



## The Art and Craft of the Personal Essay

G26100111

with Beth Kelley & Susan Dwyer

October 4-10, 2026

Dear Friends,

We're delighted you have chosen to join us for The Art and Craft of the Personal Essay, an innovative workshop in "essaying" – the practice of discovering what we think about ourselves, others, and the world through writing and creative artistic practices.

Together, we'll explore various approaches to the written essay. In daily craft sessions we'll cover the fundamentals including voice, truth-telling, and connecting the personal to the universal. Throughout the week, you'll experiment with different essay forms including lyric, list, flash, and hermit crab. There will be ample time for generative writing and small-group feedback opportunities.

The creative making practices offer a playful and deeper way to engage with the content of your writing. Making practices, like drawing, creating a personal



shrine, or collage shift your relationship to the work, and provide ways to explore and express ideas and emotions when words escape us.

Sue and Beth bring a unique blend of writing craft and creative making that will nourish and build your writerly self-confidence. The invitation is to show up, write, create, and learn together. Bring your favorite writing tools, and, if you like, any photos or objects to inspire your writing.

If you have any questions, reach out to one of us. Otherwise we'll see you at Ghost Ranch.

Warmly, Sue Dwyer [susandwyernm@gmail.com](mailto:susandwyernm@gmail.com) Beth  
Kelleybeth@[mudwitchindustries.com](http://mudwitchindustries.com)

Please Bring:

Preferred writing materials (pens, pencils, notebooks)

Yoga mat (optional)

Personal photographs or objects to stimulate memory and writing.

Comfortable clothes to allow for Yoga and movement activities.



**Workshop Itinerary:**

<p><b>Mealtimes:</b>          Breakfast 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.          Lunch 12:00 - 1:00p.m.          Dinner 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Sunday:</b>          3:00 p.m. Check in          5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Dinner followed by Orientation          7:15 - 8:30 p.m. Meet your facilitators and fellow participants</p>
<p><b>Monday: Day 1 <i>Essay Forms</i></b>  <b>9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Morning Session</b>          Each day we will start with a grounding exercise and check in. We'll discuss the personal essay as a genre, considering why people are drawn to read and write personal essays. We'll read examples of various essays. We'll reflect on the relationship between creativity/making and how it supports a writing practice  <b>1:00 - 4:00p.m. Afternoon Session</b>          After lunch we'll explore the wide variety of forms the personal can take. Enjoy some writing time and small group feedback. We'll practice different line drawing as a way to connect to our inner/outer self as a writer.  <b>4:00 - 5:30 Free Time + Open Studio</b></p>	<p><b>Tuesday: Day 2 <i>Finding Your Voice</i></b>  <b>9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Morning Session</b>          We'll talk about how to brainstorm and home in on essay topics, discuss how the tone of the essayist's voice contributes to the impact of essays on readers. Writing practice and small group feedback will allow us to experiment with different voices across different essay forms.  <b>1:00 - 3:30 p.m. Afternoon Session</b>          Our creative project explores the power of the writer's voice using collage.  <b>3:30 - 5:30 Free Time/Open Studio Time</b></p>
<p><b>Wednesday: Day 3 <i>Memory and Truth</i> 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Morning Session</b>          The personal essay is creative nonfiction. How does the essayist deal with gaps in their memory or knowledge of events? May facts be "made up" or embellished? How does the essayist deal with revealing information about other people?  <b>1:00 - 3:30p.m. Afternoon Session</b>          We'll explore the medium of copper tooling as a means of honoring memory.  <b>3:30 - 5:30 Free Time /Open Studio Time</b></p>	<p><b>Thursday: Day 4 <i>Connecting the Dots</i> 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Morning Session</b>          No matter the form they use, the essayist seeks to illuminate their own thinking on the page, showing the reader why they made the connections they did. Ample writing time to further refine what you've been generating, followed by small group feedback.  <b>1:00 - 3:30p.m. Afternoon Session</b>          We will devote our afternoon writing time and mindful weaving to integrate what we have learned together.  <b>3:30 - 5:30 Free Time/Open Studio Time</b></p>
<p><b>Friday: Day 5 <i>Revision and the World</i></b>  <b>9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Morning Session</b>          We'll talk about revision strategies and about how to get your work out into the world (identifying appropriate literary magazines and other publications and learning</p>	<p><b>Saturday: Day 6 <i>Closing Ceremony</i></b>  <b>8:30 - 9:30 a.m.</b> Wrap up and Closing          This will be an informal opportunity to share a brief reflection and final farewell to one another.</p>

# GHOST RANCH



about the submission process.)

**1:00 - 3:30 p.m. Afternoon Session**

We'll explore simple book binding to create journals to capture your work as we continue to share our writing.

**3:00 - 5:30 p.m. Free Time**