Course Title: Novel IV: Manuscript Preparedness
Course Code: OWC 306B
Instructor: Ammi Keller

Course Summary:

No matter how talented, capable or experienced writers are, most struggle at some point to get their manuscript into a form where it can be reviewed by peers, agents and publishing professionals.

In this course, designed to prepare OWC students for the One-on-One tutorials, students will write and revise diligently in service of their manuscript’s individual needs, workshop extensive sections in a small, supportive group and acquire technical and process-related skills helpful for the completion of a novel.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

Grade Options and Requirements:

The following elements must be completed for the student to receive an A or a B in this course:

- Posting short assignments and responses during Weeks One, Two and Three
- Turning in 20-40+ pages of writing during Week Five
- Responding to groupmate’s (2-3 people’s) excerpts and fulfilling any voluntarily made commitments to groupmates
- At least one discussion points post on any board each week

Students may skip one week of discussion points posts if necessary for personal reasons without it negatively impacting their grade. In addition, the perceived quality of a student’s creative writing will not be the basis for grading. Instead, consistent effort and supportive engagement with other writers will allow students to receive a high grade in this class.
Tentative Weekly Outline:

**Week One:** Your Very Beginning, or The “Airport Bookstore Test”

Meet the rest of the class. Share your novel’s first 600 words, along with a 100-200 word pitch, give feedback. We’ll also do a Zoom chat session.
Recommended reading: Chapters 1 and 2 of *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
Craft topic: bridging tension.
Creativity topic: fixed vs. growth mindsets
Author interview: Jennifer duBois

**Week Two:** POV Lab and Tolerance

Share a 600-word excerpt from your novel, discuss point of view and give feedback. For our process topic, we’ll discuss the idea of tolerance as it relates to self-improvement—or how to see your work through new eyes.
Recommended reading: Chapters 3 and 4 of *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
Craft topic: point of view
Creativity topic: the four stages of learning
Author interview: Carter Sickels

**Week Three:** Dialogue Lab and Grit

Share a 600-word novel excerpt, revisit dialogue mechanics and give feedback. This week, you’ll also return to me, via email, a questionnaire about your novel and feedback preferences.
Recommended reading: Chapters 5 of *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*, and pages 152-180 and 252-270 in *Story*
Craft topic: dialogue
Creativity topic: grit

**Week Four:** Summarizing/Outlining and Problematizing the Problem

At beginning of this week, I will put students into groups. You’ll then share outlines/summaries with your new groups and make choices around exchanging work. For our process topic we’ll discuss why, for writers, growth means turning lemons into creative lemonade.
Recommended reading: web links
Craft topic: summarizing/outlining
Creativity topic: problematizing the problem
Author interview: Ryan McIlvain

**Week Five:** Interior Monologue, Story Triangles and the Marshmallow Test
Students must post work for workshop by 5 pm on Friday. Writers are encouraged to exchange between 40 and 100 pages (10,000 and 25,000 words).
Recommended reading: Chapter 7 from Self-Editing for Fiction Writers, pages 1-66 of Story, ending after Part 2’s Chapter 2.
Micro craft topic: interior monologue
Macro craft topic: identifying your story type
Creativity topic: the science of delayed gratification

**Week Six:** Easy Beats, Character vs. Characterization and Racing Your Strengths

No workshops will occur this week as students need time to read each other’s work.
Recommended reading: Chapter 8 from Self-Editing for Fiction Writers, pages 67-131 from Story, ending at the end of Part 2.
Micro craft topic: interspersing small actions into scenes
Macro craft topic: the relationship between character and structure
Creativity topic: owning what you know
Author interview: Angela Woodward

**Week Seven:** Paragraph Breaks, Types of Protagonists and the Science of Feedback

First workshops occur with responses due by 5 pm Thursday.
Recommended reading: Chapter 9 from Self-Editing for Fiction Writers, pages 134-207 from Story, ending after Chapter 8
Micro craft topic: breaking up text
Macro craft topic: types of protagonists, types of conflict
Creativity topic: cognitive bias

**Week Eight:** Repetition, Resonance and Reverse Engineering

Workshops continue with responses due by 5 pm Thursday.
Recommended reading: Chapter 10 from Self-Editing for Fiction Writers, pages 208-252 from Story by Robert McKee, ending after Chapter 10
Micro craft topic: avoiding unnecessary repetition
Macro craft topic: the principal of progression
Creativity topic: retrograde analysis

**Week Nine:** Prose Doctoring, Scene Doctoring and the Problem with Perfectionism

Workshops continue with responses due by 5 pm Thursday.
Recommended reading: Chapter 11 from Self-Editing for Fiction Writers, pages 253-333 from Story, ending after Chapter 14
Micro craft topic: improving sentence construction and style
Macro craft topic: values and story shifts
Creativity topic: perfectionism
**Week Ten: Preparing to Work with an Editor**

Last workshops with responses due by 5 pm Thursday.  
Recommended reading: Chapter 12 from *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*, pages 334-419 from *Story*  
Micro craft topic: recognizing your voice  
Macro craft topic: problems and solutions  
Creativity topic: walking while writing