

Sky O'Brien

Assistant Professor of Creative Writing
English and Creative Writing, School of Nations, 110-D
Principia College, 1 Maybeck Place, Elsah, IL, 62028
Phone: (618) 374 5244 Email: sky.obrien@principia.edu
skyobrien.com

Education

M.F.A, Creative Writing & Poetics

University of Washington, Bothell, WA, June 2022
Thesis advisors: Ted Hiebert and Joe Milutis
Thesis: *Beginners, or The First Voyage of Discovery* (novella)

B.A., English: Creative Writing

Principia College, Elsah, IL, May 2018
Highest Honors; Member of Phi Alpha Eta

Teaching Experience

Principia College, Elsah, IL, 2026 -

Associate Professor of Creative Writing
Faculty Advisor, *Mistake House Magazine*
Courses taught:

- GEN 120: FYE: Science Fiction Vision
- ENGL 220: Environmental Themes
- ENGL 242: Generative Processes

Principia College, Elsah, IL, 2022 - 2023; 2024 - 2026

Visiting Professor, English and Creative Writing; Writing Center
Faculty Advisor, *Mistake House Magazine*, Issues 11 & 12
Faculty Sponsor, Friends of English Club
Courses taught:

- WRIT 120: Reading Words and the World
- WRIT 141: Solve Literacy Mysteries
- WRIT 158: Reading and Writing Inquiry
- ENGL 202: Understanding Poetry
- ENGL 220: Environmental Literature
- ENGL 239: Intro to Creative Nonfiction
- ENGL 241: Fiction Writing I
- ENGL 291: Fiction Writing II
- ENGL 351: Advanced Creative Writing Seminar
- ENGL 353: Literary Editing
- ENGL 354: Literary Editing Practicum

- ENGL 401: Capstone

University of Washington, Bothell, WA, 2022

Grader, Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences,
BIS 132: Introduction to Photography, Prof. Ted Hiebert

Principia College, Elmhurst, IL, 2018 - 2019

Post-Graduate Teaching Intern, English Department
Courses assisted:

- ENGL 241: Fiction Writing II
- ENGL 234: The Language of Film
- ENGL 253: Gender Studies in Literature
- ENGL 351: Adv. Creative Writing Seminar
- ENGL 388: Literature and Critical Theory

Editorial Work

Dispatches Magazine, Berkeley, CA, 2020 - present

Managing Editor, 2026 -

Deputy Editor, 2022 - 2025 (Issues III, IV, V, and VI)

- Acquired poetry by Sam Sax, Yusef Komunyakaa, Rosie Stockton, Mónica de la Torre
- Edited fiction, reviews, and long form essays by various contributors

Contributor, 2020 - 2022 (Issues I and II)

California Institute for Community, Art and Nature, Berkeley, CA, 2019

Intern

- Assisted Malcolm Margolin, Claire Greensfelder, and David Reid with researching source texts for an anthology of writing about Berkeley, California.

Manuscripts by MLA Dr. Tony Buti, Armadale, WA (Aus), 2019

Editor

- Edited two of Dr. Buti's book length non-fiction manuscripts.

Mistake House Magazine, Elmhurst, IL, 2018; 2025 - present

Editor in Chief, 2018 (Issue 4)

- Interviewed poet Rajiv Mohabir and artist Rudy Shepherd

Faculty Advisor, 2025 - present

- Facilitated interviews with writer Suzanne Scanlon and artist Sayuri Ichida

The Principia Pilot, Elmhurst, IL, 2017 - 2018

Assignment Editor and Writer

- Organized weekly writers' meetings to assign stories, discuss ideas, and mentor writers
- Communicated with Editors-in-Chief to ensure stories were relevant and inclusive

The Valley Reporter, Roleystone, WA (Aus), 2013 - 2015

Cadet Journalist

- Wrote and edited 20-30 articles monthly (twelve editions), interviewed local residents for feature articles, and traveled to cover stories and take photographs.

Publications

Essays and reviews

- “Stings Real Bad” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 5 Jan 2026.
- “Let Us Pray” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 19 Oct 2025.
- “The Long Goodbye: Dispatches at the DNC” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 19-22 Aug 2024.
- “Through a Screen, Darkly” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 16 Feb 2024.
- “On Oppenheimer” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 13 Oct 2023.
- “Steinberg’s Tantric Universe” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 19 May 2023.
- “Postpostwar: Postwar Modern at the Barbican” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 28 Oct 2022.
- “Dreams of Iron” in *Artworks for Jellyfish*, eds. Ted Hiebert & Amanda Boetzkes, 2022.
- “The Art of War” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 10 May 2022.
- “The Gift That Keeps on Giving” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 20 Dec 2021.
- “Lost, Damned and Confused” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 18 Jul 2021.
- “We’re Not Done Yet” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 12 May 2021.
- “Searching for Solace” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 16 Jan 2021.
- “Vigil in Perth” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 10 Nov 2020.

Interviews

- “In Conversation: Dinah Ryan” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 20 Jan 2026.
- “Person-to-Person: Leonardo Drew” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 12 December 2025.
- “Person-to-Person: Willis Barnstone” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 17 July 2024.
- “In Conversation: Susan Chen” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 13 Aug 2023.
- “Person-to-Person: Sarah Schulman” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 5 Sep 2023.
- “Person-to-Person: Alfredo Jaar” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 26 July 2023.

Poetry

- Her Prophecies of Cake* with Amy Hirayama, FFFAFF Press, Jul 2023 (chapbook).
- “Forest dream” and “Edge of the Forest” in *Clamor* 2022.
- “Four poems” in *Hex Enduction Quarterly* Summer 2021.
- “Harold, a young accountant” in *High Shelf Press* online, March 2019.

Fiction

- “Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails” in *Dispatches Magazine*, 13 December 2024.
- “The Cleaning Tools of Amateur Astronomers” in *Maestranza Magazine*.
- “The Story” in *Maestranza Magazine*, Sep 2023.
- Beginners: Or, The First Voyage of Discovery* (MFA Thesis), Jun 2022.
- “Three pieces from a fiction in progress” in *Hex Enduction Quarterly* Spring 2022.
- “Shoes in the Suburbs” in *Puerto del Sol* online, Jun 2019.
- “The Union” in *NonBinary Review* online, Apr 2019.
- “Harry’s Bird” in *Drunk Monkeys* online, Feb 2019.
- “Engineers” in Principia College Creative Writing Contest 2018 (1st place).
- “Appliance” in Principia College Creative Writing Contest 2016 (2nd place).
- “65 Inches Wide and 37 Inches High” in *Mistake House* online, May 2017.

“Escaping Reality” in Armadale Young Writers’ Award, 2011 (1st place).

Art Exhibits

Gallery shows

Schmidt Gallery, Principia College 2018. Exhibited work in the inaugural “Juried Student Exhibition,” receiving two honorable mentions.

Radford Gallery, Principia College 2017. Exhibited artworks in “Thirteen Ways of Looking at Prague” and “Radford Pop-Up Exhibition.”

Art Gallery of Western Australia 2014. “Give Us This Day Our Daily Facebook” included in the annual Perspectives exhibition.

Film Screenings

Short films

Common Area Maintenance, Seattle, March 2023. “University Bridge” co-produced with Eric Acosta and Skye Michel.

Grand Illusion Cinema, Seattle, May 2022. “all leisure no work” co-produced with Eric Acosta.

Cox Auditorium, Principia College Film Festival 2016. “I am wood” (awarded best cinematography).

Presentations, Workshops, Conferences, and Public Readings

Readers and Writers, Reef to Range – Writing Festival

Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun, Western Australia, July 2026
Workshops offered: “Memorable Characters”; “Atmospheric Settings”

Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun, Western Australia, June 2025
Workshops offered: “Scriptwriting”; “Experimental Methods”; “Writing in the National Park”

Creative Writing Studies Organization – 9th Annual Conference

Virginia Tech University, VA, November 2024
Panel with Professor Emerita Dinah Ryan and Professor Sara Wienecke: “The Tapas Method: Small Bites and Creative Writing”

M.F.A in Creative Writing & Poetics – Fall Convergence on Poetics

University of Washington, Bothell, WA, September 2024
Generative writing workshop offered with Amy Hirayama: “What I Could Never Be” (after Fernando Pessoa)

Dispatches Magazine – Launch Parties

2727 Gallery, Berkeley, CA

- Issue V, October 2024
- Issue IV, August 2023

M.F.A in Creative Writing & Poetics – Gamut Reading Series

University of Washington, Bothell, WA, April 2021

Reading, “Dreams of Iron”

Fiction readings at Underbelly and Damn the Weather, Seattle**National Undergraduate Literature Conference**

Weber State University, Ogden, UT

- 2016: Reading of short story, “Cheap”
- 2017: Reading of poem, “The Garden”

Selected Awards

- M.F.A Catalyst Award, University of Washington, Bothell, 2022
- William H. Selmeier Literary Award, Principia College, 2018
- Special Merit Award for Student Publications, Principia College, 2018
- Excellence Award, University of Western Australia, 2014

Professional Organizations

- Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP)