

Pinckney Benedict
Professor, Department of English (Creative Writing/Fiction)
Founder and Director, Digital Expressions Lab
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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biography

Pinckney Benedict grew up on his family's dairy farm in [Greenbrier County, West Virginia](#).

education

He graduated from **The Hill School** in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, in 1982; from **Princeton University**, where he studied primarily with the writer [Joyce Carol Oates](#), in 1986 (*magna cum laude*); and from the **Iowa Writers' Workshop** at the [University of Iowa](#) in 1988.

current projects

Benedict is currently the senior fiction writer in the MFA program in Creative Writing at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He is also the founder and director of the [Digital Expressions Lab](#) at SIUC, which offers non-STEM-oriented students the opportunity to create [immersive narrative experiences](#). He and his students are engaged in an AI (GPT-3) and VR (Oculus Quest) storytelling collaboration with [Ajit Joakar](#), the Course Director for Artificial Intelligence: Cloud and Edge implementations at the University of Oxford, UK. Benedict is currently at work on a 360-degree stereoscopic visual novel for VR entitled *Rise & Slaughter*.

publications

Benedict has published three collections of short fiction—*Town Smokes* (Ontario Review Press, 1987), *The Wrecking Yard and Other Stories* (Nan A. Talese Books/Doubleday, 1992), and most recently *Miracle Boy and Other Stories* (Press 53, 2010) as well as a novel (*Dogs of God*, Nan A. Talese Books/Doubleday, 1994). These books have variously appeared in UK, German, French, and Catalan editions. His fifth book, *Papa Whiskey Tango*, is forthcoming in 2020 (Press 53).

His stories have appeared in, among other magazines and anthologies, *Esquire*, *Zoetrope: All-Story*, *StoryQuarterly*, *Ontario Review*, *Tin House*, *Appalachian Heritage*, the *O. Henry Award* series (twice), the *New Stories from the South: The Year's Best* series (four times), the *Pushcart Prize* series (three times), *Red Holler: Contemporary Appalachian Literature* (a 2013 volume from Sarabande for which he also wrote the introduction), *The Ecco Anthology of the Contemporary American Short Story*, and *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories* (both the 1992 edition and the twentieth-anniversary 2012 edition, a different story in each).

A: *The Scarlet Letter*, a musical adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel (concert version) for which he wrote the lyrics and narration, was staged at Brucker Hall on Fort Myer, Arlington VA, October 21 & 23, 2016. Music by Anthony Nalker. (View [here](#).)

He wrote the screenplay for the feature film *Four Days* (Cite Amerique, 1999). The film stars William Forsythe, Lolita Davidovich, Colm Meaney, and Kevin Zegers.

He has published graphic fictions, for which he created both the text and the artwork, in *Idaho Review* (view [here](#)), *Appalachian Heritage* (view [here](#)), and on [plotswithguns.com](#) (view [here](#)).

With his wife, the novelist Laura Benedict, he has edited three volumes of the biennial fiction anthology *Surreal South* (Press 53, 2007, 2009, 2011).

A **short film** on which he collaborated, and which was based on his story "Miracle Boy," premiered at the **Venice (Italy) Biennale** in August 2012. It was one of only fourteen short films invited to the festival and the only American short to screen there. It was named Best Short Film at the 2013 **West Virginia FILMmakers Festival** and best overall film at the **Indie Grits Film**

Festival (the first short film to win the prize in the festival's history). View the seventeen-minute film [here](#).

teaching

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois (2006 – present)
Professor, Department of English/ Program in Creative Writing

Hollins University, Roanoke, Virginia (1998 – 2006)
Associate Professor (1998-2004) and Professor (2004-2006), Department of English/Program in Creative Writing

Hope College, Holland, Michigan (1996 – 1998)
Associate Professor, Department of English/ Program in Creative Writing

Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina (Spring 1996)
McGee Professor of Writing, Department of English/ Program in Creative Writing

Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey (1994 – 1995, Fall 1996)
Lecturer, Program in Creative Writing

Warren Wilson College, Swannanoa, North Carolina (Fall 1994)
Lecturer, low-residency MFA Program in Creative Writing

West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia (Fall 1993)
Lecturer, Department of English/Program in Creative Writing

The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio (Spring 1993)
Thurber House Writer in Residence, Department of English/Program in Creative Writing

Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio (1989 – 1991)
Assistant Professor, Department of English/Creative Writing program

The Hill School, Pottstown, Pennsylvania (1988 – 1989)
Bissell Writer in Residence

University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa (1987 – 1988)
Teaching-Writing Fellow, Iowa Writers' Workshop

awards and honors

Benedict is the recipient of, among other awards and honors, the **Outstanding Teaching Award** from the SIUC College of Liberal Arts (2021), a **Teaching Innovation Grant** from the SIUC Foundation (2020), an **Innovation Grant** from the SIUC Foundation (2018), a **Canada Feature Film Fund's Development Program Grant**, Telefilm Canada, 2015, a **Literature Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts** (2000), a fiction grant from the **Illinois Arts Council** (2008), two **Plattner Awards** for fiction from *Appalachian Heritage* magazine (2008 & 2011), a **Literary Fellowship from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts** (1994), Britain's **Steinbeck Award** (1994), a **Michener Fellowship from the Writers' Workshop** at the University of Iowa (1988-89), and the **Chicago Tribune's Nelson Algren Award** (1987), and two of the **Henfield Foundation's Transatlantic Review Awards** (1985, 1986).

conference teaching

Benedict has taught on the faculties of the **Bread Loaf Writers' Conference**, the **Sewanee Writers' Conference**, and the **Aspen Writers' Foundation's Summer Words Writing Retreat & Literary Festival**. He teaches each summer at the **Tinker Mountain Writers' Workshop** at Hollins

University in Roanoke, Virginia, a conference he co-founded with the writer Fred Leebron in 2004.

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research

Since becoming senior fiction writer in the creative writing program at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, he has established and is director of The Digital Expressions Lab (DXL) through a series of Innovation Grant from the SIUC Foundation). His workshops stream on Twitch.tv (as Neophyte Studios) and are archived on YouTube. His students have access to cutting-edge artificial intelligence and game creation software and hardware. SIUC's fiction program is at the forefront of technological storytelling in academia.