be to lend greater illumination to the subjects of the poems. Discussion will also address the uses of form in our daily practice.



Michele Reese is Professor of English at USC Sumter. She earned her PhD at the University of Missouri. In addition to appearing widely in magazines, such as *Paris Review*, *Citron Review*, *Kestrel*, *Mid-America Poetry Review*, and *Poet Lore*, her poetry was anthologized in *Home Is Where: An Anthology of African American Poets from the Carolinas* and *Chemistry of Color: Cave Canem South Poets Responding to Art*. Dr. Reese's research and scholarly writing have led to numerous appearances at national and international academic conferences. She has received grants and research stipends from the University of South Carolina and the National Endowment for the Humanities.