

Course Syllabus

JOUR 6203.06

Mentorship IV

Faculty Supervisor

Stephen Kimber
Professor of Journalism
University of King's College

Mentors:

- **Lorri Neilsen Glenn**
 - **David Hayes**
 - **Lori A. May**
 - **Ken McGoogan**
-

Overview

Mentorships are the creative centrepiece of the MFA program.

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

Priorities for Mentorship IV

- approximately 15-20,000 words of the manuscript (or more), depending on the complexity of the research requirements of the book project.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will apply the writing, research and craft skills developed in earlier Writing Craft, Publishing Residency, and Mentorship courses to their work this term. The aim is to improve and enhance skills, which will include some of the following (depending on the student's project and the mentor's focus):
 - Plotting
 - Structure
 - Character development
 - Setting
 - Scenic construction
 - Dialogue
 - Description
 - Point of view
 - Voice

- Meaning
- Interviewing
- Documentary research
- Library research
- Database research
- Online research
- Word choice
- Use of simile and metaphor
- Self-editing
- Revision.

Contract of deliverables

Students will negotiate a “contract” with their mentor, agreeing to the terms of the winter semester 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 words students will submit (normally 15-20,000 words (ie. 40-50 pages), 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 winter residency, ie. by Saturday, Jan. 23, 2017.

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

While the faculty supervisor will consult with both the mentor and student during the semester to ensure that 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 that 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. 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 this 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 is 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 or 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.

Some of the writing submitted during Mentorship IV 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.

Rubric

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 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 and logical way that supports and develops the focus. It is compelling, 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, and 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 ways that both help the reader visually identify where action takes place and establish 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 characters' roles in the plot are clear. Their dialogue is authentic.	The characters seem — mostly — real. Readers know what's at stake for most major characters, and understand most of their roles 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; neither are all of their roles in the plot clear. The veracity of the dialogue is questionable.
Voice	There is a consistent, compelling voice and tone in the writing that is appropriate to the story.	There is a consistent voice and tone in the writing that is appropriate to the story.	The voice and tone are inconsistent and/or 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, and/or in the endnotes and footnotes, the sources of all important material without interrupting the narrative flow.	The writer makes clear in the text, and/or endnotes and footnotes, the sources of most of the 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 patches. In general it is focused and keeps the reader's attention.	The writing has little personality. The reader may quickly lose interest and stop reading.
Grammar, Spelling, Writing Mechanics	The writing is free or almost free of errors. It also follows the <i>Chicago Manual of Style</i> .	There are occasional errors, but they don't represent a major distraction or obscure meaning. Style is inconsistent.	There are so many errors that meaning is obscured. The reader will be confused and may stop 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.	The story is hackneyed, derivative and/or pedestrian.

Academic Performance

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 B- in all classes.

Disputes over academic performance and assessment will be dealt with according to the Academic Regulations of the School of Journalism. Students may appeal decisions of the Journalism Studies Committee to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. For more information, see the King's calendar and the Dalhousie University Graduate Calendar.

Accommodation

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests, quizzes and exams should make their request to the Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation (OSAA) prior to or at the outset of each academic term. Please see www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca for more information and to obtain Form A – Request for Accommodation.

A note taker may be required to assist a classmate. There is an honorarium of \$75/course/term. If you are interested, please contact OSAA at 494-2836 for more information.

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

Academic Integrity

The School of Journalism vigorously enforces the highest standards of academic integrity.

Plagiarism is the duplication in whole or in part of work created for another purpose. This can be work done by another student, published work or even a student's own work that has been re-purposed for a class. Plagiarism can be reflected in actual language, or in the duplication of an idea or a sequence. Do not

cut and paste information from the Internet. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, consult your instructor. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be dealt with according to the policy.

Academic integrity issues will be dealt with by the Academic Integrity Officer of the University of King's College, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Dalhousie Senate, as outlined in the King's calendar and the Dalhousie University Graduate Calendar.

As well, the School of Journalism has a statement of ethics and professional standards that must be followed. It can be found at <http://ethics.kingsjournalism.com> Please read this material carefully.

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.

Deadlines

Deadlines are crucial in the publishing industry. Learning to meet deadlines is a necessity for writers, so working to deadlines is part of this course. Please email all assignments by the stated deadlines. If allowance is needed – for health or other reasons – please email or phone to request more time.