

VIETNAM NOW!

## The 22nd Annual Norman Mailer Society Conference

Wilkes University Wilkes-Barre, PA

#### Conference Schedule

### Thursday, October 9

9:00–10:00 Business Meeting (Simms 231)

10:10-11:10 **Panel #1** 

The Mailer Archives at Wilkes University (Simms 231)

Moderator: Bonnie Culver

Suzanna Calev, Brian Sacolic, J. Michael Lennon

11:20-12:20 **Panel #2** 

Mailer and A.I.: Running Existential Errands for the Devil? (Simms 231)

Moderator: Raymond M. Vince

Salvatore J. Fallica, "How Mailer's 'Left-Conservatism' Can Help Us Understand What He Would Say About A.I."

Robert Dean Lurie, "Plastic Intelligence in 'Technology

Land': Mailer, A.I., and Jacques Ellul"

Nicole DePolo, "Artificial Intelligence: A Fourth

Protagonist in Mailer's Ontology?"

Austin Dabney, "Outsourcing Our Hearts to the

Machine: Mailer and Emotion A.I."

12:30–2:10 Lunch on your own

2:20-3:20 Panel #3

Technology and Its Discontents (Simms 231)

Moderator: Nicole DePolo

Maggie McKinley, "'Pollution in the Conduits': Mailer's

Technology Skepticism and the Rise of A.I"

Raymond M. Vince, "Objective Knowledge or Cognitive

Ghetto? Science, Faith, and Media Today"

Gerald R. Lucas, "Norman Mailer 2.0: Tech's Latest 'Put-On'?"

#### 3:30-4:30 **Panel #4**

Mailer's Rabbi: Mashey Bernstein in Conversation with John Buffalo Mailer and Maggie McKinley (Simms 231)

4:40–5:40 **Tour**: **The Mailer Archives at Wilkes University** (Farley Library Archives, 2nd floor)

Led by Suzanna Calev

Dedication of Mailer Archives

5:45–7:30 **Welcome Reception** (Farley Library, 1st floor Lobby)

Sponsored by the President's and Advancement Offices

7:30- Dinner on your own

### Friday, October 10

9:00–10:00 Panel #5
The Political Is Personal (*Simms 231*)

Moderator: Gerald R. Lucas
Jason Mosser, "Mailer and Orwell: Turning
Political Writing into Art"
Matthew S. Hinton, "The Spooky Art of the
Squeal: Mailer Meets Trump"

10:10-11:10 Panel #6
What Would Norman Say and Do?
A Roundtable (Simms 231)

Moderator: Maggie McKinley Salvatore J. Fallica, John Buffalo Mailer, J. Michael Lennon

## 11:20–12:20 **Panel #7 The Lively Arts** (*Simms 231*)

Moderator: Philip Bufithis

Austin Dabney, "Toni Morrison's Unlikely
Advocacy of Norman Mailer"

Olivia Rutigliano-Mailer, "Mailer, Dickens, and Serialization"

12:30–2:30 Lunch on your own
Executive Board meeting (Henry Student Center,
Miller Conference Room, 2nd floor)

# 2:40-3:40 Panel #8 Norman Mailer and James Jones: The Wilkes University Connection (Simms 231)

Moderator: Matthew S. Hinton Kaylie Jones, Bonnie Culver, J. Michael Lennon

# 3:50-4:50 Panel #9 A Celebration: 20 Years of the MFA in Creative Writing at Wilkes University (Simms 231)

Moderators: Bonnie Culver and David Hicks Kaylie Jones, Wayne Benson, Barbara Taylor, and J. Michael Lennon

4:00–7:00 Book Sale (Foyer outside Simms 231)

Limited books from Wilkes University's Barnes & Noble Bookstore will be available for sale

5:00-7:00 Cocktail Hour (Foyer outside Simms 231)

Sponsored by Bonnie Culver and David Hicks

7:00- Dinner on your own

### Saturday, October 11

9:30-10:45 **Panel #10** 

Of the Making of Men and Their Manuscripts (Henry Student Center, Miller Conference Room, 2nd floor)

Moderator: Enid Stubin

Peter Balbert, "Prescience, Zemblanity, and Death: Ruminations on Mailer's 'Ten Thousand Words a Minute'"

Jared Young, "'A New Breed of Man': War Wounds, Veterans, and Anti-Remasculinization Narratives in An American Dream"

Matthew S. Hinton, "The Blurbs of Norman Mailer Revisited"

#### 11:00–12:00 The Castle in the Forest:

A Reading by the Wilkes University Readers Theatre (Henry Student Center, Miller Conference Room, 2nd floor)

Bonnie Culver, Brenda Fager, Matthew S. Hinton, Kelly Clisham, David Hicks, and Nicole DePolo

12:00–2:30 Luncheon and Keynote Address: Rudy Langlais (Henry Student Center, Paul and Jean Adams Ballroom, 2nd floor)

## The 22nd Annual Norman Mailer Society Conference

Presenters and Moderators

### Keynote Speaker: Rudy Langlais

Born in the British Caribbean colony of St. Kitts and Nevis, Rudy Langlais established a long career as a journalist and newspaper and magazine editor in New Jersey and New York, starting with The Star-Ledger, New Jersey's largest newspaper, before moving on to become Senior Editor of The Village Voice and Executive Editor for the monthly music/culture/politics magazine Spin.



Langlais began his work in film with Norman Mailer, with whom he developed several films, about banned writer Henry Miller and a crime thriller set in Cuba in the 1950s. He went on to produce the drama *Sugar Hill*, starring Wesley Snipes, for Beacon Pictures, and *The Hurricane*, the story of wrongfully convicted boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, played by Denzel Washington in a Golden Globe-winning and Oscar-nominated performance.

For Showtime, Langlais produced *Who Killed Atlanta's Children?* based on his *Spin* team's investigation of the series of brutal slayings in Atlanta. The film starred legendary dancer/actor Gregory Hines as Langlais. For FX, he produced *Redemption*, which gave Jamie Foxx his Golden Globe and SAG-nominated role as the death row, Nobel Prize-nominated author and peace activist Stanley Tookie Williams, founder of the notorious street gang, the Crips.

Currently, Langlais is producing *Miles and Me*, a film about the life of jazz icon Miles Davis, with Denzel Washington, directed by Carl Franklin (*Devil in a Blue Dress*); *Rebel*, starring Jamie Foxx, the story of American gangster Danny Sims, who discovered the great singers Johnny Nash and Bob Marley; and a drama of Ralph Bunche's 1949 negotiation of the armistice between Israel and the Arab States. Langlais is also producing films about the African American tank battalion that liberated a concentration camp, with Washington and basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar; and Arthur C. Clarke's science fiction masterwork *Childhood's End*, starring Washington.

#### **Presenters and Moderators**

- Peter Balbert is Professor of English at Trinity University, where he formerly served for sixteen years as department chair. He has published more than fifty essays on modern and contemporary writers, including Norman Mailer, D. H. Lawrence, and Ernest Hemingway. He is the author of D.H. Lawrence and the Marriage Matrix, D.H. Lawrence and the Phallic Imagination, D. H. Lawrence and the Psychology of Rhythm, and D.H. Lawrence: A Centenary Consideration. His book-in-progress, from which sections have been published in The Journal of Modern Literature and The Mailer Review, is entitled "D. H. Lawrence and the Great Black-Backed Gull: Essays on Lawrence, Freud, Mailer, and the Subversive Art of Conte a Clef."
- Wayne Benson, Jr. is a poet and editor from Easton, Pennsylvania, who earned his MFA with the Maslow Family Graduate Program in Creative Writing at Wilkes University. He owns Basement Poetry Podcast and Basement Publishing & Media LLC, which aims to make poetry more accessible and equitable. He also produces KQ on the Avenue, a podcast highlighting published writers and underrepresented BIPOC artists. Wayne's poems are published in various literary magazines, and he can be found on Instagram @wayne\_like\_batman.
- Emily Benedek graduated from Harvard College. Her articles and essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post, Newsweek, Rolling Stone, Tablet* Magazine and on NPR, among others. She has written extensively about the American West. Her first book, *The Wind Won't Know Me: A History of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute* (Knopf), was a finalist for the Robert F. Kennedy Book Prize. She is the author of *Beyond the Four Corners of the World: A Navajo Woman's Journey* (Knopf), and a memoir, *Through the Unknown, Remembered Gate* (Schocken). She is also the author of *Hometown Betrayal: A Tragic Story of Sexual Abuse and Secrecy in Mormon Country* (Greenleaf), and *Red Sea* (St. Martin's Press), a thriller about terrorism and counter-terrorism. She has two daughters and lives in New York City.
- Mashey Bernstein is delighted to be able to attend this year's conference! He holds a PhD in American literature with a focus on Mailer's fiction. He retired in 2015 from the Writing Program and Film Studies Dept at the University of California Santa Barbara. He has written extensively on Norman Mailer, with

articles appearing in *The Mailer Review, Studies in American Jewish Literature, The San Francisco Review of Books,* and the *London Jewish Chronicle.* His most recent article was on Mailer's
Judaism in *Norman Mailer in Context,* ed. Maggie McKinley. He
also writes on film, especially Jewish aspects of the media.

Philip Bufithi, author of the critical study *Norman Mailer* (1978, Japanese edition 1981), is former executive editor of the literary magazine *Antietam Review*. His articles on twentieth-century American literature and his stories have appeared in numerous publications. He is Professor of English Emeritus at Shepherd University and a member of the graduate creative writing faculty at Wilkes University.

Suzanna Calev has worked at Wilkes since August 2018 as a Public Services Librarian and Archivist. She is a native New Yorker and holds a dual Masters degree in History and Archives Management from Simmons College in Boston. She has worked in a variety of archival repositories, museums, and libraries, including the Museum of the City of New York, The Jewish Museum, JFK Presidential Library, Boston Public Library, Harvard University, and Mount Sinai. She re-created Norman Mailer's Provincetown study on the second floor of Farley Library for the Fall 2019 Mailer conference and has continued to supervise and oversee the processing of Norman Mailer collections at Wilkes University.

Kelly Clisham earned her MFA from Wilkes University. She got her start as a professional writer at the age of four when her Gram paid a dollar for the Sears catalog she wrote and illustrated. The work dried up quite a bit after that, though she did pen some spectacular Star Wars fan fiction in middle school. Since Hollywood failed to call, Clisham took a writing hiatus until she began freelancing for a local arts and entertainment weekly. Her adventures in freelancing include covering a crane rodeo for a construction magazine and writing a script for an iPhone game about ogres. In her day job, Clisham is a communications specialist at Wilkes, telling stories to recruit undergraduate students. She's currently working on a comedy titled Recast, a rom-com called A Giant Love Story, and revisions on her screenplay, a thriller titled Keep Her Close. She would still like Hollywood to give her a call. If her search history gets her arrested, Bonnie Culver is her one phone call.

**Bonnie Culver**'s play *A Ticket to the Circus*, adapted from Norris Church Mailer's memoir, starring Anne Archer and directed by Michelle Danner, streamed in June. Her play *Sniper* debuted Off-Broadway in 2005, and Princeton University's Theatre Intime produced *Sniper* in 2023. Her screenplays *I Do* and *Raining Rainbows* were finalists in the Mystic Film and the Southern California Film Festivals. *I Do* was a Second Rounder finalist at the Austin Film Festival, and *Raining Rainbows* was optioned by Marlee Maitlin's Solo One Production Co. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild and a Professor Emerita at Wilkes University, where she was a professor, dean, and co-founder of the Graduate Program in Creative Writing along with Mailer biographer Dr. J. Michael Lennon. This conference's reading will mark the twentieth presentation by Wilkes readers. *Sniper* and her other plays can be found at Havesripts.com and Amazon.com.

Austin Dabney is a former professional ballet dancer and a recent graduate from Fisher College in Boston, Massachusetts, where he completed an Honors thesis on Toni Morrison and Literary Ethics. For the 22nd Annual Conference of the Norman Mailer Society, his work explores Toni Morrison's presentation of Norman Mailer as he received the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution in American Letters in 2005 as a framework to investigate her unlikely advocacy for his work. Austin's short story, "The Motley Girl," has been selected for publication in the literary journal Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle, and he will present at the organization's national convention in New Orleans in Spring 2026. Austin intends to apply to graduate programs in both English and Creative Writing, with hopes of further advancing the study of his research interests, which include the presence of African Americans in American literature, literary criticism and canonicity, and aesthetics.

Nicole DePolo is a full-time Associate Professor of English at Fisher College and a part-time Associate Professor of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Berklee College of Music, both in Boston. She serves as the Vice-President of the Norman Mailer Society and Co-President of the Board of Governors for BRAWN (the Boston Rhetoric and Writing Network). She holds a Ph.D. in Editorial Studies from the Editorial Institute at Boston University, an MFA in Creative Writing from Wilkes University, and a BFA in Illustration from Rhode Island School of Design. Her doctoral dissertation, "Norman Mailer's Book of the Dead: A Companion to Ancient Evenings," was completed under the direction of Christopher Ricks and includes a critical edition of the second chapter of Mailer's ancient Egyptian novel, "The Book of the Gods."

Brenda Fager has been a theatre artist for 35 years (playwright,

theatre teacher, actor, stage manager, and director), including 17 years at the A.D. Players Theater in Houston, TX, where she trained as a stage manager and acted in mainstage and children's theatre productions. She's played roles as varied as Ouiser in *Steel Magnolias*, Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*, and most recently, Aunt Martha in *Arsenic and Old Lace* (May 2025, LTWB). She is the playwright and director of the Russell Park Experience at the First Annual Carbondalien Festival (2024) in Carbondale, PA and is looking forward to this year's Second Festival. Her play, *A Flight Behind*, will be produced by Little Theatre of Wilkes-Barre, in Summer 2026.

Salvatore J. Fallica was born in Brooklyn, NY. He earned his doctorate at New York University, in the Department of Culture and Communications, now Media, Culture and Communication, where he studied with Neil Postman; and it is where he teaches courses in spectacle culture, political communication, propaganda, and political rhetoric. Dr. Fallica is the recipient of the Excellence in Teaching award from the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University. He serves as the editor of the *Proceedings for NYSCA*, the New York State Communication Association, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Norman Mailer Society. Fun fact: Sal taught high school English for more than thirty years — and if you don't believe him, he can show you the scars.

David Hicks, PhD, is an award-winning college professor, a Fulbright scholar, the director of the nationally ranked Maslow Family Graduate Program in Creative Writing at Wilkes University, and the author of three books: the novel White Plains, which was a finalist for the Colorado Book Award and Westword's #1 Book by Colorado Authors; The Magic Ticket, an autobiographical children's book; and a second novel published this year, The Gospel According to Danny. He and his wife Cynthia moved back east during the pandemic and now live in Scranton, PA, where they co-founded the Electric City Writers.

Matthew S. Hinton was born in the back seat of his great grand-mother's Posten Taxi in Wilkes-Barre, PA. He is a playwright (*Playroom* – 2022), professor, actor, journalist, producer, and photographer. Hinton's work on the life and writing of Norman Mailer appears in *The Mailer Review, Provincetown Arts*, and *Norman Mailer In Context*. He is currently the Treasurer of the Norman Mailer Society. Hinton is also the narrator of the

- forthcoming audiobook of *The Gospel According to Danny* by David Hicks (2025). His photography of the city and people of Wilkes-Barre serves as the masthead art of the online literary journal *River & South Review*. He teaches writing and literature at Misericordia University (Dallas, PA). He dreams in analog.
- Kaylie Jones is the daughter of American author James Jones, who wrote From Here to Eternity and The Thin Red Line. Kaylie's latest novel is The Anger Meridian. She is the author of the acclaimed memoir, Lies My Mother Never Told Me. Her novels include A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries, adapted as a Merchant Ivory Film in 1998. She co-chairs the James Jones First Novel Fellowship, which awards \$12,000 yearly for an unpublished first novel. Kaylie is also the publisher of Kaylie Jones Books, an imprint of Akashic Books. She is a full professor at SUNY Stony Brook in the Lichtenstein Center for Creative Writing and Literature, and she also teaches at the Wilkes University Maslow Family Low-Residency MFA Program in Creative Writing.
- J. Michael Lennon is the author of the 2013 biography, Norman Mailer: A Double Life, and has edited several of Mailer's works, including the 2023 Library of America edition, The Naked and the Dead and Selected Letters, 1945-46 and, with G.R. Lucas and Susan Mailer, Lipton's: Norman Mailer's Marijuana Journal (2024). He teaches in the MFA program at Wilkes University.
- Gerald R. Lucas is co-editor of *Lipton's*: A Marijuana Journal, 1954-55 (2024), editor of *Norman Mailer*: Works and Days (2018), and creator and editor of *Project Mailer*. Jerry serves as President of the Norman Mailer Society, the Society's webmaster, and the Digital Editor of *The Mailer Review*. He is Professor of English at Middle Georgia State University.
- Robert Dean Lurie is the author of two music biographies: Begin the Begin: R.E.M.'s Early Years and No Certainty Attached: Steve Kilbey and the Church. His essays on arts and culture have appeared in The Spectator, National Review, Modern Age, America, Blurt Magazine, The American Conservative, and Dangerous Minds. Lurie received his MFA in Creative Writing from the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, and is currently at work on another book with (and about) acclaimed Australian songwriter Steve Kilbey.
- John Buffalo Mailer is an award-winning producer, screenwriter, journalist, playwright, actor, and director with over twenty movies to his credit. After graduating from Wesleyan University in 2000, he co-founded Back House Productions in New York City with Thomas Kail, Anthony Veneziale, and Neil Stewart,

developing plays by Beau Willimon, Sam Forman, Anne Nelson, and Lin-Manuel Miranda. Mailer's first play, *Hello Herman*, premiered in New York in 2002 and was adapted into a movie directed by Michelle Danner (*Miranda's Victim*) starring Norman Reedus.

Mailer has been an editor for three national magazines – High Times, Tar, and Stop Smiling, and has written for Playboy, New York, ESPN, Art Forum, LitHub, Provincetown Arts, Corriera De La Sera, The Norman Mailer Review, The American Conservative, Vector and Inked Magazine, among others.

He is a member of The Actors Studio and has performed in dozens of plays in New York, including the notorious 2011 revival of *Dracula* starring Thora Birch. His film acting includes *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps, River of Fundament, Friends and Romans, Blind* (for which he wrote the screenplay), An *Imperfect Murder, American Terrorist,* and *Miranda's Victim.* In addition to being a Lifetime Member of the Actors Studio and Playwright Directors Unit, Buffalo is a member of the Screen Actors Guild, Actors Equity Association, and the Dramatists Guild of America.

He executive-produced *How to Come Alive with Norman Mailer*, a feature documentary about the life of his father, Norman Mailer, directed by Emmy Award Winner Jeff Zimbalist and produced by Emmy Award Winner Vicki Marquette. *How to Come Alive* was listed as one of the Top 10 Documentaries of 2024 by *Variety* and *Men's Journal*.

Buffalo lives in New York with his wife, Olivia Rutigliano-Mailer.

Maggie McKinley is Professor of English and Honors Program
Co-Coordinator at Harper College. She is the author of Masculinity and the Paradox of Violence in American Fiction (Bloomsbury, 2015) and Understanding Norman Mailer (U of SC Press, 2017), and the editor of the Cambridge collections Philip Roth in Context (2021) and Norman Mailer in Context (2021). She has also published on Saul Bellow, Richard Wright, and Joan Didion, and she currently serves as co-editor of the journal Philip Roth Studies. Her book The Art of Looking Back: Joan Didion and American Nostalgia is forthcoming from LSU Press in 2026.

**Jason Mosser** is a retired Emeritus Professor of English from Georgia Gwinnett College. He taught at a number of schools from the Georgia Institute of Technology to Rockford College. In addition to creative work, he has published widely on Norman Mailer and the New Journalism of the 1960s-70s. Dr. Mosser's article on

Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* is expected to appear this year in a centenary collection published by Cambridge University Press.

Olivia Rutigliano-Mailer is a writer and cultural critic. For the last six years, she has worked as an Editor at the online publication Lit Hub and its vertical CrimeReads, as well as a Book Editor at its parent company, the publishing house Grove Atlantic. Her essays have appeared in Vanity Fair, New York Magazine/Vulture, Lapham's Quarterly, the Los Angeles Review of Books, Public Books, The Baffler, Bright Wall/Dark Room, Politics/Letters, The Toast, Truly Adventurous, and others. A specialist in the history of mass entertainment (especially detectives) from the late nineteenth through the twentieth centuries, she has a PhD from the departments of English/Comparative Literature and Theatre at Columbia University, where she was the Marion E. Ponsford Fellow. Currently, she is teaching a course in social justice and literature at CUNY's John Jay College, as well as courses on nineteenth-century literature and culture for Philadelphia's Rosenbach Museum. She is the host of the new podcast "Culture Schlock" on Lit Hub Radio. She lives in New York City with her husband John Buffalo Mailer, and they are expecting their first child.

Brian Sacolic is the Director of E. S. Farley Library at Wilkes University and has worked in all aspects of Library Public Services. For over 30 years he has assisted student and faculty with their research at Farley Library and has seen the original card catalog been replaced with A.I. driven databases and search tools. Despite the many changes in information retrieval, he believes that modern libraries should offer their patrons an array of both traditional and high-tech resources to best enable and support information literacy. He is a strong proponent of Bibliographic Instruction via active learning, with the goal of developing skills sets that permit library users to penetrate through the maze of information clutter/noise produced by the ongoing information explosion. Brian has background in science and engineering, which is well-suited to support the various STEM programs and courses at Wilkes University. He enjoys working with the other Librarians at Farley to create an inclusive learning environment that fosters a passion of life-learning coupled with critical thinking abilities.

**Enid Stubin** is Professor of English at Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York, where she teaches courses in composition, literature, and Shakespeare. She has published in *The Reader* (University of Liverpool) and *The Mailer*  *Review* and contributed to *Norman Mailer in Context*. Her interests include the intersection of politics, culture, and writing in the seventeenth and twentieth- and twenty-first centuries.

Barbara J. Taylor was born and raised in Scranton, PA, and sets her books in the hometown she loves and populates them with miners, evangelists, vaudevillians, gangsters, and a prostitute or two. Publishers Weekly named her first novel, Sing in the Morning, Cru at Night, a Best Book of Summer 2014. The American Library Association called her second novel, All Waiting is Long, "Powerful ... a book club discussion cornucopia." The Historical Novel Society described her latest work, Rain Breaks No Bones, as, "... everything a reader could want in a family saga." Taylor attended the University of Scranton, where she received a BA in English and an MS in education. She taught English in the Pocono Mountain School District for thirty-one years. In the latter part of her career, she returned to graduate school, this time at Wilkes University, and earned an MFA in creative writing. Taylor has since retired from teaching to write full-time. She's currently at work on her fourth novel, tentatively titled, The Prodigal Husband.

Raymond M. Vince is now an independent scholar, having taught American Literature, Creative Writing, Film, and other topics for well over thirty years at the University of Tampa, the University of South Florida, Eckerd College, and Hillsborough Community College, Florida. With graduate degrees in English, Theology, and Logic & Scientific Method, he has published nine articles in *The Fitzgerald Review* and *The Mailer Review* and has also contributed chapters to *Arthurian Writers* (2008), *Norman Mailer in Context* (2021), and *Neglected Scorsese* (2025).

Jared Young is an instructor at the State University of New York at Orange. He received his PhD in English from Oklahoma State University. His research interests include literary disability studies, twentieth-century modernism, and war fiction. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Journal of Cultural and Literary Disability Studies*, H-War, The Strategy Bridge, and The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps Journal.

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