



WRITERS CONFERENCE  
OCTOBER 28-29, 2017

THEME: THE HAUNTED PLAINS

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
KANSAS CITY CAMPUS  
8400 W. 110TH ST., SUITE 150  
OVERLAND PARK, KS



Ad Astra is a new conference for those aspiring to write professionally, with an eye toward commercial publication, or as the foundation for personal growth and self-expression. With that in mind, we welcome writers of all ages, education backgrounds, and skill levels. Each year, the theme of the conference will change, and for our 2017 premiere conference—on the weekend before Halloween—the theme is horror.

Our faculty is composed of writers and editors who have had a wide range of both commercial and critical success, and who have a talent for teaching writing to others. Offered by the Center for Great Plains Studies at Emporia State University, the conference is co-sponsored by the Department of English, Modern Languages, and Journalism.

Registration is \$97 if received by Oct. 1, and \$117 after. Registration will also be taken at the door, space permitting. Registration also covers lunch on Saturday and admission to the open mic that night at the conference hotel.

A limited number of manuscript critiques from our faculty are available for an additional \$60. The critiques will consist of a private 20-minute conference, and notes, from the faculty member. Manuscript samples, of no more than 10 double-spaced typed pages, must be received by Oct. 1.

**The samples should be sent to:**

Ad Astra Writing Sample  
c/o Max McCoy  
Director, Center for Great Plains Studies  
Campus Box 4040  
Emporia State University  
1 Kellogg Circle  
Emporia, KS 66801-5451

**To register, please visit the home page for the Center for Great Plains Studies at [www.emporia.edu/cgps](http://www.emporia.edu/cgps).**

**The following code will take you to our page:**



**You may also register by sending a check for the total amount to the address above. If you have questions, please contact the center at 620 341-5574 or email [cgps@emporia.edu](mailto:cgps@emporia.edu).**

Or, click here to go directly to the registration page.

## Conference Hotel

Our conference hotel is the Marriott Kansas City Overland Park, 10800 Metcalf Ave., just a few blocks east of the ESU-KC campus. We have a block of rooms reserved at the special rate of \$105 per night. The deadline for reserving rooms at this special rate is Sept. 29. You may make reservations by following the link for the Ad Astra Workshop on the Center for Great Plains Studies page at [www.emporia.edu/cgps](http://www.emporia.edu/cgps) or use the following QR code:



Or, click here to go directly to the hotel reservation page.

You may also call the Marriott directly at (913) 451-8000.

## College Credit

Participants may also choose to enroll, in advance, through Emporia State University, in *EG 596: Studies in Literary Traditions*, for college credit of one to two hours. Additional work will be required, with one of the ESU Ad Astra faculty members. Regular tuition and fees will apply. For more information, please contact the Center for Great Plains Studies at [cgps@emporia.edu](mailto:cgps@emporia.edu). The Department of English, Modern Languages, and Journalism at ESU also offers intensive and degree-track instruction in literature, creative writing, and journalism. For more information on these and other programs, please contact the department chair, Kevin Rabas, at [krabas@emporia.edu](mailto:krabas@emporia.edu).

## Sponsors

The Ad Astra Conference is sponsored by ESU's Center for Great Plains Studies, with support from College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; the Department of English, Modern Languages, and Journalism; and the staff of the ESU-KC campus.

## Ad Astra Writing Conference Schedule

All of our classrooms are close, or adjacent, to one another. The Quad is a commons area where we'll have registration and book sales. WiFi is also available to our participants, and login instructions can be found at the registration desk.

[Click here to go to our blog.](#)

# Saturday, Oct. 28, 2017

**8:00 - 9:00 am** Registration Staff

**8:50 am** Greetings and Announcements

**9:00 - 10:20 am** “Slaying the Hydra: Writing and the Business of Living”

Dale Bailey, Saturday keynote

We often have romantic notions of the writing life. Writers are brawling heroes, snatching their stories from the jaws of experience (Hemingway). Writers are sensitive recluses, wrestling in privacy with unrecognized genius (Dickinson). They are mad (Poe), drunk (Poe), sinful and mysterious (Poe). All of which makes for fascinating reading, but none of which provides much in the way of practical advice for those who aspire to see their byline in print. In “Slaying the Hydra: Writing and the Business of Living,” Dale Bailey draws upon his experience in the trenches to provide just that: a little practical advice for those who want to make a life, if not a living, at the keyboard.

**10:30 - 11:20 am** “The Role of Editors: What You Can Expect from Them, and What They Expect from You” Don D’Auria

D’Auria, who is among the most respected horror editors in the business, will give you an introduction to the author-editor relationship. He’ll also take your questions.

**11:30 - 1:00 pm** Catered lunch

**1:00 - 1:50 pm** “Avoiding Publishing ‘Horror Stories.” Julianne Couch

Here are a few: *A publisher facing economic hard times slashes half their planned titles, including yours. A publisher who forgot she’d just told you your manuscript was great and then suggest you hire a developmental editor to help you rethink the whole thing. A publisher introduces errors into the copyedited manuscript after you approved it, which then comes out in print.*

Finding a publisher isn’t the end of authorial angst: sometimes it is just the start. Julianne Couch will lead this conversation about how writers can know when the central vision of the book is at risk, when publishing “challenges” can actually be constructive, and how to gauge the difference.

**“The How of Horror”** Mort Castle

In this workshop, horror master Mort Castle will look at techniques of good fiction writing as they apply to the horror genre and focus on specialized prose techniques to create horror stories.

**2:00 - 2:50 pm** Book Signing Ellen Plumb’s City Bookstore

The book signing, which is open to the public, will feature works by the faculty, and a selection of recommended books for writers. The signing is hosted by Ellen Plumb’s City Bookstore, Emporia, Kansas.

**3:00 - 3:50 pm** Breakouts

**“Writing the Paranormal Mystery.”**

Max McCoy

The author of the Ophelia Wyld paranormal mysteries (*Of Grave Concern*, *The Spirit is Willing*, *Giving up the Ghost*) will talk about the special demands of writing mysteries with a paranormal element. He’ll talk about his process for researching and writing paranormal mysteries, discuss the need for consistent internal logic, and explain why good writing and solid structure are a must.

**“Flash Fiction and Fear”** Kevin Rabas

The session will focus on writing “scary” stories in the short form (1,000 words or less). We will discuss ghost stories, myths, and fables and weigh the advantages of writing this type of story in the short form.

**4:00 - 4:50 pm** Breakouts

**“Dredging Up Your Past for Frightful Fun and Profit.”** Mark L. Groves

This discussion includes how the *Black Buttons* anthologies came to be, how authors were recruited for the anthologies, where it started and where it plans on going, and doing some in-session mining with attendees regarding characters in their life, adding fiction to them that makes them real, and “What if”-ing those characters in a brainstorm fashion to create story seeds.

**“Pitch Perfect”** Don D’Auria

You’ve spent two years writing your 100,000-word masterpiece, but how do you pitch it in person when you’ve only got a minute or two to grab somebody’s attention? A top horror editor will describe the perfect pitch, and workshop pitches from the audience.

**5:00 - 6:30 pm** Dinner on Your Own

**6:30 pm** Reception The Marriott

**7:00 pm** Open Mic The Marriott

**Sunday, Oct. 29, 2017**

**8:00 - 9:00 am Breakouts**

**“Plains Superstition and Folklore”** Jim Hoy

The Great Plains are rich in folklore and superstition and provide an endless source of inspiration for writers. Hoy will share some of the most compelling stories from the plains.

**“The Id of Publishing: Where “Self” Is Not a Dirty Word.”** Mark L. Groves

An author and publisher, Groves will talk about establishing his LLC “Magnificent Cowlick Media,” and becoming an indie publishing house through grit, determination, an embarrassing amount of screw-ups, and a massive number of Google searches. Find out ways to make your self-publishing harder, more expensive...and better. Plus, advice on how to sell your books--and yourself.

**Critique Sessions** Faculty

*Individual critiques for those who submitted manuscripts.*

**9:00 - 10:00 am “The Hero’s Journey”**

Max McCoy

McCoy, who has written four original *Indiana Jones* stories for Lucasfilm, will share the secret that blockbuster stories from *The Wizard of Oz* to *Star Wars* have used to tell compelling stories for mass audiences. With nods to Joseph Campbell and Chris Vogler.

**“A Conversation with Dale Bailey”** Dale Bailey

In this informal session, novelist Dale Bailey will field questions and offer advice about whatever aspect of writing the conversation leads.

**Critique Sessions** Faculty

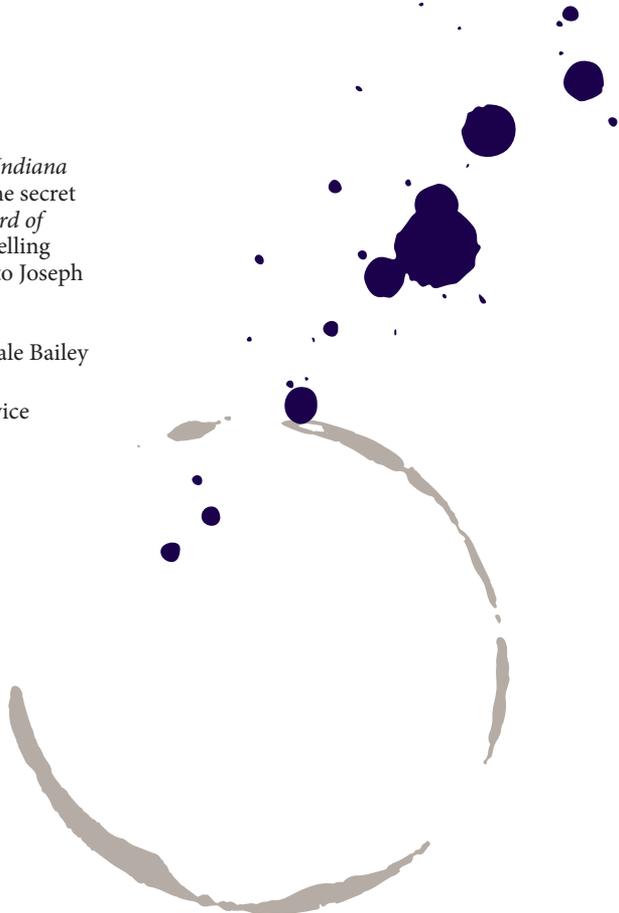
*Individual critiques for those who submitted manuscripts.*

**10:00 - 11:20 am “Something at Work in My Soul”** Sunday keynote, Mort Castle

Keynote: “I’m a writer,” you say, and maybe you hear, “Hmm,” or “Are you published?” or “I’m going to write a book myself some day ...” And then you say, “I’m a horror writer ...” And the cringing begins, with “Why do you write that stuff?” Mort Castle will attempt to answer these questions and more.

*The title for this keynote comes from Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, “There is something at work in my soul, which I do not understand.”*

**11:30 am Door prizes, evaluations, and farewell** Faculty



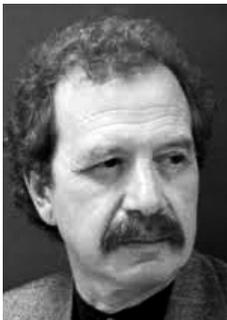
## Faculty



### Dale Bailey

A winner of both the Shirley Jackson Award and the International Horror Guild Award, Dale Bailey is the author of *The End of the End of Everything: Stories* and *The Subterranean Season*, as well as *The Fallen*, *House of Bones*, *Sleeping Policemen* (with Jack Slay, Jr.), and *The Resurrection Man's Legacy and Other Stories*. His work has twice been a finalist for the Nebula Award and once for the Bram

Stoker Award, and has been adapted for Showtime Television. He lives in North Carolina with his family.



### Mort Castle

Mort Castle, deemed a “horror doyen” by *Publishers Weekly*, has won three Bram Stoker Awards, two Black Quills, and a Golden Bot, and has been nominated for an Audie, the International Horror Guild Award, the Shirley Jackson Award, and the Pushcart Prize. He’s edited or authored 17 books, his recent or forthcoming titles include: *New Moon on the Water*; *Writer’s Digest Annotated Classics: Dracula*; and 2016 Leapfrog Fiction

contest winner *Knowing When To Die*. His novel *The Strangers* made the Polish Newsweek list of “Ten Top Thrillers Published in Poland in 2008.” More than 600 Castle authored “shorter works,” stories, articles, poems, and comics stories have appeared in periodicals and anthologies, including *Twilight Zone*, *Bombay Gin*, *Poe’s Lighthouse*, and *Tales of the Batman*. At the turn of the century, Castle was cited as “One of 21 Leaders in the Arts for the 21st Century” by the Chicago Sun-Times Southland Newspaper Group. With 4 Maples Productions and Mirkwood Partners LLC, he is currently developing *Vincent Price’s Shadow Show* for television. Castle teaches fiction writing at Columbia College Chicago and has presented writing workshops and seminars throughout North America. He and Jane, his wife of 46 years, live in Crete, Illinois, where he sometimes plays banjo on the front porch on warm summer nights.



### Julianne Couch

Julianne Couch is the author of three books of narrative non-fiction travel-explorations, and one collection of short stories now being re-imagined by her publisher into an episodic novel. Her book *Small Town Midwest: Resilience and Hope in the Twenty-first Century* was named a Kansas Notable Book for 2017. Julianne was raised in the Kansas City area and studied theater and English at Emporia State University.

Since 1998 she has taught in the English Department at the University of Wyoming. Even though she left Wyoming for Iowa and the western shore of the Upper Mississippi River, she continues to teach courses online for UW.



### Don D'Auria

Don D'Auria is a freelance fiction editor. Previously he was the executive editor of the horror line at Samhain Publishing for six years. Before that he was executive editor at Leisure Books for fifteen years, where he directed their thriller line, as well as the horror line that *Rue Morgue* magazine called “the champion of paperback horror.” During his career he’s been lucky enough to work with some

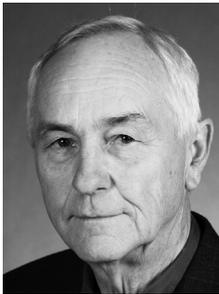
of the leading authors in the field, including Richard Laymon, Ramsey Campbell, Graham Masterton, Edward Lee and Jack Ketchum. He is the recipient of an International Horror Guild Award for his contributions to the horror genre.

## Faculty



### Mark L. Groves

Mark L. Groves grew up in the Ozark Mountains of southern Missouri, where his love of trees and sky and things that go bump in the night began. He earned a degree in Communications from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and went on to a career spanning two-plus decades in the radio industry. He's written thousands of commercials, promotional pieces, and radio theater scripts. He also writes plays, short stories, novels, songs, and poetry. His books are: *HELLZAPALOOZA The Best DamnED Rock Show Ever!*; *Black Buttons Vol. 1*; *Black Buttons Vol. 2*; and *Route 666: Four on the Floor*. He's had short stories and photography published in "Kansas City Voices Magazine," plus short stories published in "Strange, Weird, and Wonderful Magazine", *The Book of Blasphemous Words* anthology, and the upcoming "Ghosts on Drugs" anthology. Mark lives in Olathe, KS, and still works in radio in the Kansas City market.



### Jim Hoy

Jim Hoy is a folklorist and native of the Flint Hills. He is the author of sixteen nonfiction books including, *Flint Hills Cowboys: Tales of the Tallgrass Prairie* (2007 Kansas Notable Book) and *Cowboy's Lament: A Life on the Open Range*, (2011 Will Rogers Medallion for Non-fiction; 2011 Westerners International First Prize Co-founders Book Award). Hoy is director emeritus of the Center for Great Plains Studies at ESU, past president of the Kansas State Historical Society, and past chair of the Board of Trustees at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. In 2016, he was named Kansan of the Year.

## Faculty



### Max McCoy

Max McCoy is an award-winning author and journalist. His books include four original Indiana Jones adventures for Lucasfilm, the novelization of Spielberg's epic TNT miniseries *Into the West*, and his own critically-acclaimed novels, including the thriller *The Moon Pool*. He has won three best novel Spur awards from the Western Writers of America, for *The Sixth Rider*, *Hellfire Canyon*, and *Damnation Road*. His novels have twice

been named Kansas Notable Books, most recently for the paranormal mystery *Of Grave Concern*. He is also an investigative journalist whose subjects have ranged from serial killers to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His forthcoming nonfiction book, from the University Press of Kansas, is a personal history of the upper Arkansas River. He teaches at Emporia State University, where he also directs the Center for Great Plains Studies.



### Kevin Rabas

Kevin Rabas is Kansas Poet Laureate, 2017-2019. He teaches at Emporia State University, where he leads the poetry and playwriting tracks and chairs the Department of English, Modern Languages, and Journalism. He has seven books, including *Lisa's Flying Electric Piano*, a Kansas Notable Book and Nelson Poetry Book Award winner, and *Songs for My Father: poems & stories*. A writer of flash fiction and prose poetry, he is a devotee to the short form.

## In Memoriam: Patsy Terrell (1961-2017)

It is with sadness that we note the death of Patsy Terrell, a longtime faculty member of the writing workshops sponsored by the Center for Great Plains studies. Patsy conducted many workshops on marketing and social media over the years, managed Social Media for some workshops, and was on the program this year for the Ad Astra conference. Patsy, a Kentucky native who had lived in Hutchinson, Kansas, for 33 years, was found dead in her Topeka motel room June 7 following a particularly long legislative session. A coroner ruled her death was by natural causes.

Kevin Rabas, the Kansas Poet Laureate, composed the following in memory of Patsy a few days following the news of her death. It is reproduced here with his permission.

### Patsy

That morning, when the senate gavel  
comes down, wood on wood,  
the sanded clap to order, the call,  
Patsy's not there, she  
who's always early, always there,  
she who rode a Sinclair dinosaur  
from Hutch into the statehouse,  
her float with the slogan,  
"Make the Brownback agenda extinct,"  
she who cast one of 88 votes  
to override the income tax increase,  
and won, celebrated with the post,  
"You're waking up in a Kansas  
where the Brownback experiment  
has ended. Good morning."  
But Patsy did not  
make it long  
into that new dawn.  
As with the old, who make it  
through winter, only to pass  
at the first of spring,  
so, too, with Patsy. Her voice,  
her vote lasts, though,  
like so many careful words  
placed on a page.

\* Patsy Terrell's Hutchinson parade float featured her attached with reins to a Sinclair brontosaurus painted white and dressed in Democrat blue. Patsy was a writer and marketing consultant before turning to Kansas politics. She was 55.