

# THE NONFICTION WRITER AS MAPMAKER

JRN3900 / 3900H

WEDNESDAYS, 2:30 - 5:25 PM

WITH FALL 2026 SIDNEY HARMAN WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

## SARAH M. BROOM

draw me a map of what you see  
then I will draw a map of what you never see  
and guess me whose map will be bigger than whose? —Kei Miller, poet

The best nonfiction writers are astute cartographers, directing us through the use of granular detail, language, and point of view to what they deem important. Which points compose your own personal map? And how do we use those points as a guide to uncover those wildernesses still unknown? Toni Morrison said “It’s what I don’t know that stimulates me.” We will begin at the point of unknowing, sketching points on our maps together, expanding, in the process, the idea of memoir itself and what it is capable of doing. When we are born, we inherit ideas, philosophies, systemic structures, mythologies and their attendant weight. The nonfiction writer attempts to make meaning and give context to their lives -- a way of writing against displacement of all types. In this class, we will consider the development and use of a personal archive in layering and developing creative nonfiction stories that map our worlds. We will improvise throughout this course, reading widely across genres into journalism, poetry, fiction, theatre, nonfiction and song. Through in-class assignments we will attempt to fortify each others work, while also exploring structure, research technique, revision and writing ritual. By the end of this course, the goal is for each student to have drawn a finely wrought narrative map, drawn from the material of their lives and the world in which we live.

**Sarah M. Broom** won the 2019 National Book Award for her searing memoir *The Yellow House*, about which *The New York Times* wrote: "Part oral history, part urban history, part celebration of a bygone way of life, *The Yellow House* is a full indictment of the greed, discrimination, indifference and poor city planning that led her family’s home to be wiped off the map."

Applications are open on the Sidney Harman Writer-In-Residence Program website. Please email [esther.l.allen@gmail.com](mailto:esther.l.allen@gmail.com) for any questions.

**APPLY HERE**

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