SAMUEL COHEN

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Samuel Cohen is an award-winning teacher and scholar of American literature at the University of Missouri, where he teaches twentieth- and twenty-first century American literature and culture. He is author of After the End of History: American Fiction in the 1990s and co-editor of The Legacy of David Foster Wallace and The Clash Takes on the World: Transnational Perspectives on the Only Band That Matters. He is series editor of The New American Canon: The Iowa Series in Contemporary Literature and Culture and author of the textbooks 50 Essays: A Portable Anthology and Literature: The Human Experience.

AVAILABLE PRESENTATIONS

THE STATE OF THE STATE: MISSOURI WRITERS ON MISSOURI

This talk engages the things writers from Missouri have had to say about the state of their state. Writers such as the first African American novelist Williams Wells Brown, Mark Twain, T. S. Eliot, Tennessee Williams, Maya Angelou, Calvin Trillin, and many other essayists, novelists, poets, and playwrights who have hailed from Missouri have had a lot to say about the state. As a place that has been implicated in so much of American history, that is home to the last eastern U.S. city and the first western one, that has been shaped by people from France, Spain, and Germany as well as Boston, the upper South, and the people who were here before all of them, there is much about Missouri that is informed by and connects to the rest of the country and the world. The course of the nation, of its political realities and aspirations, of its expansion westward and its foreign entanglements, all of these developments have marked Missouri, and as they have done so they have provided fuel for the work of a great and varied group of writers. Ultimately, their work can itself be read as providing a composite portrait of their state.

SHOW ME: NONFICTION BY MISSOURI WRITERS

While Missouri boasts some of the most important American writers of fiction, poetry, and drama, such as Mark Twain, T. S. Eliot, and Tennessee Williams, it has also contributed a rich and interesting tradition of nonfiction. In the twentieth century, this tradition includes the war journalism of Martha Gellhorn; the civil rights reporting of Calvin Trillin; the memoirs of Maya Angelou and Dick Gregory; the hybrid auto/biography of John Neihardt; the travel writing of William Least-Heat Moon. Looking at the work of these writers and at twenty-first century work by Missouri products such as Walter Johnson and Jabari Asim, this talk explores the nonfiction accounts by Missourians of Missouri and the wider world for what they reveal about the art of nonfiction writing and about how these Missourians saw their home state, their country, and their world, alone and in relation to each other.

SPEAKER CONTACT INFORMATION

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