

Mentorship III

JOUR6201.06

MFA in Creative Nonfiction

Fall Term 2019

Faculty Supervisor

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Overview

Mentorships are the creative centrepiece of the program. During the course of the program, students will have the opportunity to work one-to-one on their book projects with accomplished professional writer-mentors, each with their own expertise, approach to nonfiction and style of teaching and mentoring.

Priorities for Mentorship III:

- approximately 15-20,000 words of the manuscript, depending on the complexity of the book proposal and the research requirements of the book project (100 per cent).

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will apply the writing, research and craft skills developed in Writing Craft I and II and Mentorship I and II to their own work, improving and enhancing their own writing skills.

Assignment of Mentors

Two months prior to the beginning of the Writing Craft II summer residency, students will submit a rank-ordered list of the names of the mentors they would like to work with during Mentorship III. While the faculty supervisor will attempt to match students with their first choices, this may not always be possible in a given semester.

Summer Residency

During the residency, students will meet daily with their mentors in small group workshops where they will discuss assigned readings or craft-related (voice, plot, etc.) issues; undertake in-class writing assignments; and/or workshop their own and other students' work. They will meet, at least once, for a one-to-one

session with their fall semester mentor to discuss their project and to develop a contract of deliverables for the fall semester.

Contract of Deliverables

During the summer residency, students will negotiate a “contract” with their mentor, agreeing to the terms of the mentorship. While contracts may be tailored to meet the needs and goals of individual students, projects, and mentors, each contract must include provisions describing:

- the nature—proposal, research report, outline, manuscript section(s)—and descriptions of the writing assignments to be completed during the semester;
- the approximate number of pages (or words) students will submit (normally 15-20,000 words, or fewer depending on the stage of the project, research requirements, etc.);
- the number of writing packages the student will submit (usually one per month);
- the deadlines for each submission;
- the methods for submission (by post, email, Google docs, etc.);
- how quickly the mentor will respond to student submissions (usually within one week);
- the method of responding to the submission, which will always involve a narrative response. Responses, as negotiated between mentor and student, may also include in-person, telephone, online or email discussions.
- standard paragraphs describing procedures for dispute resolution and provisions regarding confidentiality and copyright.

The completed contract must be signed by the student and mentor and approved in writing by the faculty supervisor before the end of the summer residency.

The mentor will provide the student and faculty supervisor with a brief written narrative assessment of the student’s progress at the mid-point in the term, flagging any concerns that might adversely affect the student’s final grade.

While the faculty supervisor will consult with both the mentor and student regularly during the semester to ensure the terms of the contract are being fulfilled by both parties, it is the responsibility of the student and/or mentor to notify the faculty supervisor of any issues or concerns affecting the contract or the mentor-mentee relationship in a timely manner.

If there are compatibility issues between a mentor and a student they can’t resolve on their own, the faculty supervisor will intervene, mediate, and, if necessary, assign the student to a different mentor, or assume direct responsibility for mentoring the student. The Director of the School of Journalism will be the final arbiter of disputes.

After each student submission/mentor response, the mentor will submit to the faculty supervisor a copy of all student submissions, together with her or his responses and completed rubrics. At the end of the semester, the mentor will submit a general report on the student’s progress to the faculty supervisor. The

mentor will provide the student with a written copy of the progress report at the same time it is submitted to the supervisor.

The faculty supervisor will be responsible for approving and submitting final grades. The role of the faculty supervisor will be to ensure quality and consistency across mentor-student relationships in the evaluation process.

Grading

Manuscript (100 per cent):

Manuscript submissions will be judged on a professional basis.

- An overall mark of “A” indicates the work is considered publishable with minor structural and/or line editing.
- A mark of “B” indicates the material is publishable with some substantive structural and/or line editing.
- A mark below “B” indicates the material is not publishable as is, and would require significant rethinking, as well as rewriting and revising, to make it so.

Each book project is different and must be judged on its own requirements and merits. A memoir, for example, may not require the same level of documentary research as a work of historical nonfiction. The research methodologies employed to write a piece of historical nonfiction may be very different from the immersion reporting a writer of contemporary nonfiction must undertake in order to gather her or his information. And the lyrical quality of the writing in a collection of personal essays may be more significant than in an investigative exposé.

To complicate matters, some of the writing submitted during the Mentorship will be complete, finished chapters or sections, while others will be works-in-progress that may need to be understood in the context of the larger project.

The Manuscript Marking Rubric identifies criteria that apply—in varying degrees—to most nonfiction writing projects. As part of their contract of deliverables, the student and mentor will identify those criteria that apply to the student’s particular writing project, add in any missing criteria, and assign relative values to each.

This agreed-to rubric, which must be approved in advance by the faculty supervisor, will be used to evaluate the work.

Criteria	Exceptional “A”	Acceptable B	Failure <B-
Focus	The writing has a clear purpose and the writer maintains focus throughout.	The writer has a clear purpose but the focus sometimes strays.	The writer’s focus is not discernible.

Structure	The story unfolds in a creative but logical, compelling way that supports and develops the focus. The writer establishes a narrative complication, then develops and resolves it over the course of the work.	The story unfolds in a logical way that supports and develops the focus. The writer establishes a narrative complication but fails to some extent to develop and resolve it.	The story doesn't unfold in a logical way, making the focus unclear. There is no clear complication-development-resolution.
Scenes	The story is told in clearly delineated scenes that use character, setting, action, dialogue, and detail to advance the narrative, while providing the necessary context to understand the larger story. We hear, taste, feel, smell. Each scene contributes to plot, character, setting and tone. The writer heeds the screenwriter's admonition to "get in late, get out early."	The story is told in scenes that use character, setting, action, dialogue, and detail, while providing some context to help the reader understand the larger story. The scenes may not always be clear and sometimes start too early or end too late.	Scenes are missing or unclear.
Setting	Settings are described in a way that help the reader visually identify where action takes place as well as establishing appropriate mood. Setting does not overwhelm story.	Settings are described in a way that help the reader understand where action takes place but don't establish mood. Setting sometimes overwhelms story.	Settings are not described, or described in a way that doesn't help situate the reader or establish mood.
Character Development	The characters aren't just real people; they feel real. Readers can see, hear and feel their emotions. Readers know what's at stake for each major character and can observe their story arcs. The character's role in the plot is clear. Their dialogue is authentic.	The characters seem—mostly—real. Readers know what's at stake for most major characters, and understand their role in the plot.	The characters may be real but they don't feel like it. It's not clear what's at stake for each major character or their role in the plot. The veracity of the dialogue is questionable.
Voice	There is a consistent, compelling voice and	There is a consistent voice and tone in the	The voice and tone are inconsistent and/or

	tone in the writing that is appropriate to the story.	writing that is appropriate to the story.	inappropriate to the story.
Point of View	Point of view is clear and consistent within scenes and from scene to scene.	Point of view is mostly clear and consistent within scenes and from scene to scene.	Point of view is unclear and inconsistent.
Authorial role	The writer's role—as omniscient narrator, fly-on-the-wall, participant-observer, etc.—is clearly understood and integral to the story, providing the reader with a unique perspective.	The writer's role is clear.	The writer's role is unclear or doesn't seem integral to the story.
Universality	The writing illuminates larger universal themes in a clear but unobtrusive way.	There are larger universal themes in the story but the author either hasn't articulated them clearly or has overstated them.	There are no larger universal themes apparent in the story.
Research: Documents	The writing incorporates documentary materials in a compelling way that integrates naturally into the narrative flow.	The writing incorporates and integrates documentary materials into the text.	The writing fails to incorporate or integrate documentary materials into the text.
Research: Interviews	The writer has used information from interviews effectively to tell the story without making the story the interview.	The writer has used information from interviews to tell the story, but the story itself seems captive of the interview.	The writer has failed to use information from interviews to help tell the story.
Research: Immersion	The writer has used immersion field reporting to bring the story alive for readers, allowing them to understand the story from the inside out.	The writer has used immersion field reporting to tell the story but the reader isn't always clear about its purpose.	The writer's immersion field reporting is sloppy or self-indulgent; its purpose is unclear.
Attribution, transparency	The writer makes clear in the text, or endnotes and footnotes the sources of all important material without interrupting the narrative flow.	The writer makes clear in the text, or endnotes and footnotes the sources of most important material in the text. Attribution occasionally interferes with story flow.	The writer fails to make clear the sources of important material in the text.

Writing style	The writing is compelling. It hooks the reader and sustains interest throughout.	The writing is generally engaging, but has some dry spots. In general, it is focused and keeps the reader's attention.	The writing has little personality. The reader quickly loses interest and stops reading.
Grammar, Spelling, Writing Mechanics	The writing is free or almost free of errors. Follows <i>Chicago Manual of Style</i>	There are occasional errors, but they don't represent a major distraction or obscure meaning. Style inconsistent.	There are so many errors that meaning is obscured. The reader is confused and stops reading.
Creativity	The story is original, the ideas fresh, the language unique.	The story is well and competently told, but there are few fresh ideas or insights.	Story is hackneyed, derivative and pedestrian.

Official Stuff

Academic Performance:

The course uses the following grading scale:

A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
F	<70

Students must achieve a minimum grade of B- in all classes. Disputes over academic performance and assessment will be dealt with according to the Academic Regulations of the School of Journalism and the Dalhousie University Faculty of Graduate Studies. Students may appeal decisions of the Journalism Studies Committee to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. For more information, see the University of King's College Calendar and the Dalhousie University Graduate Calendar.

Academic Integrity: Violations of academic integrity at the graduate level are taken seriously. The punishment for plagiarism or other forms of academic integrity can range from receiving a zero on the assignment, to failing the course, being suspended or expelled from the university. If you have any doubt about proper citation for an academic paper or proper attribution in a piece of journalism, contact your instructor or the Writing Centre at Dalhousie University. For more information, consult the section on Intellectual Honesty on p. 23 of Dalhousie's Graduate Studies Calendar <academiccalendar.dal.ca/> (Find "PDF Versions" at the top of that page.)

Grammar and Style: Proper usage and grammar are an expectation for all written work in this course. Although this course is offered through the School of Journalism, the publishing content is intended primarily for book content. As a result, we will follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* for all written work.

Learning and Support Resources:

- [General Academic Support – Advising](#)
- [Fair Dealing Guidelines](#)

Ethical Conduct: All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the School's Handbook of Professional Practice <kingsjournalism.com/handbook> and abide by its ethical standards.

Inclusive Behaviour: King's prides itself on inclusiveness and respect for others. Our classrooms and newsrooms are public spaces in which racist, sexist, homophobic or intolerant comments or humour will not be tolerated. Do not screen such videos, images or web pages on school equipment or in school facilities. Offensive behaviour is not just disrespectful to your colleagues and to your profession; it may constitute harassment under the King's Code of Conduct. For more information, find the Yellow Book at <policies.ukings.ca/>.

Accommodation: Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers experienced related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic protected under Canadian human rights legislation. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests and exams should make their request to the Advising and Access Services Center (AASC) prior to or at the outset of the regular academic year. Please visit www.dal.ca/access for more information and to obtain the Request for Accommodation form. A note taker may be required as part of a student's accommodation. There is an honorarium of \$75/course/term (with some exceptions). If you are interested, please contact AASC at 494-2836 for more information or send an email to notetaking@dal.ca.

Safety: To do journalism well, you must sometimes be uncomfortable. You should never be unsafe. All students are expected to read the School's safety guidelines <kingsjournalism.com/handbook/#safety>. If you run into trouble or if you feel a situation might put your or others' personal safety at risk, bail out and call your instructor right away.