



**SYDNEY
WRITERS
FESTIVAL**

**Sydney Writers' Festival and the
NSW Education Standards Authority present**

STUDENT SESSIONS 2023



STUDENT SESSIONS

Join some of the brightest minds in the nation for a compelling program of talks, specially curated to complement the school curriculum in ways that educate and enlighten.

Led by widely renowned writers and thinkers, each an authority across literature, film, theatre, media, and more, Student Sessions is rich in learning opportunities for secondary school students. The program builds on students' classroom learning, extending their capacity for creative and critical thinking and inspiring a deeper understanding of society, language and storytelling.

Student Sessions is presented in partnership with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and presented at Carriageworks.

Recommended for Years 9 to 12.

Sydney Writers' Festival acknowledges the 29 clans of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Festival takes place. We extend this acknowledgement to all Traditional Owners of the land on which these events take place. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

DATE AND VENUE

WEDNESDAY 24 MAY
10AM–2.15PM

CARRIAGEWORKS
245 WILSON STREET, EVELEIGH

BOOKING

Each Student Session runs for 45 minutes. You can create your own schedule of sessions with options to select one, two or three sessions per student.

TICKETS ARE \$10 PER STUDENT, PER SESSION.

There is one free teacher's ticket allocated per event for every 20 paying students. Additional teachers can purchase tickets at student prices.

Please book online at swf.org.au/studentsessions2023.

Booking forms are processed in order of receipt.

Visit swf.org.au/education-faqs for the latest Risk Assessment forms and payment terms and conditions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have any questions, please contact the Sydney Writers' Festival box office team:

ticketing@swf.org.au | (02) 9256 4200

Please note, books by featured authors will be available for purchase on the day.

Disclaimer: Details in this brochure are correct at the time of publication. Sydney Writers' Festival reserves the right to add, withdraw, or substitute artists, and to vary the program should the need arise. Please note that a waiting list is kept for booked out Student Sessions.

Core Funders



CITY OF SYDNEY

Principal Partner



Premier Partner



THE PROGRAM



Each talk runs for 45 minutes and all sessions are stand-alone. Create your own schedule of sessions.

10AM A PERSUASIVE POINT OF VIEW

In a world that is often socially and politically polarised, we are all in need of advanced critical thinking skills and the ability to both listen and effectively communicate our ideas. Two-time world champion debater and former coach of the Australian and Harvard debate teams, **Bo Seo**, is an expert at formulating and putting forward his point of view. He is the author of *Good Arguments*, a guide to what the art of debating can teach us about listening better and disagreeing well. Whether arguing through essays, online, or in person, these tips will help improve the clear and concise way we formulate and communicate our ideas.

Curriculum links: English

10AM ANCIENT WISDOM

Australia is home to the oldest continuing living culture in the world. It is, therefore, an unsurprising source of great wisdom that can be applied to better our lives. This session will guide us all to a path where we can fulfil our responsibility to care for our place and all things in our place, including each other. Touching on the importance of story, relationships, sharing, learning, leadership and healing from the past, **Paul Callaghan** is a warm and generous speaker. He is the co-author of *The Dreaming Path: Indigenous Thinking to Change Your Life* and belongs to the land of the Worimi people.

Curriculum links: Geography, History, Society and Culture

10.45–11.45AM MORNING BREAK

11.45AM YE OLDE NEW SHAKESPEARE

2023 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's First Folio. We continue to study his work and mount his plays but is his work still relevant? What is it that keeps us coming back for more? We look at contemporary adaptations and re-interpretations of the Bard's works and analyse their success in connecting with and drawing new audiences. **Laura Murphy** is the composer and writer of *The Lovers* for Bell Shakespeare, a pop musical reimagining of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. **Joanna Erskine** is the Head of Education at Bell Shakespeare. As a playwright, she writes in-school adaptations of Shakespeare's plays for Bell Shakespeare's Players and recently premiered a new Australian work, *Rosaline*, a reimagining of *Romeo and Juliet* from the perspective of Romeo's forgotten first love.

Curriculum links: English, Drama

11.45AM PLAN(ET) B

Through his new book, *Dr Matt's Guide to Life in Space*, **Dr Matt Agnew** explores the qualities that make planet Earth special before moving ahead to traverse what we're beginning to know about other special places for life in the solar system. And what about beyond, in other star systems? How do we even begin to look that far away? Dr Matt Agnew is more than a scientist and a self-confessed 'Space Nerd'; he's a communications powerhouse who helps to make science, maths and technology fun and accessible for everyone.

Curriculum links: Science

12.30–1.30PM LUNCH BREAK

1.30PM WHY SHOULD WE STUDY THIS RUBBISH?

The canon of books we study at school and university includes classics both old and new, but are they all equally compelling? What makes a book or a text interesting and relevant to study in today's age, from Year 7 to undergraduate levels? Taking into consideration aspects of popular culture and some elements of contemporary literary theory, expert educators **Michael Parker** and **Fiona Morrison** discuss the best type of texts for current secondary and tertiary students, offer a few suggestions, and review what makes some texts such rich study material. Michael Parker is Headmaster at Newington College. Fiona Morrison is an Associate Professor in literary studies at UNSW. Together they have written *Masters in Pieces: The English Canon for the Twenty First Century* and a forthcoming book on critical thinking.

Curriculum links: English

1.30PM SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

There is a lot of scary and depressing discussion surrounding climate change and the fate of the planet. Is it all doom and gloom? Isn't it time we focused on the solutions? **Dr Joëlle Gergis** is a climate scientist and the author of *Humanity's Moment: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope*. **Saul Griffith** is an engineer and inventor, and author of *The Big Switch*, a detailed blueprint for dealing with climate change using technology. Former journalist **Claire O'Rourke** is the author of *Together We Can*, an examination of everyday Australians doing amazing things to give our planet a future.

Curriculum links: Geography, Earth and Environmental Science

MEET THE PRESENTERS



DR MATT AGNEW

With a PhD in Astrophysics and a background in the oil and gas industry, Matt has

a breadth of technical knowledge spanning both academic research and engineering in mechanical and piping disciplines. In 2020, Matt decided to further add to his academic credentials and completed a Masters Degree in Artificial Intelligence. Matt's passion for Astrophysics is driven by his core goal to use numerical techniques to search for habitable worlds and solar system analogues. He uses creative thinking to solve problems and to advance and evolve ideas. Dr Matt Agnew is a communications powerhouse that helps make science fun and accessible for everyone.



PAUL CALLAGHAN

Paul Callaghan is an Aboriginal man belonging to the land of the Worimi people, now called

Port Stephens. Paul has held several senior executive positions in his career and has qualifications in surveying, drafting, commerce, training, executive leadership, company boards and executive coaching. He also has a PhD in Creative Practice. His most important learning however, has been through going bush with Elders. Paul is also an author. His bestselling book, *The Dreaming Path* was published in Australia in 2022.



JOANNA ERSKINE

Joanna Erskine is a playwright, producer, teacher, arts education specialist and

Head of Education at Bell Shakespeare. A graduate of NIDA, Joanna is a two-time winner of the Silver Gull Play Award, and the founder and director of Storytellers Festival, a showcase and celebration of unproduced Australian writing at Kings Cross Theatre (KXT). She is passionate about writing for, and working with, young audiences and has written for Bell Shakespeare, Camp Quality, Poetry In Action and the Australian Theatre For Young People (ATYP).



DR JOËLLE GERGIS

Dr Joëlle Gergis is an award-winning climate scientist and writer at the Australian

National University. She served as a lead author for the United Nations' IPCC Sixth Assessment Report and is the author of *Sunburnt Country: The History and Future of Climate Change in Australia*. Joëlle has also contributed chapters to Greta Thunberg's *The Climate Book*, and *Not Too Late: Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility* edited by Rebecca Solnit and Thelma Young Lutunatabua. Her latest book is *Humanity's Moment: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope*.



SAUL GRIFFITH

Saul is an inventor, author, and founder of multiple companies and non-profits. He has

led projects for agencies including NASA, DARPA, National Science Foundation and more. He has founded and co-founded multiple successful companies, including one acquired by Google, another by Autodesk, and another by a consortium of vehicle manufacturers including Toyota. In 2007 he was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship, the so-called 'Genius Grant', for inventions in the service of humanity.



LAURA MURPHY

Laura's passion for musical theatre has led her to the forefront of composing new

Australian work. Laura's original musical *The Lovers*, a pop-infused reimagining of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, premiered in 2022 at Sydney Opera House. Laura is the composer and lyricist for the critically acclaimed new original musical *The Dismissal*. She completed the co-orchestrations and arrangements for the project which will have a return season in 2023. Laura's television work includes *William and Sparkles' Magical Tales* (Nine), *Magical Tales: Surprises* (9Go!), *Imagination Train* and *I Am Me* (9Go!).



CLAIRE O'ROURKE

Claire O'Rourke is an author and environmental advocate, and works as Co-Director of

The Sunrise Project's Australia Energy Transformation Program. Claire also directs Climate Compass, an ongoing project to develop a deep understanding of Australians' attitudes, prospective behaviours and barriers to action on global warming. With 20 years' experience in journalism, communications and advocacy in Australia and around the world, Claire has held a number of leadership positions, including most recently at Amnesty International Australia and as National Director of community-led renewable energy advocacy organisation Solar Citizens.



MICHAEL PARKER & FIONA MORRISON

Michael Parker is currently Headmaster at Newington College where he was also once Head of English. He has been shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Award for young adult fiction. Fiona Morrison is an Associate Professor in literary studies at UNSW and has been the recipient of the Walter McRae Russell Award for best book of literary scholarship on an Australian subject. Together they also wrote *Masters in Pieces: The English Canon for the Twenty-first Century* for Cambridge University Press and a forthcoming book about critical thinking.



BO SEO

Bo Seo is a two-time world champion debater and former coach of the Australian and Harvard debate teams. He

was national reporter at *The Australian Financial Review*, and has contributed to *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Atlantic*. He is currently a student at Harvard Law School.