



Course Title: From Writer to Author: Navigating the Twisty Path to Publication

Course Code: CW 28

Instructor: Malena Watrous

Instructor Bio: Malena Watrous is the author of a novel called *If You Follow Me*, co-author of a young adult novel called *Sparked* (with Helena Echlin) and two cookbooks. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writer's Workshop and a former Wallace Stegner Fellow, and has contributed magazine articles and book reviews to The New York Times, The Washington Post, and many other publications.

Do you want to hear authors and members of their publishing teams talk candidly about how they got their books out into the world and into the hands of the right readers? Are you an avid reader curious to find out about the choices and changes that these authors made as their books evolved from rough draft to published manuscript? Each week in this class, an author and one of their publishing "teammates" will visit to talk and answer questions. You will get to ask about their books, their working relationship, and the decisions they made together on the road to publication. You will meet a literary agent, two editors at major publishers, a developmental editor and a book publicist, and come to have a better understanding of these roles, by hearing from the people who do this work as well as the authors that each served. This is a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the book publishing process, designed to help you better understand how writers turn into authors and get their published books into the world, and how these pivotal members of the publishing industry work to serve and support their clients.

Class Sessions and Recording:

This is a live course, meaning all learning happens over Zoom during the weekly sessions each Tuesday, from 12:00-1:15 PM, PT (Zoom link to be provided). Every session will be recorded for the benefit of those who might need to miss class or watch to review later.

Course Features:

- Live weekly zoom session with visits from 1 author and 1 publishing expert each week. (5 visits total, with 10 authors/experts)
- Canvas site in which students will read supplemental materials about publishing and be able to ask questions in advance of visits, and also record impressions of visits and follow-up questions for the instructor

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305
continuingstudies@stanford.edu
650-725-2650

Zoom Schedule: April 18-May 23

The live zoom session each week happens on Tuesday, from 12:00-1:15 PM, PT.

Each week, an author and their chosen “teammate” will come to speak and answer your questions. We hope for as many students as possible to be there each week, but we will also accept questions on behalf of people who can’t make it to the session, which we can ask for you. Every session will be recorded and the recordings will be posted within 24 hours, so even if you can’t make one or two of these zooms, you can still take advantage of the learning that happens in class.

Required Texts:

1. *Pictures of the Shark*, short stories by Thomas H. McNeely (visiting with editor)
<https://www.amazon.com/Pictures-Shark-Thomas-H-McNeely/dp/1680032712/>
2. *Advika and the Hollywood Wives*, by Kirthana Ramiseti (visiting with agent)
<https://www.amazon.com/Advika-Hollywood-Wives-Kirthana-Ramiseti/dp/1538709279>
3. *In the Event of Death*, by Kim Young (visiting with social media expert/publicist)
<https://www.amazon.com/Event-Death-Novel-Kimberly-Young/dp/1637586663>
4. *Live Your Best Lie*, by Jessie Weaver (YA/thriller, visiting with editor)
<https://www.amazon.com/Audible-Live-Your-Best-Lie/dp/BOBRYN6R94>
5. *Brand New Catastrophe: A Memoir*, by Mike Scalise (visiting with editor)
<https://www.amazon.com/Brand-New-Catastrophe-Memoir/dp/B01N4G3R28>

Weekly Topical Schedule:

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Week 1: Tuesday, April 18 (12-1:15 PM, PT)

Class Intro/overview of publishing roles and terms and Q and A

Malena Watrous will guide students in how to use the Canvas site, and give an overview of the roles of various members of the publishing world, explaining the difference between developmental editors and editors at publishing houses, the functions that agents serve, the role of MFA programs and residencies, and anything else that students want to know about up front. The purpose of this first class is to illuminate the terms (and roles) that will come up subsequently, so that students can ask more targeted and informed questions of the expert guests who will visit in subsequent weeks.

Week 2: Tuesday, April 25 (12-1:15 PM PT)

Tom McNeely (*Pictures of the Shark*) and his editor, Peter Carlisle, will talk about writing and publishing this short story collection. This is McNeely's second book. His first was a novel featuring some of the same characters and setting. His editor will accompany him to the session.

Topics: Publishing short stories, Putting together a collection, Publishing in literary journals and magazines before publishing in a volume; University and small presses and what kind of support/payment to expect from a smaller press rather than a Big 5 Publisher.

Week 3: Tuesday, May 2 (12-1:15 PM PT)

Kirthana Ramiseti (*Advika and the Hollywood Wives*) will join us together with her agent (Andrea Somberg of the Harvey Klinger Agency) to talk about the process of working together on this, Ramiseti's second novel.

Topics: Agent/writer relationship, How to query agents (and find the right ones to query), What an agent does for their clients after signing them, How an agent chooses editors to whom to send the book and how books sell, and how they keep working together even after a sale.

Week 4: Tuesday, May 9 (12-1:15 PM PT)

Kimberly Young (*In the Event of Death*) and her Post Hill Press publicist will join us to discuss how to publicize and spread the word on social media about the existence of a forthcoming and newly published book.

Topics: Various social media outlets, How to take advantage of them effectively and not use up all of your writing time, Whether and how to hire a professional to help with publicity, Things that work and things that don't, when trying to spread the word.

Week 5: Tuesday, May 16 (12-1:15 PM PT)

Jessie Weaver (*Live Your Best Lie*) and her editor, Kelsey Sullivan, will discuss how Jessie came to write this book for Disney/Hyperion and their work together. Discussion of Jessie's trajectory before this book was accepted and how she got hired from a short list of prospective authors who were selected by Disney/Hyperion after auditioning to write it. (Full story to come in class!)

Topics: YA fiction, Thrillers/Mystery writing, Editor/Author relationship, Writing "on spec"

Week 3: Tuesday, May 23 (12-1:15 PM PT)

Mike Scalise (*Brand New Catastrophe*) and his editor, Ariel Lewiton, will discuss Mike's memoir of cancer and their work together.

Topics: Editing nonfiction, Writing about your life and making it interesting, Writing about real people without ruining relationships or getting in legal trouble, Writing about sad subjects and making them palatable through humor.

Note that this is the author/ book list and the order of visits. Each week we have one author, in conversation with one publishing teammate. You are **highly encouraged** to read all of the books before class starts so that you aren't cramming each week. Please do buy the books and read them when you have time, even if it's after the class ends. All of these authors are counting on you (as we will discuss extensively in class) and other readers to help support them, which is why they are agreeing to come to our class. You will have the opportunity to come up with questions for each author and/or their teammate, before their visit and time to ask them yourself during their visit. You may ask questions about the books and/or about the process of writing and publishing the books. This is not a lit class, however, but a class on publishing, and our sessions are just over an hour, so don't expect lengthy discussions of the themes.

Course Structure

Each module typically includes the following components. Announcements will also be posted from time to time so consider setting your "announcement" notification preference to "notify me right away" to immediately receive the information via email. See the Notification Preference section on the Settings and Preferences page for instructions.

PRELIMINARY ONLINE COURSE SYLLABUS

- **Discussions:** Each week there will be a discussion area where students can post questions that they want raised on their behalf about the book. Because this is a live class, no class work in Canvas is mandatory.
- There is also a "General Class Comments and Questions" discussion that is open throughout the course. This is a great place to post thoughts or questions related to the course topics, that don't seem to fit in any of the other discussions. Or, questions about the structure of the course, assignment expectations, class grading requirements, and so on.
- **Class Meetings/Zoom Sessions:** A live class meeting will be held each week, Tuesday from 12:00-1:15 PM, PST. The sessions will be recorded for people who are unable to attend. The meetings are conducted using Zoom, a video-conference application. Students will listen to a live conversation in the first part of the session between the visitors, then be invited to ask questions of their own in the second half. If you can't attend but have a question, feel free to email/post it to be asked for you.

Weekly Routine

- **Monday:** Each week officially begins on Monday. There will be materials provided to help you read up on the people visiting in zoom, so that you know who they are and have enough to help draft whatever questions remain for you.
- **Tuesday:** Live zoom session between the author and their team member, from 12:00 to 1:15 PM, PT.
- **Friday:** The module for the upcoming week will be available by the afternoon.

There are no assignments or writing exercises for this class. The only work is to read the authors' books, and to come up with questions for them and their teammates. The materials are all intended to support the zoom sessions. I am also here to answer questions that you may have as they arise throughout the class.