The Jackson Center for Creative Writing is home to Hollins’ esteemed undergraduate and graduate writing programs. Although the graduate program recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and Hollins has offered undergraduate classes in creative writing for even longer, the Jackson Center was initiated in 2008 through a $5 million gift from Susan Gager Jackson ‘68 and her husband, John Jackson.

The undergraduate and graduate programs in creative writing have produced dozens of writers of national and international acclaim, including Lee Smith and Pulitzer Prize winners Annie Dillard, Henry Taylor, and Natasha Trethewey. Kiran Desai won both the Man Booker Prize for Fiction and the National Book Critics Circle Award. The fiction of Madison Smartt Bell has been recognized by a Strauss Living Award, and Fifty Poems, an undergraduate honors project by Liana Quill, won a national poetry contest and was published by the Mississippi Review Poetry Series in 2010.

Students and faculty engage in collaborative learning. One former student described it this way: “We were encouraged to be endlessly curious rather than circumscribed in our approach to literature. It seems clear to me now that we were being taught an approach to life, an approach that invites, perhaps even invokes, literature. It seems clear to me now that we were being taught an approach to life, an approach that invites, perhaps even invokes, literature. It seems clear to me now that we were being taught an approach to life, an approach that invites, perhaps even invokes, literature. It seems clear to me now that we were being taught an approach to life, an approach that invites, perhaps even invokes, literature.

Another student put it like this: “The Hollins environment is especially conducive to learning and creativity. The academic experience downplays competitiveness and stresses the benefits of discussion, interaction, and support from both professors and fellow students.”
Abortion Choice: True Stories of Birth, Contraception, and the Politics of Reproduction

been anthologized in Best American Short Stories (Harvard University Press). 'Handwriting' was a finalist for the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award for Fiction 2015, was on the shortlist in 2017. In 2014, the collection was named "runner up" for the Juniper Prize for Fiction Short Story Competition, in 2013.

Karen E. Bender, distinguished visiting professor of creative writing, B.S., UCLA; M.F.A., University of Iowa. Author of the story collection Refund (Counterpoint Press), which was a Finalist for the National Book Award for Fiction 2015, was on the shortlist for the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Prize, on the Longlist for the Story Prize, a Los Angeles Times Bestseller, and a New York Times 'Editors' Choice. Also by Bender, A Town of Empty Rooms (Counterpoint Press) and Like Normal People (Houghton Mifflin). Her stories have appeared in magazines including The New Yorker, Granta, Ploughshares, and The Harvard Review, have been anthologized in Best American Short Stories and won two Pushcart prizes. She is also co-editor of the nonfiction anthology: Choice: True Stories of Birth, Contraception, Infertility, Adoption, Single Parenthood and Abortion.

Thorpe Moeckel, associate professor of English and director of the Jackson Center for Creative Writing; B.A., Bowdoin College; M.F.A., University of Virginia. Author of Arcadia Road: a Trilogy; Venison: a poem; Odd Botany: Making a Map of the River, and Watershed Days: Adventures (a Little Thorny Baby & Familiar) in the Home Range (nonfiction). Chapbooks include Off Owl's Head, Meltlines, and The Guessing Land. His writing appears regularly in journals, and selections are featured in many anthologies.

Elizabeth Poliner is the author of the novel As Close to Us as Breathing, an Amazon Spotlight Pick and "Best Book of 2016 So Far" for fiction/literature. Also by Poliner: What You Know in Your Hands (poems), Mutual Life & Casualty (novel in stories), and Sudden Fog (poetry chapbook). Her stories and poems have appeared widely in literary journals.

Cathryn Hankla, professor of English & Creative Writing; B.A., M.A. Hollins College. Poetry Editor of The Hollins Critic and author of thirteen books of poetry and fiction, including Galaxies, Great Bear, Last Exposures: a sequence of poems; Texas School Book Depository: Prose Poems; A Blue Moon in Poorwater; and Fortune Teller Miracle Fish stories; winner of the James Boatwright III Prize for Poetry, the PEN Syndicated Fiction Prize, Virginia Commission for the Arts Fellowship.

Pauline Kaldas, associate professor of English; B.A., Clark University; M.A., University of Michigan; Ph.D., SUNY-Binghamton. Her works include The Time between Places (short stories), Dinarzad’s Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction (co-editor); Letters from Cairo (travel memoir); and Egyptian Compass (poems). Her poems, stories, and essays have been published in various journals and anthologies.


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