

January 25, 2016 | By Cynthia Dillon

Diversity is Hallmark of UC San Diego Department of Literature New Writing Series

The University of California, San Diego's New Writing Series (NWS) is anything but new. In fact, the series, originally rooted in poetry, is among the longest running programs in the state, dating to the early 1970s. Each quarter the Department of Literature hosts the "new" writing series, and this winter's series, which began Jan. 13 and runs through March 2, takes a transnational focus with guest writers John Gibler, Lorena Gomez Mostajo, John B. Washington and Marivi Blanco. The next presentation, featuring Washington, takes place Jan. 27, 4:30 p.m., in the Visual Arts Presentation Lab on campus.

The director of the winter series is Literature Professor Cristina Rivera-Garza, an award-winning author of six novels, three collections of short stories, five collections of poetry and three non-fiction books—all written in Spanish, but translated into multiple languages.



UC San Diego professor and award-winning author, Cristina Rivera-Garza

"The winter NWS is designed to share the explorations and achievements of writers who work in between languages—mostly between Spanish and English—and especially in and through translation," explained Rivera-Garza. "As many in a highly diverse California, our Winter 2016 NWS writers have had important living experience in places other than the United States, Mexico and Philippines, and languages other than English. They write fiction and non-fiction, they edit, they translate, they connect with communities characterized by diversity and change: they constitute sheer examples of the writer of the 21st century."

According to Literature Professor Emeritus Michael Davidson, the UC San Diego NWS has historically offered undergraduates exposure to many high-profile writers and writers of color, including John Ashbery, Amiri Baraka, Robert Creeley, Allen Ginsberg, June Jordan, Claudia

Rankine, Adrienne Rich and Michael Ondaatje.



Author Tan Lin, featured during spring 2015 NWS

“UC San Diego is at the forefront in offering a counter-poetics to the usual creative writing program,” said Davidson. “It’s not ‘innovation’ for its own sake, but innovation as part of literature’s larger commitment to global and cross-disciplinary study.”

Davidson pointed out that while learning about national literatures across the globe, literature majors at UC San Diego learn to write and think critically while gaining literary competence—the goal of the creative writing program.

Davidson noted that the writing program at UC San Diego coincides with innovative literary study that includes inter-art collaborations, which are required of writing majors.

“Often literature students and visual artists collaborate on projects,” he said.

Rivera-Garza added that the underlying idea of the NWS is to facilitate the connection and conversation between writing students, both at undergraduate and graduate levels, and invited writers.

“I often assign books or short stories or poetry by our guests, which we analyze in class prior to our authors’ visits. As our students meet with writers they have read, writing is less an abstract art and more a practice with which they can engage,” noted Rivera-Garza.

The NWS also engages the broader community, which is invited to campus to attend the free lectures by guest writers.

“The community is brought to campus, which supports the university’s credibility for creativity and innovation,” added Davidson. “The New Writing Series serves as a social nexus for visiting writers and the community.”

Community and campus participants next can join guest writer Washington, a novelist, teacher and translator, Wednesday, when he discusses his translation of Sandra Rodriguez Nieto’s, “Story of Vicente, Who Murdered His Mother, His Father and His Sister: Life and Death in Juarez.”

The Department of Literature is part of the UC San Diego Division of Arts and Humanities. For more information, please visit the [website](#).

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