The Program in Creative Writing presents

ALTHEA WARD CLARK W’21
READING SERIES 2015–16

Wednesday, September 30
HODDER FELLOWS:
Natalie Diaz
Phil Klay

Wednesday, October 14
Jhumpa Lahiri
Mary Szybist

Wednesday, November 18
Adam Johnson
Dorianne Laux

Wednesday, December 16
Student Readings

Wednesday, February 10
Marlon James
Claudia Rankine

Tuesday, October 27
Marie Howe delivers the
Theodore H. Holmes ’51
and Bernice Holmes Holmes Lecture

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All readings take place at 4:30 p.m. at the Berlind
Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center unless noted otherwise.
Free and open to the public.

For more about the Program in Creative Writing visit
arts.princeton.edu
Jhumpa Lahiri received the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for Interpreter of Maladies, her debut story collection that explores issues of love and identity among immigrants and cultural transplants. With a compelling fluency, Lahiri portrays the practical and emotional adversities of her diverse characters in elegant and direct prose. Whether describing hardships of a lonely Indian wife adapting to life in the United States or illuminating the secret pain of a young couple as they discuss their betrayals during a series of electrical blackouts, Lahiri’s bittersweet stories avoid sentimentality without abandoning compassion.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel The Namesake was published in the fall of 2003 to great acclaim. The Namesake expands on the perplexities of the immigrant experience and the search for identity. The narrative follows the Gangulis, an Indian couple united in an arranged marriage, as they build their lives together in America. Unlike her husband, Mrs. Ganguli defies assimilation, while their son, Gogol, burdened with the seemingly absurd expectation of being Indian by Indians and American by Americans.” Lahiri’s abilities to convey the oldest cultural conflicts in the most immediate fashion and to achieve the voices of many different characters are among the unique qualities that have captured the attention of a wide audience.

Alongside the Pulitzer Prize, Jhumpa Lahiri also won the PEN/Hemingway Award, an O. Henry Prize (for the short story “Interpreter of Maladies”), the Addison Metcalf Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Vallombrosa Von Rezzori Prize and the Asian American Literary Award. Lahiri was also granted a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2002 and an National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 2006. She has recently joined the Lewis Center for the Arts’s Program in Creative Writing faculty at Princeton University as Professor of Creative Writing.

Born in London, Lahiri moved to Rhode Island as a young child with her Bengali parents. Although they have lived in the United States for more than thirty years, Lahiri observes that her parents retain “a sense of emotional exile” and Lahiri herself grew up with “conflicting expectations... to be Indian by Indians and American by Americans.” Lahiri’s abilities to convey the oldest cultural conflicts in the most immediate fashion and to achieve the voices of many different characters are among the unique qualities that have captured the attention of a wide audience.

Mary Szybist grew up in Pennsylvania. She earned degrees from the University of Virginia and the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, where she was a Teaching-Writing Fellow. Her first collection of poetry, Granted (2003), was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the winner of the 2004 Great Lakes Colleges Associations New Writers Award. Her second book, Incarnadine (2013), won the National Book Award for Poetry. According to Judge Kay Ryan, Szybist’s “lovely musical touch is light and exact enough to catch the weight and grind of love. This is a hard paradox to master as she does.”

Mary Szybist is also the recipient of a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers’ Award, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and a Pushcart Prize in 2012. She has been awarded residencies from the MacDowell Colony and the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center. Her work has appeared in the Iowa Review and Denver Quarterly and was featured in Best American Poetry (2008). In 2009, she was awarded a Witter Bynner Fellowship and a literature fellowship from the NEA. She is an associate professor of English at Lewis & Clark in Portland, Oregon, and is a member of the faculty at the Warren Wilson College MFA Program for Writers. She also has taught at Kenyon College, the University of Iowa, the Tennessee Governor’s School for Humanities, the University of Virginia’s Young Writers’ Workshop, and West High School in Iowa City.

“In her gorgeous second collection, Mary Szybist blends traditional and experimental aesthetics to recast the myth of the Biblical Mary for this era. In vulnerable lyrics, surprising concrete poems, and other forms, and with extraordinary sympathy and a light touch of humor, Szybist probes the nuances of love, loss, and the struggle for religious faith in a world that seems to argue against it. This is a religious book for nonbelievers, or a book of necessary doubts for the faithful.”

—National Book Award Committee

“Mary Szybist’s poems are about religious and sexual longing and about suspicion of religious and sexual longing. They exist in, or move toward, the negative spaces, the luminous, maddening almost presences the objects of our deepest desires inhabit. She has a gift for music, a gift for aphorism, a gift for being haunted. This is serious work, so it is occasionally funny and sometimes strange and often beautiful. ‘Original research in language,’ Ezra Pound said the real thing was. This is it.” —Robert Hass

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