

SUSAN B.A. SOMERS-WILLETT

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CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

2003	Ph.D., American Literature With study in African American Studies, Cultural Studies, Poetry, and Women's Studies	The University of Texas at Austin
1998	M.A., Creative Writing (now M.F.A. program) With a concentration in Poetry	The University of Texas at Austin
1995	A.B., Anthropology and Women's Studies Phi Beta Kappa, <i>Cum Laude</i>	Duke University
Fall 1993	Duke in New York Interdisciplinary Arts Certificate	New York University

TEACHING INTERESTS

Creative Writing, Post-WWII-present American Poetry and Poetics, editing and publishing, African American Literature, Women's and Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, Performance Studies

TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

2014-present | **Assistant Vice President for Research and Policy, Office of the Vice President
Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE), The University of Texas at Austin**

Responsible for leading a team of four employees to develop strategic plans and communications for community engagement efforts at the university and across higher education, including development of a website and research/assessment tools for the Longhorn Men of Color Campaign at UT Austin. Responsible for writing and managing the Vice President's speaking and writing engagements including academic presentations, talking points for high-stakes media issues, op-eds, run-of-show scripts for signature events, and state-of-the-division speeches and presentations. Serve as a liaison to the Vice President on campus climate issues while developing strategies for social action programs across the university, state, and nation in alignment with the university's community engagement model.

- 2014-present Campus Climate Response Team, Lead Member
- 2014-present DDCE Professional Development Committee Member
- 2014-present Longhorn Campaign for Men of Color Strategic Planning Member

2013-2014 | **Associate Director of Communications and Policy, Office of the Vice President
Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, The University of Texas at Austin**

Responsible for coordinating communications efforts across nearly 50 academic units, including developing digital and print collateral; collaborating with budgetary and development teams; writing and graphic design of academic unit, outreach, and fundraising materials; and crafting speeches and op-eds for Vice President on issues such as campus climate controversies and the *Fisher v. UT* Supreme Court case.

2009-2013 | **Assistant Professor, English Department, Montclair State University, New Jersey**

- 412: Advanced Poetry Workshop
- 312: Intermediate Poetry Workshop
- 212: Introduction to Poetry Writing
- 364: Contemporary American Poetry
- 325: American Poetry: WWII to the Present
- 365: Poetry and Performance
- 200: Introduction to Creative Writing (multi-genre)
- 601: African American Poetry and Poetics

2008-2009 | **Visiting Assistant Professor of English, The University of Texas at Austin**

- 391L: Independent Study in Creative Writing (graduate)
- 379S: Senior Seminar: Poetry & Performance
- 379M: Sylvia Plath's Poetry and Prose
- 376M: African American Poetry and Poetics
- 341L: Advanced Poetry Workshop

2006-2007 | **Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for the Arts in Society, Carnegie Mellon University**

- 64-401/76-401/76-701: Contemporary American Poetry, Poetics, and Publics
- 64-301/76-211: Poetry and Performance

2004-2006 | **Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, English Department, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

- 461: Contemporary American Poetry and Poetics
- 460: Feminism and the African American Literary Tradition
- 274: Poetry and Performance

2003-2004 | **Editor, Language Arts Department, Holt, Rinehart & Winston**

Responsible for managing online essay writing product, textbook writing, copyediting, and supervising a small staff to develop web architecture.

2001-2003 | **Assistant Director, Graduate Creative Writing Program, The University of Texas at Austin**

Helped pilot an introductory-level creative writing course, organized readings and orientations, developed advertising campaign for program to appear in trade journals, consulted undergraduate writers about pursuing graduate creative writing degrees, and designed and maintained website for the M.A. degree in creative writing.

1998-2002 | **Assistant Instructor, Rhetoric and Composition, The University of Texas at Austin**

- 309K: Gender, Race, and the Image
- 306: First-Year Composition
- 318L: Poetry and Performance
- 318L: Gender and Poetry Writing

1998-2000 | **Writing Consultant, Undergraduate Writing Center, The University of Texas at Austin**

Consulted and advised undergraduates writing research papers, theses, essays, and graduate school applications across all disciplines.

1996-1998 | **Graduate Teaching Assistant, English Department, The University of Texas at Austin**

- 316K: Masterworks of American Literature
- 316K: Masterworks of British Literature

1995-1996 | **Editor and Production Manager, Juno Books, New York City**

Responsible for transcribing and editing interviews, managing freelance writers, copywriting, designing sales materials and catalogues, preparing cover art, and sending books to print.

PUBLICATIONS

Books

- 2009 | *Quiver* (poetry). *Virginia Quarterly Review* Poetry Series, University of Georgia Press. Winner of the Writers' League of Texas Book Award in Poetry.
- 2009 | *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race, Identity, and the Performance of Popular Verse in America* (criticism), University of Michigan Press.
- 2006 | *Roam* (poetry). Crab Orchard Series, Southern Illinois University Press. Winner of the *Crab Orchard Review* Award Series Open Competition Award.

Selected Poems

- 2015 | "On Signs," *An Uncommon Book of Prayer: An Anthology of Poetry*, Ed. Matthew Vollmer.
- 2014 | "Birds, In Flight," *99 Poems for the 99 Percent: An Anthology of Poetry*, Ed. Dean Rader.
- 2013 | "Tallahatchie," *The Pushcart Prize XXXVIII: The Best of the Small Presses*.
- 2013 | "Three Views of a Souvenir," *Bop, Strut, and Dance: A Post-Blues Form for New Generations* (forthcoming).
- 2013 | "Downtown Zoetrope," "Bagram," "Three Views of a Souvenir," "Looking at Photographs in Which Our Faces Do Not Appear," and "Uptown Zoetrope." *the minnesota review* 80, Duke University Press (Spring).
- 2012 | "Matter and Void," *American Scientist*, (September-October).
- 2012 | "Memento Mori" and "On Cancer," *Gulf Coast* 25.1 (Fall).
- 2012 | "Tallahatchie," *Orion* (May/June).
- 2012 | "Oppenheimer's Lament," *Villanelles, Eds. Annie Finch and Marie-Elizabeth Mali*, Everyman's Library Pocket Poets Series (Random House).
- 2011 | "Cry Baby," *Columbia Poetry Review* (Spring).
- 2011 | "Sugar: A Blues," *The Pinch* (Spring).
- 2009 | "A Call to Arms," "In the Office of Temporary Assistance," "Just a Girl," "The Cutting Place," "Advice for the Penny Bride in Times of Economic Crisis," and "Women of Troy." *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Fall).

- 2009 | "Insomnia Chiaroscuro," *Borderlands Texas Poetry Review* (Summer).
- 2009 | "Facts for Visitors Experiencing the Sensation that is the Body's Warning System Alerting Them that Something is Wrong," *foundpoetry.org*, January 5.
- 2008 | "The Golden Lesson," *The Iowa Review* (April).
- 2008 | "Half-Life," *Gulf Coast* (Summer/Fall).
- 2007 | "Petites Curie" and "Object Lesson: Horses," *Indiana Review* 29.2 (Winter).
- 2007 | "Campanology" and "Oppenheimer's Lament," *West Branch* (Fall/Winter).
- 2007 | "Girl, 7, Seeking U.S. Flight Record, Dies in Crash," "The Birds," *Connecticut Review* (Spring).
- 2007 | "The Order of a House" and "Cotyledon," *Pebble Lake Review*, Spring 2007.
- 2007 | "Ophelia's Technicolor G-String" and "The Gift," *Spoken Word Revolution Redux*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks.
- 2006 | "What the Doctors Forget to Tell You About Morphine," *Poets & Writers Online* (October).
- 2006 | "Thaw and the Beginning of Everything," *Painted Bride Quarterly* Issue 75.
- 2006 | "Notes for Living in NOLA," *RATTLE*, Summer.
- 2006 | "Darwin Strikes a Match," "First Sex," "My Natural History," *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Spring).
- 2006 | "Cow Song," *Verse Daily*, Poem of the Day (May 8).
- 2006 | "Decorum," "The Boy Who Would Be Achilles," "Cow Song," *Crab Orchard Review* (Winter/Spring).
- 2006 | "Polaris." Ann Stanford Poetry Prize, First Place winner selected by Al Young, *Southern California Anthology*, Volume XXI.
- 2005 | "Virginia Dare (i-vi)." *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review* (Spring/Summer).
- 2005 | "Ring One," "Ring Three," "The Naming of Eve." *The Cream City Review* 29.1 (Spring).
- 2005 | "Celestial Music." *GSU Review* (Spring).
- 2003 | "Cowboys and Indians." *The Saint Ann's Review* 4.2 (Summer/Fall).
- 2002 | "A Note on the Type." *Spoon River Poetry Review*, Finalist, Editor's Prize (Fall).
- 2000 | "Circe with Her Hair Down," "Where He Lives Rhymes with Rome," "Self-Portrait as Interstate 10." *The Madison Review* (Spring). Winner of the Phillis Smart Young Prize in Poetry.
- 1999 | "A Pain, A Fencepost, A Black-and-White Film." *Hayden's Ferry Review* 23 (Fall/Winter).

Nonfiction Essays

- 2013 | "Natasha Trethewey's 'Myth'." *Voltage Poetry*, eds. Kim Addonizio and Michael Thuene.
- 2012 | "The Place Where I Write." *Orion* (July/August).
- 2012 | "Poetry is Dead. Long Live Poetry! Some Thoughts on Poetry in the American Public Sphere." *Creative Research Center Guest Blog* (April). <http://tinyurl.com/longlivepoetry>
- 2009 | "The City Ablaze." *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Fall).
- 2009 | "Through the Invisible Cloak: Some Problems and Possibilities of Being a White Reader of African American Poetry." *RATTLE* 15.1, (Summer).
- 2007 | "Can Slam Poetry Matter?" *RATTLE* 13.1 (Summer).

Scholarly Articles and Book Chapters

- 2015 | "From Slam to *Def Poetry Jam*: Spoken Word Poetry and its Counterpublics." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, (forthcoming).
- 2006 | "Def Poetry's Public: Spoken Word Poetry and the Racial Politics of Going Mainstream." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 8/9: 72-89.
- 2005 | "Slam Poetry and the Cultural Politics of Performing Identity." *Journal of the Midwestern Modern Language Association* 38.1: 51-73.
- 2003 | "Authenticating Voices: Slam Poetry, Politics, and Performances of Black Identity." *Mantis Journal of Poetry and Poetics* No. 3, Stanford University: 33-55.
- 2002 | "Representing" Slam Poetry: Ambivalence, Gender, and Black Authenticity in *Slam*." *Text, Practice, Performance Journal of Cultural Studies* 3.1: 37-63.

Authored Interviews and Reviews

- 2013 | Review of *The Declarable Future* by Jennifer Boyden, *Orion* (September/October).
- 2012 | Review of *Plume* by Kathleen Flenniken, *Orion* (November/December).
- 2002 | "A 'Sacred Condition': A Review of Li-Young Lee's *Book of My Nights*." *E3W Review of Books*. Ethnic and Third World Interest Group, The University of Texas at Austin (Spring).
- 1998 | "Music in the Language: A Conversation with Lucille Clifton." *The American Voice* (Summer).
- 1998 | Review of *Chicana Falsa and Other Stories of Death, Identity and Oxnard* by Michelle Serros. *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review* 12 (Fall/Winter).

Interviews and Press

- 2012 | Cited Authority: "Since '84, City Poetry Scene Has Thrived, but What's Next?" by Naomi Nix, *Chicago Tribune* (April 19).
- 2011 | Interview: "On Representing 'The City and Its Women': An Interview with Susan B.A. Somers-Willett" Parts I & II by Elizabeth Frye, *Viz.* (June 20, 29).
- 2010 | Interview: "Painting with Words" by Gabrielle David, *Phati'tude Literary Magazine* 2.3 (Fall) 38-44.
- 2010 | Cited Authority: "In the Realms of the Unreal: Searching for Authentic Slam Poetry in Chicago" by Alizah Salario, Poetry Foundation Website (December 9).
- 2010 | Interview: "Women of Troy: A Documentary Poem" by Danielle Blau, *The New Yorker Book Bench* (June 10).
- 2010 | Cited Authority: "Performance Poetry Hits the Mainstream" by Dave McGinn, *Globe and Mail* (February 28).
- 2010 | Interview: *Narrative Digest*, Neiman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University (January 22).
- 2009 | Interview: "The Women of Troy: Upstate Girls" by Wayne Trujillo, *Huffington Post* (December 18).
- 2009 | Interview: "Women of Troy," *Transom.org* (November feature).
- 2009 | Interview: "Six Questions for Susan Somers-Willett." *VQR Blog* (November 21).
- 2009 | Cited Authority: "Is Slam in Danger of Going Soft?" by Larry Rohter, *New York Times*, June 3: Page C1.
- 2009 | Interview: "Book/Talk: A Conversation with Slam Poetry Scholar Susan B.A. Somers-Willett," *The Arts Politic* Inaugural Issue (Summer).
- 2009 | Interview: "An Interview with Susan B.A. Somers-Willett," by Chris Opiela and Scott Van Pelt, *West Branch* (February).
- 2007 | Interview: "Performing the Academy," by Jeremy Richards, Poetry Foundation Website (June 7).
- 2006 | Featured author: "Finishing the First: 12 Debut Poets," *Poets & Writers Magazine*, (November/December).

Broadcasts and Podcasts

- 2009 | *Word of Mouth*, New Hampshire Public Radio (December 9, 10 min).
- 2009 | "Just a Girl," BBC Radio 4 Americana (November 22, 6 min).
- 2009 | "Women of Troy." Three poems and interviews aired on PRI/WNYC's *Studio 360 with Kurt Andersen* (November 5, 18 min).
- 2007 | Poetry Foundation Podcast (June 11, 14 min).
- 2007 | "Slam Past, Present, and Future," *The Eclectic Word with Victor Infante*, BlogTalk Radio (Aug 17, 1 hr).

Multimedia and Installations

- 2010 | "Wild Animals I Have Known" multimedia palimpsest in response to David Ellis's motion painting *Animal*, University of Texas Landmarks program, http://landmarks.utexas.edu/poetry_projects.
- 2009 | "Women of Troy" multimedia slideshow. A collaboration with Lu Olkowski (radio) and Brenda Ann Kenneally (photography) available at <http://vimeo.com/6363677>.
- 2008 | "The Last Known Confederate Civil War Widow Writes from the Dead Letter Office of Heaven" and "Insomnia Chiaroscuro," *If These Walls Could Speak* installation, Blanton Museum of Art. <http://blantonmuseum.org/elearning/blantonpoetry/index.html>.

SELECTED HONORS

Writing Honors

- 2014 | Pushcart Prize for "Tallahatchie," originally published in *Orion*.
- 2012 | Center for the Book Arts Chapbook Competition, Honorable Mention (broadside publication).
- 2010 | Writers' League of Texas Book Award for best book of poetry published in 2009, *Quiver*.
- 2010 | Gracie Award for "In Verse: Women of Troy," Outstanding Soft News Feature, Alliance for Women in Media.
- 2010 | Distinguished Entry, Campbell Corner Poetry Prize, Sarah Lawrence College.
- 2010 | Third Place, *The Pinch* Literary Award in Poetry for "Sugar: A Blues."
- 2009 | Second Place, *The Missouri Review* Audio Award for "Women of Troy."
- 2008 | Finalist, Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer's Award.
- 2006 | Emily Clark Balch Prize, *Virginia Quarterly Review*.
- 2006 | Finalist, Helen C. Smith Award for best book of poetry (*Roam*), Texas Institute of Letters.
- 2005 | Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition selection.
- 2005 | Robert Frost Foundation Poetry Award for best poem.
- 2004 | Ann Stanford Poetry Prize for best poem.

Grants, Fellowships, and Teaching Awards

- 2015-2016 | National Endowment for the Arts Individual Creative Writing Fellowship (\$25,000).
- 2012-2013 | Manuscript, Archive, and Rare Books Library Short-Term Fellowship, Emory University (\$1000).
- 2011 | Separately Budgeted Research Award, Montclair State University (\$1500).
- 2010 | Global Education Center Grant, Montclair State University (\$800).

- 2009 | City of Austin Artist Opportunity Grant (\$600).
 2006-2007 | Center for Arts in Society Visiting Scholar Fellowship (\$35,000 plus \$3,000 research budget), Carnegie Mellon University.
 2005-2006 | Nomination, Outstanding Teacher Award, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
 2004-2006 | Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship (\$40,000 annually plus \$5,000 research budget), University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
 2002-2003 | American Dissertation Fellowship (\$25,000), American Association of University Women.
 2002-2003 | Keene Fellowship for Contributions in Creative Writing, The University of Texas at Austin.
 2001-2002 | J.M. Coetzee Distinguished Alumnus Fellowship, The University of Texas at Austin.

Residencies

- 2013 | Hedgebrook Foundation Alumna Fellowship, Whidbey Island, WA (July).
 2007 | Hedgebrook Foundation Fellowship, Whidbey Island, WA (May-June).
 2005 | Millay Colony for the Arts, Martha Martin Fellowship, Austerlitz, NY (July).
 2004 | I-Park Artist's Enclave, East Haddam, CT (November).
 2004 | Alden B. Dow Center for Creativity, Northwood University, Midland, MI (June-August).

CONFERENCE PAPERS, WORKSHOPS, AND TALKS

- 2014 | Featured Author and Workshop Leader, *Poetry at Round Top Festival*, Round Top, Texas (April 11-13).
 2013 | Featured Author and Workshop Leader, *Auburn Writers' Conference*, Auburn University, (October 18-19).
 2011 | "Poetry as Multimedia Documentary." Reading and discussion, *Associated Writing Programs Conference*, Washington D.C. (February 2-5).
 2013 | Keynote Speaker, "'Poetry to Oversee the Dance Floor and the Streets': Saul Williams and the Hybrid Lyric." *The Poetics and Politics of Hip-Hop Cultures Conference*, University of Arizona, (February 7-9).
 2012 | Keynote Speaker, *Sequels Conference for Ethnic and Third World Literatures*, University of Texas at Austin (April 5-6).
 2012 | "Sophomore Year: The Maturation of the Slam Poetry Movement." Panelist, *Associated Writing Programs Conference*, Chicago, IL (February 29-March 3).
 2011 | "Poetry as Multimedia Documentary." Reading and discussion, *Associated Writing Programs Conference*, Washington D.C. (February 2-5).
 2011 | "Does School Kill Poetry? Can It Be Poetry's BFF?" Panelist, *Associated Writing Programs Conference*, Washington D.C. (February 2-5).
 2010 | "From Slam to Def Poetry Jam: The Racial Encoding of Poetry's Publics." Paper delivered at the *Performance Studies International Conference*, Toronto, Canada (June 10-14).
 2010 | "The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry." Moderator and Panelist, *Associated Writing Programs Conference*, Denver, CO (April 7-10).
 2010 | "Women of Troy" presentation and talkback, Union Docs, Brooklyn, NY (February 28).
 2010 | "Women of Troy" discussion with MFA students, Sarah Lawrence University (February 25).
 2009 | "Performing the Scripts of Lyrical Citizenship: Saul Williams and Other Poemcees." Paper delivered at the *American Studies Association Conference*, Washington DC (November 5-8).
 2009 | *Poetry, Voice, and Performance Symposium*, The University of Texas at Austin. Full-day roundtable discussion, performance, and Q&A session featuring Meta DuEwa Jones, Susan B. A. Somers-Willett, and Leslie Wheeler (March 31).
 2007 | "Is There Such a Thing as Slam Poetry?" *National Poetry Slam* panel discussion, Austin, TX (August 7-11).
 2006 | "Slam Poetry and the Academy." Moderator and Panelist, *Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference*, Austin, TX (March 8-11).
 2006 | "Surviving in the Small Press World." Panelist, *National Poetry Slam*, Austin, TX (August 9-12).
 2005 | "Def Poetry's Public: Spoken Word and the Racial Politics of Going Mainstream." Paper delivered at *Attention/Inattention: Writers, Scholars, Theorists Conference*, University of Denver (October 7-9).
 2005 | "Poetry in Public Culture." Chair and Moderator, *Attention/Inattention: Writers, Scholars, Theorists Conference*, University of Denver (October 7-9).
 2004 | *Black Art: A Discussion of Adam Pendelton's Exhibit Being Here*. Symposium Panelist, Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (October 12).
 2003 | "Authenticating Voices: Performances of Black Identity in Slam Poetry." Lecture, *Américo Paredes Colloquium on Cultural Studies* (March 19, 2003).
 2001 | "'Lucy and her girls': The Generational Tradition of Lucille Clifton's Poetry." Paper delivered at the *College Literature Association Annual Conference*, New Orleans, LA (April 18-21).
 2000 | "'Representing' Slam Poetry: Realism, Authenticity, and Images of the Black Poet in Slam." Paper delivered at the *George Horton Moses Society Annual Conference on African American Poetry*, American Literature Association, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (March 31-April 2).

READINGS

Featured public readings at the following institutions and venues:

Art Night Austin	louderARTS	University of Arizona
Auburn University	The National Poetry Slam	University of Illinois
AWP Conference	New Hampshire Public Radio	University of Pittsburgh
BBC Radio 4 Americana	One Page Salon	University of Texas at Austin
The Blanton Museum of Art	Page Meets Stage Reading Series	University of Texas at San Antonio
BookPeople	Poetry at Round Top	University of Virginia
Bowery Arts and Sciences	Quezta! Quill Reading Series	Virginia Festival of the Book
Bucknell University	Sarah Lawrence College	Virginia Tech
Carnegie Mellon University	Southern Illinois University	WILL Radio
Gist Street Reading Series	SUNY Oneonta	WKUT Radio
Lord Weary's Reading Series	Union Docs	WNYC Radio
		WYEP Radio

EDITORIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2013-present	Campus Climate Response Team, The University of Texas at Austin.
2014	Manuscript Consultant, Poetry at Round Top Festival.
2012, 2014	Consultant, The Performance Poetry Preservation Project (P4).
2012	Peer Reviewer, Bedford/St. Martin's Press.
2011	Judge, Virginia Tech annual MFA poetry prize.
2009-2010	Advisory Board, <i>Yale Anthology of Rap</i> (Yale Univ. Press, 2010)
2009	Contributing Editor, <i>RATTLE</i> 15.1, Tribute to African American Poets.
2007	Contributing Editor, <i>RATTLE</i> 13.1, Tribute to Slam Poetry.
2003-2004	Editor, Holt, Rinehart and Winston (a division of Harcourt Publishing).
2001-2003	Instructor, Grrl Action, a non-profit writing and performance workshop for teenage girls.
2000	Poetry Editor, <i>Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review</i> .