

# Finding the Narrative

UGA MFA Narrative Nonfiction  
Residency Guide | Fall 2023



Grady College of Journalism  
and Mass Communication  
**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

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## LOCATION INFORMATION

### Host Hotel

- [Hotel Indigo](#)
- 500 College Ave., Athens, GA 30601
- See page 13 of this guide for more information on accommodations.

### Events

- The sessions are Monday through Saturday in the [Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication](#) 4th-floor classroom or the Peyton Anderson Forum unless otherwise noted.
- Daily continental breakfast provided, 8–9 a.m., 4th-floor common area.

## RESIDENCY SCHEDULE

### SUNDAY, July 30

6 p.m.

#### OPENING RECEPTION

[Trappeze Pub](#) (RSVP please)

269 Hull St Athens, Georgia 30601

### MONDAY, July 31

9–10:45 a.m.

#### WELCOME: Introductions

*Moni Basu*

#### The Real You

By July 30, please upload a photo of yourself that shows the essence of who you are. [TheRealYou](#)

11 a.m.–1 p.m.

#### “What Is Narrative?”

*Jan Winburn*

(For first- and second-year students. Graduating students will meet with Moni Basu during this time.)

How does this form differ from a feature story? And how do we craft it? We define the genre, examine its elements and then practice thinking narratively. (Writing exercise.)

1-2 p.m.

**Quick lunch on your own**

First-year students will have lunch with Moni Basu.

2-4 p.m.

**A Conversation with Beth Macy**

*Moderated by Pat Thomas*

[Peyton Anderson Forum \(PAF\)](#), 2nd floor

A conversation with Beth Macy, who will discuss her journalism journey from a shoe-leather newspaper reporter to writing nonfiction books to an Emmy-nominated screenwriter. Pat Thomas moderates this session with Macy, who will join via Zoom. Joint session with screenwriting students.

4:15-5 p.m.

**Ask the Mentors Anything**

Bring your questions about craft or the program or anything that is on your mind.

**TUESDAY, Aug. 1**

9 a.m.-noon

**FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS:**

**Out of Obscurity**

*Jill Severn*

[Richard B. Russell Special Collections Libraries](#)

It's said that those in power write history and those who suffer write the songs. Marginalized voices provide a counter narrative to the historical record. Jill Severn, head of outreach and access at the Russell Special Collections Libraries, will discuss the power dynamics and nature of the documentary record: What gets saved, what doesn't? What goes in archives, what doesn't? And how to approach searching for materials in the archives. Students will participate in a research exercise and tour the library's vault and galleries.

\*\*\*Please register a day in advance as a researcher for this class: <https://uga.aeon.atlas-sys.com/logon>

**SECOND-YEAR AND GRADUATING STUDENTS:**

**How to Write a Book Proposal**

*David Black, Melissa Fay Greene, John T Edge*

Reading: Book proposals (attached)

Noon-1:30 p.m.

Lunch on your own

1:30-4:30 p.m.

Student Craft Talks:

- **Beth Burch:** Cultivating Sources
- **Clinton Colmenares:** Writing About What Bothers You  
Please read: [Words of Wisdom from Mother Mary](#)
- **Marlee Miller:** Utilizing Poetry and Lyrical Writing in the Stories We Tell
- **Colin Donohue:** How Music Can Inform Your Writing
- **Karen Andes:** Memoir on the Road to Narrative

5-6:30 p.m.

Student Readings (5)

[Hendershot's, 237 Prince Avenue](#)

## WEDNESDAY, Aug. 2

9-11:45 a.m.

The Making of an Investigative Narrative

*Alexandra Zayas*

Investigative narratives are some of the toughest feats in journalism because the best ones accomplish more than elegant, propulsive writing. They're written for impact. What kind of reporting does it take to pull them off? How do you know when it's worth it to try? How do you balance conveying your findings and telling a story? This session will examine the answers to those questions. We'll dig into what makes a successful investigative narrative, from the genesis of an idea to the pursuit of the reporting to the structure, writing and editing. Suggested pre-reads: [Unprotected](#), by Fin Young; [A Betrayal](#), by Hannah Dreyer; and the [Black American Amputation Epidemic](#), by Lizzie Presser

Noon-2 p.m.

Lunch in the PAF

We will eat together and do a speed writing exercise.

2-3:30 p.m.

How to Make the Most Out of this Program

*Graduating students*

The veterans will share their tips and suggestions on how you can maximize your time in the MFA program.  
(Mentors will not attend this session and will meet separately to discuss semester assignments.)  
PAF

4-5: p.m.

**Student Readings (3)**

[Hendershot's, 237 Prince Avenue](#)

## **THURSDAY, Aug. 3**

9 a.m.-noon

**Student Craft Talks:**

- **Andy Kavoori:** The Challenges of Writing About Science and the Environment
- **CJ Bartunek:** Getting Down to Sentence Level
- **Jarrett Van Meter:** Writing Action Using All Five Senses
- **Josina Guess:** Painting a Truer Picture

Noon-1:30 p.m.

**Lunch on your own**

1:30-4:30 p.m.

**How to Turn History into Story and Story into Memoir**  
*Paul Kix*

Paul Kix will discuss how to turn your obsessions and vulnerabilities and curiosities into stories, be they narratives ripped from the headlines or stories that arise from historic events. Even when you are not present in a story, it can still be informed by the deep-seeded obsessions that guide your life. In fact, Paul will show how those are the only stories worth telling. What Paul did with his latest book—turning history into story and story into memoir—is the narrative adaptability you'll learn as well. And it's that sort of adaptability that will elevate your writing – and make you more money.

Please read: <https://www.trinityfi.org/press/newyorker.html>  
<https://www.gq.com/story/the-accidental-get-away-driver>

5:30–7 p.m.

**Book Reading Event: Paul Kix**  
[\*Athica\*, 675 Pulaski St, Suite 1200](#)

Reception and community gathering for a public reading from  
[\*You Have to be Prepared to Die Before You Can Begin to Live\*](#).  
Co-sponsored by The Bitter Southerner.

**FRIDAY, Aug. 4**

9–11:15 a.m.

**Listening Lessons: What Narrative Writers Can Learn from Narrative Radio**  
*Lisa Pollak*

Lisa Pollak examines the techniques that audio journalists use to make their stories suspenseful, vivid and compelling and how to apply those tools to nonfiction narrative writing.

11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

**The Underdogs**  
*Melissa Fay Greene*

How can a single taut (and classic) storyline be kneaded and pulled? How can you thicken with science? How can you tell a story of desperation, joy and grief in a compelling way? For Melissa Fay Greene, the storyline was dog rescues human. One story quickly became two, two became four, four became six, six became eight. Every storyline in *The Underdogs* is the same, and yet different. Her NYT article took shape as a pair of twin narratives—like parallel train tracks—that then curved and intersected. At that intersection, great energy was given off, a transmission of relief and joy from one person who had suffered to another still in the trenches. In the book, it happens many times. Please read: [\*Wonder Dog\*](#)

1–5 p.m.

**Lunch on your own or with your new mentor**  
The rest of the afternoon is open for individual student/mentor meetings.

**SATURDAY, Aug. 5**

9–10 a.m.

**Closing Circle, Grady PAF**

Midday

Opportunity for Student-Mentor Meetings

2 p.m.

Graduation and Reception

*UGA Fine Arts Theatre*

*255 Baldwin St, Athens GA 30602*

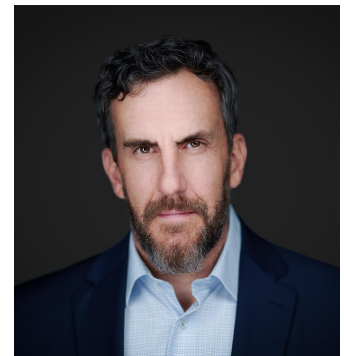
(Family and friends welcome)

## GUEST SPEAKERS



**David Black** founded his agency in 1989 with the goal of representing books that interest him. Narrative non-fiction has formed the core of the business, though he has a penchant for some works of fiction as well. He specializes in sports, business, journalism and politics, and has a soft spot for books in the culinary world, be they narratives or cookbooks.

**Paul Kix** is an author and magazine writer who's written for *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *GQ* and *ESPN: The Magazine*, among other publications. At ESPN, he was part of a small team that won a National Magazine Award for General Excellence. His first book, [\*The Saboteur\*](#), was a No. 1 best-seller on Amazon and optioned by Steven Spielberg. His second book, [\*You Have to be Prepared to Die Before You Can Begin to Live\*](#), was Amazon's Pick of the Month for Nonfiction and is available wherever books are sold. He lives with his family in Connecticut.







**Beth Macy** is an award-winning journalist and author of several highly acclaimed nonfiction books including [\*Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company That Addicted America\*](#), and her latest, [\*Raising Lazarus: Hope, Justice, and the Future of America's Overdose Crisis\*](#). She began her career as a newspaper reporter and to this day, her journalism M.O. is to keep digging, follow what moves you.

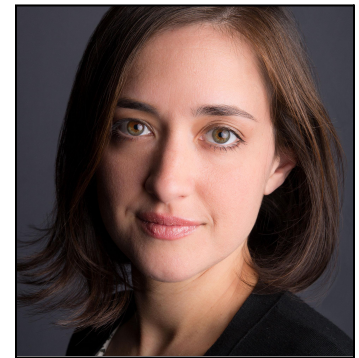
**Lisa Pollak** is a reporter, editor and audio producer who specializes in deeply reported narrative journalism about ordinary people in extraordinary situations. She spent nearly a decade as a producer for the highly acclaimed radio program “This American Life” and now works independently as a podcast editor, consultant and producer. In addition to TAL, her work has aired on ESPN’s “30 for 30,” NPR’s “Embedded,” “99 percent Invisible,” and “Reveal,” among others. As a series editor her credits include “According to Need,” a series on homelessness that won a Dupont award in 2022, and “The Capital Gazette,” which won the Edward R. Murrow award for excellence in writing. Lisa began her career as a newspaper reporter focusing on feature stories inspired by news events. Her story “The Umpire’s Sons” -- written while she was on staff at the Baltimore Sun -- won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. In addition to her radio work, Lisa spent two seasons as a producer for Showtime television’s Emmy award-winning series “This American Life.” She was also a story producer on “The King,” a feature documentary directed by Eugene Jarecki which premiered at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival and at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival.





**Jill Severn** has been a certified archivist with the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies for 25 years. She holds an MA in history from the University of Georgia and a Certificate in Museum Management from the University of South Carolina. She manages the access and outreach unit, which includes exhibit and events programs, research services, and instruction. For most of her career, Severn has focused on exploring and developing an archives-centered pedagogy for learning both in and outside academia. In 2015 she helped to establish the University of Georgia's Special Collections Faculty Teaching Fellows Program, which provides training and support to university instructors to develop archives-centered courses that make significant use of special collections materials. Since 2015, 69 faculty from 20 different departments on campus have completed the program. The program has been honored by the Georgia Historical Records and Advisory Council in 2020. In 2021 Severn was awarded the Marta Lange/CQ Press Award, given annually by the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association.

**Alexandra Zayas** is a deputy managing editor at ProPublica, guiding reporters and editors on investigative projects. Stories she edited have won two National Magazine Awards, two George Polk Awards and a Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing. As a reporter at the Tampa Bay Times, her investigation into abuse at unlicensed religious children's homes won the Selden Ring Award for Investigative Reporting and the Livingston Award for Young Journalists and was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting.



## NONFICTION FACULTY MENTORS



**Moni Basu** is director of the [Master in Fine Arts in Narrative Nonfiction](#) program and the Charlayne Hunter-Gault Distinguished Writer in Residence at the UGA Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. She is formerly the Michael and Linda Connelly Lecturer in Narrative Nonfiction

at the University of Florida. Moni worked as a reporter and editor for 35 years at CNN, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and other news outlets before becoming a full-time professor. She still writes as a freelancer, and her most recent work has been published in the Bitter Southerner and Flamingo magazine. Her 2012 e-book, [Chaplain Turner's War](#) (Agate Publishing) grew from a series of stories on an Army chaplain in Iraq. A platoon sergeant gave her the moniker “Evil Reporter Chick,” and she was featured as a war reporter in a Marvel comics series. Moni was born in Kolkata, India, and grew up straddling two cultures. Her work has been recognized with numerous accolades but she is most proud of being named the [2020 University of Florida Teacher of the Year](#). Moni lives in the ATL and loves Sunday mornings, traveling, terrific storytelling and Gizmo — not always in that order.

**Rosalind Bentley** (UGA MFA '17) served as the Interim Director of UGA's Narrative Nonfiction MFA Program in 2022. She is deputy editor at Gravy, the Southern Foodways Alliance's journal, and editor-at-large for the Oxford American. She also serves on the editorial board of [Great Circle Books](#), a new University of North Carolina book series. Rosalind's work has been recognized in *Best American Essays* (2021), and has been anthologized in *Best American Newspaper Narratives*. Her work has also appeared in The New York Times, the [Oxford American](#), *Saveur*, [Southern Living](#), Longreads and [Essence magazine](#), among others. She is a [two-time James Beard Award](#) finalist and was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for a special project on race relations in Minnesota. Her essay “Iron and Brass” appears in *Bigger than Bravery: Black Resilience and Reclamation in a Time of Pandemic*, edited by the late Valerie Boyd and published by Lookout Books in Fall 2022.



**John T. Edge** writes about the American South. NPR, Publisher's Weekly and others named [The Potlikker Papers](#) a best book of 2017. Edge hosts the television show [“TrueSouth”](#) on the SEC Network, ESPN and Hulu. A contributing editor at Garden & Gun, he served the Oxford American as a columnist for twenty-plus years. For three years Edge wrote the “United Tastes” column for The New York Times. Twice honored by the James Beard Foundation with the MFK Fisher Distinguished Writing Award, Edge received the 2018 nonfiction prize from the Mississippi

Institute of Arts and Letters. [The Georgia Writers Hall of Fame inducted Edge in 2019.](#) Edge lives in Oxford, Mississippi, where he serves the University of Mississippi as director of the Mississippi Lab and writer-in-residence for the Department of Writing and Rhetoric.

**Melissa Fay Greene** is the author of six books of nonfiction: [Praying for Sheetrock](#) (1991), [The Temple Bombing](#) (1996), [Last Man Out](#) (2003), [There Is No Me Without You](#) (2006), [No Biking in the House Without a Helmet](#) (2011) and [The Underdogs](#) (2016), and is the Kirk Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at Agnes Scott College. Melissa's work has been translated into a dozen languages and has been honored with a 2015 Guggenheim Fellowship, two National Book Award nominations, a National Book Critics Circle Award nomination, the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award, the Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize, the Southern Book Critics Circle Award, the ACLU National Civil Liberties Award, the Hadassah Myrtle Wreath Award, the Lillian Smith Book Award, the Georgia Book Award, a Lyndhurst Foundation Fellowship, the Georgia Governor's Award for the Arts & Humanities, and induction into the [Georgia Writers Hall of Fame](#). *Praying for Sheetrock* was named one of the "Top 100 Works of American Journalism of the 20th Century" by a panel convened by NYU. She has contributed to The New York Times, The New Yorker, The Atlantic, The Washington Post, New York Magazine, Newsweek, LIFE, [CNN.com](#) and other periodicals. A Macon native and 1975 graduate of Oberlin College, Melissa and her husband, defense attorney Don Samuel, are the parents of nine, the in-laws of four, and the grandparents of two.



**Laurie Hertz** is a seasoned reporter and editor. She served as the Senior Editor for Books at the Minneapolis Star Tribune, where she worked for more than 20 years. Her journalism and short fiction have appeared in newspapers, magazines and journals across the United States, in Finland and in Australia. Her fiction has been published in the literary journals South Carolina Review, North Dakota Quarterly and elsewhere, and her nonfiction has been anthologized and also published in the Chicago Tribune, TriQuarterly, Brevity.blog, Siirtolaisuus (Turku, Finland), Ascent, Blue River Review, and many other places. Her work



has received a multitude of awards, including recent honors from the Society for Features Journalism and the Minnesota Society of Professional Journalists, which honored her with a first-place award for arts criticism in 2021. She is the author of three books, including [\*News to Me: Adventures of an Accidental Journalist\*](#), winner of a 2011 Minnesota Book Award. She has an MFA in creative nonfiction from Queens University in Charlotte, N.C., and is past president of the National Book Critics Circle and also served as autobiography chair of NBCC's board of directors.

**Patricia Thomas** has been mentoring narrative nonfiction students in the MFA program since 2017, following 12 years as the founding director of the MA program in health and medical journalism at the UGA Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. She held the Knight Chair in Health and Medical Journalism at UGA before becoming a Professor Emerita. Having grown up in a small town in Central Florida, she was eager to go elsewhere for college and earned degrees from UC Berkeley and Stanford. For more than three decades she worked as a reporter and editor in the San Francisco Bay Area, Atlanta and Boston, specializing in science, health and medicine. She was a science writing fellow at MIT, the editor of Harvard Medical School's consumer newsletter and a visiting scholar at Boston University. Pat realized during her year at BU that she wanted to teach writers to become better storytellers. By that time, she had written a narrative nonfiction book of her own: [\*Big Shot: Passion, Politics, and the Struggle for an AIDS Vaccine\*](#) was published in 2001 and named a notable book by The Washington Post.



**Jan Winburn** is a fan of artful storytelling, kickass reporting and the powerful melding of the two. She spent more than four decades working in newsrooms as a narrative editor, writing coach and investigative editor and has led workshops around the world. Her career was recognized with the [\*2009 Mimi Award\*](#) given to editors “who encourage journalistic excellence and understand the emotional landscape of assignments on tragedy and trauma.” Selected to be a [\*Pollner Professor by the University of Montana\*](#), she taught a course on reporting

and writing about trauma. Winburn edited Lisa Pollak's 1997 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing, and her writers have won many of the other top prizes in journalism, including a Peabody Award, Edgar R. Murrow Awards, the Ernie Pyle Award for Human Interest Storytelling, the Al Neuharth Award for investigative journalism, the Wilbur Award for religion coverage, and the Batten Medal for public service. She is especially proud of two young journalists she worked with whose stories captured the prestigious Livingston Award for journalists under age 35. Jan grew up in a small town in Missouri and graduated from the University of Missouri School of Journalism. She is the author of [\*Shop Talk and War Stories: Journalists Examine Their Profession\*](#) and co-editor of the e-book [\*Secrets of Prize-Winning Journalism 2013\*](#) and its sequel, [\*Secrets 2014\*](#).

## PROGRAM SUPPORT

**Tracy Coley** (UGA MFA '19) officially joined the UGA MFA Narrative Nonfiction Program as Program Manager in 2022. Tracy is a graduate of the MFA program and worked as editor and digital marketing specialist for [\*Boom Magazine\*](#). Her essay "Unspeakable Grief," which originated in the MFA program, was a semi-finalist in the 2021 [\*North Carolina Literary Review\*](#) Alex Albright Creative Nonfiction Prize Competition. Tracy recently launched a new boutique publishing agency, Lucky Dog Press, LLC. She also enjoys teaching an undergraduate course in news writing and reporting at the University of Georgia.



**Anne Hurne** is the Program Coordinator for the Grady College MFA in Narrative Media Writing, Ph.D., and MA programs. She's been with the program since the first residency in 2015 and has worked at UGA for 10 years. Little is as important to her as making sure everyone is included and heard. She's here to make the residency run smoothly.

## **HOTEL & DINING INFORMATION + TIPS**

Our host hotel for this residency is the [Hotel Indigo](#), located at 500 College Ave., Athens, GA 30601. The hotel is located 0.8 mile from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communications (about a 20-minute walk). This is where all the mentors and guest speakers will be staying.

**COST:** Sadly, there are no more rooms available at the discounted rate for the program. If you still wish to stay there, you will need to pay the regular rate. To make reservations, you may call the hotel at 1-800-808-1483. Please let us know if you need other Athens housing information.

**TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING:** Parking at the hotel is free for guests. Parking on campus in any parking deck is \$10 per day, payable at the kiosk located in the deck. The closest parking deck to the Grady College is next door at the Tate Student Center deck. We will run a shuttle van from the Hotel Indigo to the Grady College every morning between 8 and 9. The shuttle will also be available in the afternoon depending on when we finish for the day. Parking is not super cheap at UGA and we recommend you take the shuttle or walk to campus.

**EATING AND DRINKING OPTIONS:** The [Hotel Indigo](#)'s restaurant [Madison Bar & Bistro](#) serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. For a Starbucks coffee or a quick bite, head to the [Tate Student Center](#), located adjacent to the Grady College of Journalism. You will find fast food options, including Chick-fil-A, Niche Pizza, Barberitos and Panda Express.

Many thanks to the esteemed John T Edge for curating the following “opinionated and incomplete” list:

### **MORNING**

**1000 Faces** (Walk from Indigo)

Great coffee

Mon-Fri opens at 7, Sat-Sun at 9

**Buvez** (Boulevard)

Good coffee, great vibe

Tues-Sun opens at 8

**Independent Baking** (5 Points)

Great baguettes, croissants, pastries, good coffee

To-go or lean-and-eat  
Tues-Sat opens at 7, Sun at 8

## **LUNCH**

**Mother Pho** (Downtown)  
Summer rolls, pho, banh xeo  
Mon-Sat (dinner too)

**Camino Real** (North Avenue)  
Hecho a mano tacos in a grocery store  
7 days, lunch and dinner

**Tlaloc** (Boulevard)  
Enchiladas with mole, pupusas  
7 days, opens at 10

**White Tiger** (Boulevard)  
Burgers, salads, slaw dogs, in old country store  
Tues-Sunday, lunch and dinner

**Taqueria del Sol** (Boulevard)  
Turnip greens, fish tacos, enchiladas verde  
Mon-Sat lunch, Tue - Sat dinner

**Homemade** (Baxter Ave)  
Sandwiches and salads, to-go or eat-in  
Mon-Fri

**Scott's BBQ** (Danielsville Road)  
Ribs, greens, cake  
Thurs - Sat, lunch and early dinner

## **HAPPY HOUR**

**Expat** (see below)

**Nighthawks Lounge** (Newtown)  
Brand new, cocktails from Expat folks  
Hours TBD

**Old Pal** (Normaltown)  
Friendly townie bar, good cocktails  
Mon-Sat, opens at 5



**The Lark** (Prince Ave)

Wine bar and shop, tinned fish, toasts, cheeses

Tues-Sat, lunch and early dinner

**Manhattan Lounge** (Walk from Indigo)

Cocktails and atmosphere

Mon-Sat, opens at 4

**DINNER**

**Seabear** (Prince Ave)

Oysters, fried okra, lobster rolls

Weds-Sun, opens at 4

**Cali n Tito's** (Baxter Street)

Cuban and other sandwiches

7 days, dinner and lunch

**National** (Walk from Indigo)

Stuffed dates, hummus w lamb, veg friendly, good wine and cocktails

Mon-Sat dinner, Weds-Sat lunch

**Mannaweenta** (Gaines School Rd)

Ethiopian and Eritrean, okra wat, shiro

Dinner 5 nights, closed Weds and Sun

**Pulaski Heights BBQ** (Boulevard)

Smoked chicken, mac and cheese, greens

Tues-Sat dinner and lunch

**Expat** (Five Points)

Cocktails, kale caesar, tagliatelle, duck

Tues-Sat dinner

**Puma Yu's** (Historic Southern Mill)

Great cocktails and wine, spicy noodles, whole fish and other Thai-inspired dishes

Mon-Sat dinner

**TIPS FOR THE RESIDENCY:**

- In late July, it can get quite warm in Athens but the classrooms can feel cold with the air-conditioning. Make sure to bring light, breathable clothes and something warm for the classroom – a shawl or sweater or sweatshirt — and a raincoat or umbrella for possible thunderstorms.
- Bring a water bottle. There are motion-sensor water fountains on campus for a quick refill.
- Bring your laptop or other writing implements to take notes during the presentations and for writing exercises.
- There is a Target in downtown Athens if you need anything. There is also a Trader Joe's on the west side of town as well as several health-conscious groceries.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- North Campus in general, because it's the oldest and most picturesque part of campus. This includes the UGA Arch (edge of North Campus and downtown Athens) and the President's Fountain beside Old College.
- [Sanford Stadium](#) and the Brass Bulldog (in the Memorial Hall Plaza)
- [Stegeman Coliseum](#) (adjacent to the Georgia Center)
- [Butts Mehre Heritage Hall](#)
- [Tree That Owns Itself](#)
- [Avid Bookshop](#) – independent bookseller in Five Points
- [State Botanical Gardens](#)