The Columbia III Writers Group

(A chapter of the *South Carolina Writers Association*)

Thank you for your interest in the Columbia III chapter of the South Carolina Writers Association. Our mission is to provide constructive literary critiques of our members' written work, as well as be a support group to help our writers face the challenges of the writing process. In the following pages you'll find the basic information you'll need to get started with us.

PLEASE NOTE: **We do not mask or social-distance at our meetings**. An individual may do so if they wish, but we do not do it as a group.

Contents

Overview

Columbia III (COLA3) is a Chapter of the *South Carolina Writers' Association* (SCWA). COLA III meets on the **second and fourth Tuesday of each month** at the home of:

Larry and Carolyn Cobb

[The address will be provided to persons who notify the COLA3 Chapter Lead by email that they wish to attend a meeting.]

You may park in the driveway and enter at the back door, through the garage beginning one-half hour before the meeting. **NOTE** that in the event of Larry and Carolyn's home being unavailable, we will meet elsewhere or not at all. If you plan to attend one of our meetings, please email the Columbia III Chapter Lead to verify our meeting date and time (see the calendar of meetings below).

You may **email all inquiries** to the Chapter Lead at this email address:

rayfoy2010@gmail.com

Our meetings begin promptly at 6:00pm and end no later than 9:00pm (we leave early if we finish early).

The first thirty minutes of our meetings are reserved for handling chapter business and announcements. This usually only takes a few minutes unless there is some involved business to discuss.

Persons interested in working with our group are welcome and may attend without membership or obligation for *three* meetings. **Paid membership in SCWA will be required by the fourth meeting attended**. Persons new to the group should **not** expect to read at their first meeting, but are encouraged to participate in all other ways.

Once a person has become a member, *it is very helpful that they have an email address* to facilitate group communication. Typically, an email is sent to all members a few days before a meeting, asking for an affirmation of attendance (RSVP). Based on this response, another email is sent to the group (usually on the day of the meeting or the day before) reporting the number of those who indicated they will attend, plus any visitors. This helps those who intend to read for critique to determine how many printed copies of their manuscript to bring.

Meeting Calendar for 2023 (Subject to Change)

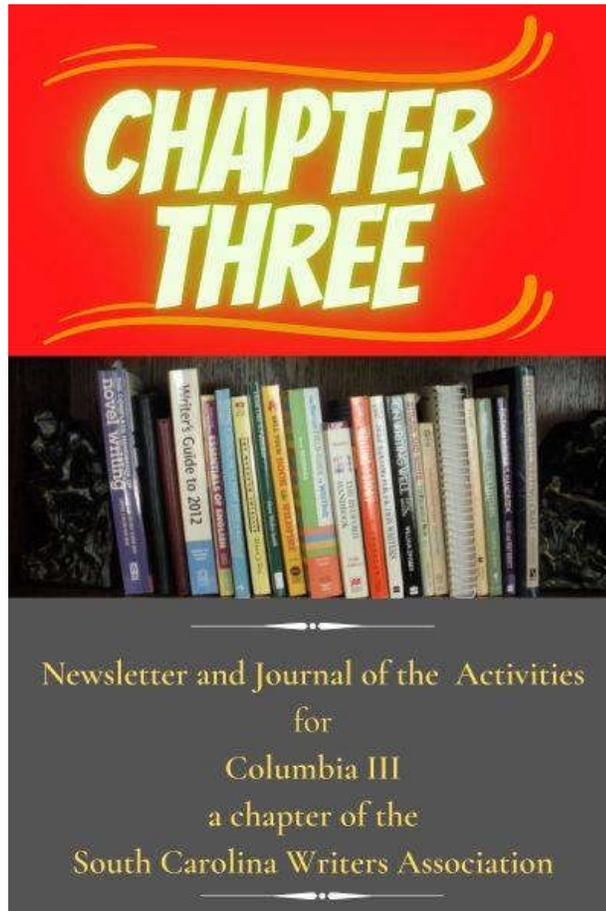|	
~~01/10/2023~~	07/11/2023
~~01/24/2023~~	07/25/2023
~~02/14/2023~~	08/08/2023
~~02/28/2023~~	08/22/2023
~~03/14/2023~~	09/12/2023 (13th anniversary)
03/28/2023	09/26/2023
04/11/2023	10/10/2023
04/25/2023	10/24/2023
05/9/2023	11/14/2023
05/23/2023	11/28/2023
06/13/2023	12/12/2023 (Christmas Party)
06/27/2023	

You see from the calendar, we observe a couple of socializing meetings each year. The first is our **Anniversary meeting**, usually the first meeting night in September. We still do critiques, but we have shorter readings. The first part of the meeting is snacking and fellowship.

We also have a **Christmas Party** on our first meeting night of December. We bring dishes for a dinner and play Christmas games. This is our last meeting of the year.

Where to Find More Info

You can find an expanded **description of Columbia III** with some helpful website links here: https://rayviews.blog/columbia-iii-a-writers-group/

The *Chapter Three* Newsletter

We send out an electronic newsletter entitled, **Chapter Three,** after every meeting. It reviews our activities at the previous meeting and includes event reminders, news, shout-outs, article links, serial fiction, and anything else interesting and germane to the creative process, and the work of Columbia III. You need to subscribe to *Chapter Three* to receive it by email. Subscriptions are FREE. You don't have to be a Columbia III or SCWA member to receive the newsletter. You may subscribe here:

Chapter Three subscribe link

You can see the recent issues of *Chapter Three* here.

The SCWA Website

Columbia III is a chapter of the **South Carolina Writers Association** (SCWA) so to be a regular, participating writer in our group, you will need to join the SCWA. The best way to learn about the SCWA is to peruse their website: http://www.myscwa.org/. You will find links there to join the association and pay your membership. Their site is also where you can find association news and sign-up for both virtual and in-person events (such as workshops and conferences).

COLA3 Meeting Status

We maintain a web page containing the status for the next COLA3 meeting. There you can verify whether we will be meeting, where, and the number of participants who have acknowledged that they will be there. It looks like this:

You may access this page at: https://rayviews.blog/columbia-iii-a-writers-group

Critiquing Guidelines

NOTE that readings in absentia are not allowed (i.e., nobody will read for an author, the author must be present to read). An author **who is present**, however, may ask that someone else read for him/her.

Members wishing a critique should bring printed copies of their manuscripts to the meeting (at least enough copies to cover the number of writers who indicated attendance as specified in the pre-meeting "numbers" email). Manuscript lengths are restricted as follows:

- Prose should be a maximum of **six (6)** pages, indented paragraphs, double-spaced with no extra space between paragraphs, 12 pt. (Times New Roman or Courier) font. One-inch margins. **OR** you may use any readable font for your prose manuscript as long as the **total word count** is within ten percent of **1500 words**.

- Poets may decide on the formatting for their poetry, but with a maximum of **three pages** per reading (even if the MS contains several poems).

- Query letters should be a maximum of three pages.

- It is helpful to **number every line** of your manuscript so that references to particular places in it can be quickly found by the group. In Microsoft Word, you can set line numbers by selecting (from the menu): Layout—Line Numbers—Continuous (see appendix).

We always have much information to share as a group, but in the interest of keeping our meetings efficient, we reserve socializing to the time before and after all readings. That is, once we start critiquing, that is all we do.

The **sequence for readings** is determined by the random selection of the first reader, and then proceeding clockwise around the table (or room) from there.

The Critiquing Process

1. The author distributes copies of his/her writing to all attendees.

    a. *Listeners should write their name at the top of the first page of their critique copy*. As the author reads, listeners should write any remarks about the material in appropriate places on their manuscript copy.

2. When the author is finished reading, the listeners will make their verbal comments, beginning with the person to the author's left. Commenting will proceed clockwise around the table.

    a. The author should respond to questions regarding clarifications, but otherwise **listen quietly**.

    b. Comments should always pertain to the written material and **never** infer a lack of character, talent, or ability on the part of the author.

    c. Those critiquing should **never presume** the attitudes and beliefs of depicted characters in fictional works to be those of the author.

    d. Writers should never consider a critical review to be a personal attack.

    e. Critique comments should be held to no more than 2 minutes. A timekeeper will track comment times and note if anyone's critique time is going too long. (**Note**: this rule may be waived by group consensus if the number of manuscript readings is considered low enough).

3. When the verbal reviews are finished, the author will have about two minutes to ask for any clarifications on the critiques offered, or otherwise respond.

4. Listeners will return their copy of the manuscript (containing their written comments) to the author.

Normally, a single reading with comments requires no more than twenty minutes.

IN THE EVENT that we run out of time during the critiquing process (we will not go beyond 9:00pm) we will follow this procedure:

1. Whoever is next to read will begin the readings at the next meeting. If others were missed the previous meeting, they will read, continuing the order of the previous week. Then the remaining writers will read clockwise around the table or room.

New Chapter Members

Like all writers groups, Columbia III operates under constraints on physical space and logistical procedure. This means only so many participants can be accommodated at a meeting. Therefore, we have to close our meetings to new writers when our operational capacity is reached. When we are closed to new writers, we indicate it on our STATUS website and in email replies to membership queries.

If you are interested in working with Columbia III but find we are closed to new writers, note that the SCWA has a lot of chapters in its association, including some virtual ones. You may find another chapter you can work with. Check out the list of SCWA chapters on their LOCAL AND VIRTUAL CHAPTERS webpage.

Appendix

Setting Line Numbers in Microsoft Word

From the Word menu select Layout—Line Numbers—Continuous: