
Bennington College Welcomes 2024 Ben Belitt Distinguished Visiting Writer Jia Tolentino

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Bennington College Welcomes 2024 Ben Belitt Distinguished Visiting Writer Jia Tolentino *Winston Foundation Grant funds Spring 2024 class and public reading Wednesday, March 27*

Bennington, VT: The Literature discipline at Bennington College has received a grant from the Winston Foundation to fund a new course and reading from 2024 Ben Belitt Distinguished Visiting Writer [Jia Tolentino](#).

"Jia Tolentino has the gift of making everything that she writes about interesting," said Benjamin Anastas, Literature faculty member. "She's the most intellectually agile and versatile journalist and cultural critic working today; her beat ranges from abortion access to Britney Spears's conservatorship to the psychological effects of the climate crisis. She is also a consummate professional, and it's exciting to think about the ways in which she'll be sharing her insights and experience with the students."

Her reading is scheduled for 7:00 pm on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at Tishman Lecture Hall on the Bennington College Campus. It is open to the public and the college community and will be simulcast online. No preregistration is required. Visit www.bennington.edu/event-calendar for the link to join online.

"These days I'm trying to think of upcoming readings as a prompt," said Tolentino. "My hope is to write something new and read a rough draft."

The full-term, 4000-level course, Hearing Voices: A Master Class in Literary Journalism, is offered this term. Students will learn what animates the work of the most influential voices in literary journalism through close analytical readings, and exercise their own craft through short and longer writing assignments. The complexities of developing a voice is a particular focus of the class, along with how the first-person "I" can be used to clarify a journalistic subject.

"I'm really excited, and partly in a selfish way," said Tolentino. "I learn a lot from my students, and I'm looking forward to getting to know them, their writing, their worldviews, their understanding of what it means to be young in 2023."

While at Bennington, Tolentino will also be judging the winners of the Ben Belitt Prize for Undergraduate Writing, which is new this year. The contest will award three prizes of \$1000 to the best work of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction or hybrid work written by a current undergraduate student. Winners of the first Ben Belitt Prizes will be announced in May.

Tolentino is the bestselling author of the essay collection *Trick Mirror: Reflections on Self-Delusion*, a staff writer at *The New Yorker* magazine, and a screenwriter. Formerly, she was the deputy editor at *Jezebel* and a contributing editor at the *Hairpin*.

Trick Mirror, published in 2019, was an instant *New York Times* bestseller and a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle's John Leonard Prize for Best First Book and the PEN America Diamondstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay. It was named one of the best books of the year by the New York Public Library, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Washington Post*, NPR, the *Chicago Tribune*, *GQ*, and the *Paris Review*. The book has been translated into twelve languages. There's also an audiobook narrated by the author.

Tolentino grew up in Texas, received her undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia, and got her master of fine arts in fiction from the University of Michigan. In 2020, she received a Whiting Award as well as the Jeannette Haien Ballard Prize. Her work has also appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* and *Pitchfork*, among other places. She lives in Brooklyn.

"We've been talking with Jia about finding a way for her to come to campus to teach a class for a couple of years now, and my colleagues and I are grateful that the timing and the support of the Winston Foundation for our Ben Belitt programming have made this possible," said Anastas.

The Ben Belitt Distinguished Visiting Writer is supported with a grant from the Winston Foundation. The New York City-based foundation supports higher education, including medical education, as well as hospitals and cultural programs.

The 2024 Ben Belitt Distinguished Visiting Writer was named in memory of Ben Belitt, an American poet and translator who was a professor of comparative literature at Bennington for nearly fifty years. Belitt published eight books of poems, two books of essays, and numerous translations, notably of the Spanish-language poets Jorge Luis Borges, Federico García Lorca, and Pablo Neruda. *This Scribe, My Hand*, his complete poems, was published in 1998. The visitorship serves to enhance instruction at the college through programming that embodies the spirit of Belitt's legacy as a poet, a literary translator, and an educator.

About Literature at Bennington College

Bennington College's alumni include twelve Pulitzer Prize winners, three U.S. poets laureate, four MacArthur Geniuses, and countless *New York Times* bestsellers and National Book Award recipients.

Recent graduates have gone on to attend PhD and MFA programs in literature and creative writing at Stanford University, the Iowa Writers' Workshop, NYU, UVA, Columbia University, Cornell University, the University of Massachusetts, Arizona State, and Brown University. Graduates have had poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, journalism, and book reviews published or accepted by *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Wire*, *The Awl*, *Boston Review*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Guardian*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *Ploughshares*.

Rooted in an abiding faith in the talent, imagination, and responsibility of the individual, Bennington invites students to pursue and shape their own intellectual inquiries, and in doing so to discover the profound interconnection of things.

Bennington College is the proud home to [Bennington Review](#), [Bennington Writing Seminars](#) MFA program, the [Robert Frost Stone House Museum](#), and the [Young Writers Awards](#).

About Bennington College

Bennington College is a liberal arts college in southwestern Vermont that has distinguished itself as a vanguard institution within American higher education. It was the first to include the visual and performing arts in a liberal arts education. It is the only college to require that its students spend a term—every year—at work in the world. Bennington students work intensively with faculty to forge individual educational paths around their driving questions and interests.

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