

Fiction Mentorship I

MFA in Fiction
Fall Term, Year One

Cohort Director
Stephen Kimber

Mentors: TBD

Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of King's College is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.

We encourage you to find out more about the Indigenous lands you may live and work in. A good starting point is native-land.ca.

Overview

Mentorships are the creative centrepiece of the program. You will have the opportunity to work one-to-one on your book project with accomplished professional writer-editor mentors with their own expertise, approach to fiction and style of teaching and mentoring.

Priorities for Mentorship I:

- **Book Proposal:** approximately 5,000 words. While works of fiction are typically sold on the basis of a full manuscript rather than a proposal drafting a proposal will help you and your mentor better understand your project and provide an ongoing flexible reference point as your manuscript progresses over the course of your program. The proposal should include the following elements:
 - An elevator pitch of your book (roughly 250 words)
 - One-page synopsis
 - Target audience
 - Competitive titles/authors
 - Who you are as the author
 - Marketing and PR opportunities

You can find excellent information on writing book proposals at Jane Friedman's website and in her book *The Business of Being a Writer* (University of Chicago Press, 2018). Although her focus is nonfiction proposals, much of the information will be useful for you too.

- **Manuscript:** approximately 10-15,000 words of your manuscript.

Learning Outcomes:

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

Assignment of Mentors

Two months prior to the beginning of the June residency in Halifax, you will submit a rank-ordered list of the names of the mentors you would like to work with during Mentorship I. While your cohort director will attempt to match students with your first choices, this may not always be possible in a given semester.

June Residency

During the residency, you will meet daily with your mentor and other students (four to six students) in your mentor group where you will

- workshop your own and other students' work
- discuss assigned readings and/or craft-related (voice, plot, etc.) issues
- undertake in-class writing assignments.

You will meet individually with your mentor to discuss your project and develop a contract of deliverables for the fall semester.

Contract of Deliverables

During the June residency, you will negotiate a "contract" with your mentor, agreeing to the terms of your mentorship. While contracts may be tailored to meet the needs and goals of individual students and mentors, each contract must include provisions describing:

- the nature and descriptions of the writing assignments to be completed during the semester
- the approximate number of manuscript pages (or words) you will submit (normally 10-15,000 words; 40-60 double-spaced pages)
- the number of writing packages you will submit (usually one per month for a total of three per term)
- the deadlines for each submission
- the methods for submission (by post, email, Google docs, MS Word, etc.)
- how quickly the mentor will respond to your submission (usually within one week)
- the method of responding to your submission, which will always involve a narrative response but may also include in-person, telephone, Zoom, online or email discussions, as negotiated between you and your mentor
- 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 cohort director before the end of the June residency. (For convenience, you may submit a copy of the agreed upon contract to your cohort director by email with a copy to your mentor; this will constitute a signed contract.)

At the mid-point in the term, your mentor will provide you and your cohort director with a brief written narrative assessment of your progress, flagging any concerns that might adversely affect your final grade.

While the cohort director may consult with both you and your mentor during the semester to ensure the terms of the contract are being fulfilled by both parties, it is the responsibility of you and/or your mentor to notify the cohort director in a timely manner of any issues or concerns affecting the contract or the mentor-mentee relationship.

If there are compatibility issues between a mentor and a student they can't resolve on their own, the cohort director will intervene, mediate, and, if necessary, assign you to a different mentor, or assume direct responsibility for mentoring the student. The Director of the Writing & Publishing Program will be the final arbiter of disputes.

At the end of the semester, your mentor will submit to your cohort director a copy of all your submissions, together with your mentor's responses and any completed rubrics. Your mentor will also submit a short narrative report on your progress during the semester, which will be shared with you.

Although your mentor will submit a suggested final grade for your term's work, your cohort director will be responsible for approving and submitting final grades. (The cohort director's role is to ensure quality and consistency across mentor-student relationships in the evaluation process.)

Grading

Manuscript + Proposal = 100 per cent:

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. The research methodologies employed to write a piece of historical or crime

fiction, for instance, may be very different from the level of research required for other genres.

To complicate matters, some of the writing submitted during the Mentorship will include 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.

Creative writing does not lend itself to checkbox marking, although rubrics can offer your mentor a rough thinking-while-marking guide.

The Manuscript Marking Rubric below identifies criteria that may apply — in varying degrees — to most fiction writing projects.

As part of your contract of deliverables, you and your mentor should identify any criteria you believe apply to your 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 cohort director, will then be used as a guide 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	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.

	admonition to “get in late, get out early.”		
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 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.
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	The writing incorporates documentary and research materials, if required, in a compelling way that integrates naturally into the narrative flow.	The writing incorporates and integrates documentary and research materials into the text, as necessary.	The writing fails to incorporate or integrate documentary and research materials into 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	The writing has little personality. The reader quickly loses interest and stops reading.

		focused and keeps the reader's attention.	
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

Grammar and Style

Proper usage and grammar are an expectation for all written work in this course. As the publishing content is intended primarily for book content, we will follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* for all written work.

Ethical Conduct

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the Journalism School's [Handbook of Professional Practice](#) and abide by its ethical standards. For book writing, there may be some differences in approach from those of daily news gathering. If in doubt, please discuss with your mentor or cohort director.

Learning & Support Resources

In addition to resources at King's, many are available to you at Dalhousie University. These include the [Student Health & Wellness Centre](#), the [Indigenous Student Centre](#), the [Black Student Advising Centre](#), the [LGBTQ2SIA+ Collaborative](#), and the [South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre](#), among others.

Fair, Inclusive and Safe Conduct

All students in the School of Journalism, Writing & Publishing should feel they are participants in a respectful, fair and safe learning environment. Classrooms and online course delivery systems are spaces where everyone should feel welcomed and supported. The School expects students, staff and faculty to abide by the highest standards of collegial learning. The University has policies, procedures and resources to guide students' experience. If you are concerned about your learning environment you may take a range of steps to initiate a discussion or a process:

Meet with the course instructor or mentor: You are encouraged to discuss concerns about a particular course first with the instructor or mentor. The instructor or mentor may be able to address concerns informally. Such concerns may relate to grading, course content, interpersonal issues with other students, or any other issue. The instructor or mentor may also direct you to other resources within the University. If you have an unresolved issue with an instructor or mentor, you can also:

- **Appeal a final grade** in a course by filing a [Request for Reassessment of a Final Grade](#) form.
- **Provide written comment on an instructor** in the Student Ratings of Instruction, distributed near the end of the course. Evaluations are reviewed by the Director each year and used in tenure and promotion decisions for Faculty.

Meet with the Director of Writing & Publishing: The Director welcomes any comment on the experiences of students within the Writing & Publishing program. Concerns may be addressed informally — especially as they relate to the curriculum, academic environment and interpersonal issues. The Director may refer students with more specific or serious concerns to individual policies, procedures and resources of the University. Inclusion and respect for others are key values of the School. An experience of racism, intolerance or inequitable treatment will typically prompt cooperation between the Director and the Equity Officer in working toward immediate and longer-term resolutions.

- **Write a letter** to the Director of Writing & Publishing to express a strong concern about an experience in the program. The Director may bring it to a meeting of Writing & Publishing Faculty and will keep the letter on file.

Meet with the Equity Officer: King's Equity Officer is available for consultation on any issue concerning equity, diversity, inclusion, discrimination and harassment. The officer administers the Policy and Procedures for Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment, found in the [Yellow Book](#). If you have concerns about your experience in the Writing & Publishing program, you are encouraged to seek advice and assistance from the officer, who also receives complaints and administers the process for resolution under the policy. This policy is part of the University Code of Conduct, also found in the Yellow Book, which governs conduct by all members of the University community. The Equity Officer is Rhema Ferguson <rhema.ferguson@ukings.ca >

Meet with the Sexual Health and Safety Officer: The SHSO provides support around experiences of sexualized violence and administers King's [Sexualized Violence Policy](#). This support is confidential and can include [informal discussion, academic accommodations, and assistance with disclosures and reports](#). All decisions regarding disclosure of sexualized violence are in the hands of the individual disclosing. Academic accommodations may be available to those who do not wish to make a formal report. The SHSO is also available if you are supporting someone who has experienced sexualized violence. The SHSO is Jordan Roberts <jordan.roberts@ukings.ca>, 902 229-6123.

Academic Integrity

At King's and Dalhousie, we are guided in all of our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all of the work you do. Plagiarism — stealing someone else's work and presenting it as your own — is a form of academic fraud and unethical behaviour within the writing community. The most common instance involves copying material from the Internet without attributing it. If you have any doubt about proper citation for an academic paper or proper attribution in a piece of writing, contact your instructor, mentor or Cohort Director. For more information, consult the section on Intellectual Honesty on p. 54 of Dalhousie's [Graduate Studies Calendar](#) (Find "PDF Versions" at the top of that page) or the [King's academic calendar](#).

Accessibility

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers to inclusion related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. If you experience barriers related to the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course please contact the [Student Accessibility Centre](#). Please note that a classroom may contain specialized furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom, untouched, so that students who require them will be able to participate in the class.

Appeals

Disputes over academic performance and assessment will be dealt with according to the Academic Regulations of the School of Journalism, Writing & Publishing. Students may appeal decisions of the Journalism Studies Committee to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. For more information, see the [King's Academic Calendar](#).

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, Writing & Publishing 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.