

This document is a compilation of the initial invitations we sent to outside speakers in our Transformative Speakers Series

**SUSAN BLUM**

Dear Susan,

Good afternoon! I hope this finds you well.

I really enjoyed your presence at the Hunter College ACERT discussion group in January and I am reaching out to gauge your interest (and to inquire about what your typical speaking fee is) for a remote, Zoom talk on ungrading of about 30 minutes with a group of about 21 people (16 faculty, 2-3 admins, 2 faculty directors of the TLH program).

You've probably already heard about TLH (Transformative Learning in the Humanities) through Cathy on Twitter, but just in case: it's a 3-year, Andrew W. Mellon grant-funded initiative at CUNY to bring active, student-centered learning to more classrooms, and, institutionally, to push for greater recognition for good teaching in faculty tenure and promotion. You can learn more about us here:

<https://www.cuny.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/cuny-innovative-teaching-academy/transformative-learning-in-the-humanities/>.

This fall, we're running a seminar with 16 faculty from across many of CUNY's 25 campuses, and in October we're devoting 30 minutes to the topic of ungrading during the seminar to be held on Tuesday, October 19 @ 4-6:30 PM EST. I know 30 minutes isn't a ton of time but we have much ground to cover and the group would greatly benefit from any and all time you could share with us. I've already spoken to some members of the group about ungrading during our TLH open office hours and we've given each of the fellows a copy of the *Ungrading* collection you edited. So they've heard Cathy and me talk about ungrading, it's a big topic of inquiry among all the fellows, and it would mean even more for the discussion to be led by you!

If you're available and willing to join us, please let me know -- and please do let me know what your typical speakers fee is. We have a budget for meetings and events and I would love nothing more than to invite you back to CUNY and to be able to give you an honorarium.

Warmest wishes for good health to you and yours,  
Christina

**JESSE STOMMEL (after an initial direct invitation, a letter to his speaker's agent)**

Dear Jesse,

I hope this finds you and yours healthy and well.

Cathy N. Davidson, myself, and the whole TLH team would like to invite you to give a 1.5-2 hour interactive, hands-on workshop on ungrading via Zoom at CUNY this spring semester. If you're available and willing to join us, please let me know and please give me some dates and times that work for you in the month of March. We can offer you a **\$2,500** honorarium.

You've probably already heard about TLH (Transformative Learning in the Humanities) through Cathy on Twitter, but just in case: it's a 3-year, Andrew W. Mellon grant-funded initiative at CUNY to bring active, student-centered learning to more classrooms, and, institutionally, to push for greater recognition for good teaching in faculty tenure and promotion. You can learn more about us here:

<https://www.cuny.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/cuny-innovative-teaching-academy/transformativ-e-learning-in-the-humanities/>.

This spring, we're running two seminars with a total of 35 faculty fellows from across many of CUNY's 25 campuses, and we've devoted some time already this year to the topic of ungrading (we gave the fellows a copy of the *Ungrading* collection that Susan edited, I gave a short 30-min workshop on it to the fall fellows and Susan gave a talk in October). The fellows (and many faculty at CUNY) keep asking for more. All you do with ungrading, your openness to sharing your teaching methods with others, and all your active learning methods and pedagogical innovations make you the perfect person to deliver something more hands-on in a 1.5-2 hour workshop. We're looking to do a workshop/activity on ungrading with faculty – some form of application/practice/exercise as well as a review of the reasons WHY to ungrade. Please let me know when you can if this interests you.

Warmest wishes for good health to you and yours,  
Christina

**JAMILA LYISCOTT (not available)**

**BETTINA LOVE (submitted via form on her website)**

<b>Name</b>
Christina Katopodis

**School, University, or Association**

City University of New York (CUNY)

**Email**[Christina.Katopodis@cuny.edu](mailto:Christina.Katopodis@cuny.edu)**Phone**

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**Comment or Message**

Dear Dr. Love,

On behalf of Transformative Learning in the Humanities (TLH - <https://transform.commonsgc.cuny.edu/>) at CUNY, I would like to invite you to give a virtual workshop on abolitionist teaching this Fall 2022. At TLH, we advocate for equitable, inclusive teaching methods to spark transformation in our classrooms and institutions. In the past year, we've hosted speakers like Jamila Lyiscott and Felicia Rose Chavez to talk about antiracist teaching and liberatory practices in the classroom as well as ungrading experts like Susan Blum and Jesse Stommel, who use alternative assessment to structure equity, co-creation, and student agency into evaluation. Our team has long admired your work and we would love to bring you to CUNY for a 1-1.5 hour workshop on abolitionist teaching via Zoom. We don't record these but we do write event recaps for our blog. Attendance ranges from about 115 to 250 faculty, staff, and students. Please let me know if you would be interested and what your availability looks like. We're looking to start our antiracist teaching speaker series in late September and to conclude in early December, so any dates/times in there that work for you, we will build our Fall programming around your workshop.

With gratitude and admiration,

Christina Katopodis, PhD

Associate Director, Transformative Learning in the Humanities

**KIESE LAYMON (submitted to his agency)**

Dear Hannah (if I may),

I'm Christina Katopodis, the Associate Director of Transformative Learning in the Humanities (TLH), a three-year initiative at the City University of New York (CUNY) supported by the Mellon Foundation. We're starting to build our Transformative Speakers interactive workshop series for the upcoming academic year (September 2022 – May 2023), and our 52 faculty fellows will be reading parts of Kiese Laymon's *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* throughout this summer and fall.

Would Kiese Laymon have an interest in giving a 1-1.5 hour virtual workshop (via Zoom) on practical teaching methods and strategies for the college classroom? Our workshops focus on

inclusive, equitable, antiracist pedagogies and our prior speakers have included Felicia Rose Chavez, author of *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop*; Jamila Lyiscott, author of *Black Appetite. White Food.*; as well as Susan D. Blum and Jesse Stommel, who are experts on ungrading methods that give students agency in their own evaluation. We're talking now with Bettina Love's team to hopefully invite her to give an interactive workshop on practical ways to incorporate abolitionist teaching methods into the college classroom. Please let me know if this is something Kiese Laymon has done in the past and/or if it's something he would be interested in doing with us this fall!

Thank you for your time,  
Christina

## OCEAN VUONG

Dear Kate,

Happy Friday! We've consulted with our team and have an official offer letter for Ocean – yes, please do let us know what the next steps are in the process. Below is our letter. Please let us know if there is anything else you need.

[Transformative Learning in the Humanities](#) (TLH) is a three-year initiative at CUNY, the largest public urban university system in the U.S., supported by the Mellon Foundation. The program focuses on equitable, creative, student-centered pedagogical research and methods designed for the rich diversity of CUNY students; greater recognition for the importance of teaching; and the role of an urgent and indispensable humanities for the future of CUNY students and a more just and equitable society.

This fall we're welcoming Kiese Laymon, author of *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America*, and Bettina Love, author of *We Want to Do More Than Survive*, to host workshops with TLH.

We would like to invite Prof. Ocean Vuong back to CUNY for a one-hour virtual Q&A in February 2023—to be in conversation with our Mellon TLH Faculty Directors Drs. [Shelly Eversley](#) and [Matt Brim](#) as well as Dr. [Khanh Le](#), who is a current Mellon TLH Faculty Fellow and immigrant from Vietnam working on translanguaging. As an alum from CUNY's Brooklyn College who centers his writing on his mother and the intergenerational trauma of the Vietnam War, Professor Vuong is very relatable to CUNY students, many of whom are immigrants and first-generation college students. Prof. Vuong centers his writing on dispossession, the loss of identity, language, and cultural practices to tease out what it means, and how it feels, when your mother can never understand what you write. What does it mean for CUNY immigrant students when their parents do not understand their work (be it a turn of phrase or piece of writing, a desire to earn a particular degree, a thesis, or a dissertation) or can't comprehend the meaning of a college education? We know that our CUNY students, scholars, and faculty deeply relate to

Prof. Vuong's work. Because multilingualism, immigration, and translanguaging as well as queer lives and class dynamics are so central to his work (for example, in *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*), and to CUNY students' lived experiences while undertaking undergraduate and graduate study, we would like the session to include a discussion about class struggle, translanguaging, queering the curriculum, and the value of transformative pedagogies.

Working within a public university system, we have limited resources. We aim to serve our diverse student and faculty population by providing them with as many resources as we can and to offer a robust Transformative Speakers Series. If Prof. Vuong would consider a best offer of \$6,000 for an honorarium, we would be incredibly honored and overjoyed to have him in our Spring 2023 series.

Have a lovely weekend,  
Christina