

Kansas writers meet at JCCC

Kansas as a “place” is the subject of the Kansas Writers Symposium.

Dr. Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, the Poet Laureate of Kansas 2009-2011, has been invited to speak at 4 p.m., Saturday, April 16, in the M.R. and Evelyn Hudson Auditorium of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art. A reception follows her presentation in the Atrium of the Regnier Center. Mirriam-Goldberg will give a poetry reading with a focus on Kansas. The event is free and open to the public.

Mirriam-Goldberg received her PhD in English and master's degree in creative writing, both from the University of Kansas, and a bachelor's degree in history, University of Missouri. As founder of Transformative Language Arts at Goddard College, she values social and personal transformation through the spoken, written and sung word. She is the author of 10 books including her most recent *Landed* (poetry, Mammoth Publications), *The Sky Begins At Your Feet* (a memoir on cancer, community and ecology, Ice Cube Press) and the award-winning *Write Where You Are*. She is editor of *The Power of Words: A Transformative Language Arts Reader*, and her poetry and prose have been published in more than 50 literary journals and anthologies.

Her project as poet laureate is *Poetry Across Kansas — Reading and Writing Our Way Home*, intended to strengthen the presence of poetry in Kansas, build literary communities statewide and enhance Kansans' sense of place through poetry.

Mirriam-Goldberg's presentation is a capstone to an all-day Kansas Writers Symposium, sponsored by JCCC's Kansas Studies Institute and English department. The goal is to facilitate a gathering of writers from diverse disciplines whose work centers on Kansas as a “place.” The invitation-only event has a limit of 20 writers who will submit about

3,000 words of a published work in advance. The writers will read each other's works before the symposium. During morning and early afternoon sessions, writers will briefly present their works and participate in large- and small-group sessions.

“Our intention is to bring these writers together to celebrate the diverse ways they address the Kansas experience and to embrace the commonalities of their work,” said Thomas Reynolds, associate professor, English, who will be presenting from his poetry book, *Ghost Town Almanac*, at the symposium.

Invited writers include historians, fiction writers, poets, essayists and scientists.

“I hope the writers can sit down and share ideas with people approaching the same subject they are,” said David Davis, chair/professor, English. “Writing can be an isolating job, and that's why writers symposiums are so popular. I find the symposium an exciting idea. It's something the college hasn't done before.”

After a number of public lectures and a film sponsored by KSI during the last year and a half, Dr. James Leiker, director, KSI, says he wants to offer an academic symposium tailored to people writing about Kansas.

“We want to let people know that JCCC is taking the study and promotion of writing about Kansas seriously,” Leiker said. “So if this works out, we would like to do a writers conference on an annual basis.”

The organizing committee for the Kansas Writers Symposium are Leiker, KSI; and Davis, Reynolds, Dr. Samantha Bell, assistant professor, and Farrell Jenab, adjunct professor, English department. **Im**