

# *Novel Beginnings: From Idea to Page*

## Syllabus

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### Instructor

*Dipika Mukherjee*

**Quarter:** Spring 2024

**Start – end date:** March 18 – April 22

**Session day/time:** Mondays, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm CT

**Course Code and Section:** WRIT32404 24S1

### Email

*dmukherjee@uchicago.edu*

### Course Overview

Welcome to this course! Over the course of six weeks, I will guide you into starting a novel and staying motivated while writing the first chapters! This online class will offer craft discussions, intensive study of a mentor text, instructor feedback on a synopsis, as well as approximately 40 pages of work. We will use Canvas for online interactions and Zoom for live webinars. You will develop a supportive creative cohort as you work on developing your novel-in-progress, and by the end of the six weeks, you should have at least forty pages of a novel completed, though it need not be in polished form.

### Modality

Remote learning

This course will also benefit writers who have started a novel, but need some help in finding their inspiration or motivation again.

### COURSE GUIDELINES

- Assignments should be completed by Saturday, 11:59 p.m, of the week that they are due. Each new week begins on Monday.
- There will be three milestone submissions due to the instructor including the **Introductory 5 pages; first chapter; any other chapter (total of 40 pages)**.
- Manuscripts should be formatted in Word (not a PDF) and double-spaced. Please number pages and include your name and your novel's name on the first page.
- New material will be posted on Canvas every Friday. New discussion boards will open at the beginning of each new topic being addressed.
- I will check discussion boards on Tuesdays and Fridays. If you have an urgent question, email me directly at [dmukherjee@uchicago.edu](mailto:dmukherjee@uchicago.edu).
- This is a generative workshop, and you will be strongly encouraged to progress on your own novels. You will begin this course by setting a realistic goal of writing a certain number of words every week (I will help you decide on a number that is realistic for you).

- The Zoom links and related information for the webinars will be available a few days before the scheduled webinars. There will be technical assistance available before the first webinar.
- I will consult with each student during an individual one-on-one meeting (10 minutes online). This meeting will be scheduled in the third week of the course, at a mutually agreeable time. This interaction will focus on feedback given to your work and any questions related to that feedback.
- Feedback on student manuscripts will also come in the form of in-text comments, whether from the instructor or a peer-review.

### CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

As we may be addressing controversial topics in our class discussions, students are expected to be respectful and considerate of others.

### Required texts:

1. *Bird by Bird*, by Anne Lamott ISBN 978-0385480017
2. *Save The Cat! Writes a Novel*, by Jessica Brody ISBN 978-0399579745
3. In addition, you will choose a “mentor text”—a novel written by an author whose work has been influential or may be instructive (**this may include works translated into English, or published outside the United States**). The mentor text will allow you to customize your learning experience with independent study. I will help students in need of assistance in choosing an author whose style or content may compliment the student’s own.

Books can be purchased online through the [University of Chicago Bookstore](#).

### Assignments –

Assignments in **Blue** : Discussion board submissions addressed to everyone in the class

Assignments in **Green**: Instructor led events/Instructor only submissions

Week	Topic	Student Assignments
Week 1	Introductions: Starting Stong; Reworking weak opening pages.	-Submit a short introduction of yourself and the inspiration for your work on discussion forum Start working on the first 5 pages of your novel
Week 2	Make The Reader Care: Who is your Protagonist? Writing the first third of the book	-Post 5 introductory pages from your novel into the discussion forum. -#1 Submit first 5 pages of novel to instructor Respond to the pages posted by your peers
Week 3	Mentor Texts: Looking at Pacing How to grab your reader (and keep them hooked!).	Post Mentor-Text and reason for choosing this particular text 10 minute meeting with instructor

Week	Topic	Student Assignments
Week 4	Dialogue development. Writing from multiple POV. Making Dialogues Sing	Submit a dialogue-heavy scene from your Novel on the discussion forum  #2. Submit first chapter or 15 pages of novel to instructor
Week 5	The Importance of the Narrative Arc. Tightening the tension.	-Post details from mentor text on Narrative Arc/Plot on discussion forum
Week 6	Setting the Stage: How build an effective word- world.	#3 Final submission of chapter of novel to instructor

### Accessing remote courses

Remote courses are taught through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the “Get Started” button in the email to begin the Canvas login process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit <https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts>. Once you’ve created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: <https://canvas.uchicago.edu>.

### Accessibility information

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class session at 773.702.6000 or [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu).

### UChicago CARES Statement:

The University and its faculty are committed to creating a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all students. At the University, all faculty, staff, graduate student instructors, and teaching assistants are considered “Individuals with Reporting Responsibilities” and are required to let the University’s Title IX Coordinator know about any disclosures they receive from students about experiences of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment). This includes disclosures of experiences that happened before their time at the University. This is to ensure that all students who have experienced sexual misconduct receive support, options, and information about their rights and resources. Students are not obligated to respond to this outreach, and this will not generate a report to law enforcement.

For more information, please see [this handout for students](#) as well as the [University's Policy on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct](#) and [Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment](#). You can also reach out directly for services and support from the [Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support](#) by emailing [titleix@uchicago.edu](mailto:titleix@uchicago.edu).

If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at [zmel@uchicago.edu](mailto:zmel@uchicago.edu).