

Mentee Experiences: Seneca Roach

Courtney's mentorship over the past two semesters has helped me better narrow down my interests in what amounts to a very broad field of study. Their discussion and exploration of their own fields of study (creative nonfiction and Ecoliterature) has opened new avenues for me to explore and pursue in my own studies. Courtney's experience in the graduate system has been invaluable in teaching me what to expect from graduate programs, something I had previously known nothing about. Their mentorship in areas like applying to colleges, getting funding, and the afore-mentioned pursuit of personal interests has made the future of my academic career much clearer.

Their work on the literary journal *Permafrost* has illuminated my own work on *Ice Box*, the undergraduate literary journal of UAF. They helped me identify and discuss strategies for workplace organization, suss out criteria and qualifications for submitted manuscripts, and introduced me to several venues through which to submit and receive work, such as Submittable.

Our trip down to Seattle for AWP was reality-shaking for me. It tore down my preconceived notions across the spectrum from my academic career to my personal life. I had previously known very little and even wrote off smaller publishing houses, but AWP's book fair gave me a new appreciation for publishing houses and made clear the real, amazing opportunities out there for small writers like myself. I definitely plan to apply to many of them in the future!

The conference section was even more enlightening! There is just so much more in every facet of literary life than I thought there was. Panels on Creative nonfiction, ecopoetry, and community building within the literary space blew me away. I used to think I was on top of everything in the field and had a firm grasp on the subject of "English", but AWP pulled the rug out from under me in the best possible way! I found new interests, explored new avenues, and was in overall awe. It was an utterly phenomenal experience that unmoored me from my prior conceptions and worldview, and I'm a much better equipped, astutely trained, and happier person as a result :)

Mentorship in Literary Arts

Mentorship in Literary Arts - what exactly does that mean? As we found out, it encapsulates a great deal! The mentorship, under the guidance of Courtney Skaggs, editor of the *Permafrost Literary Journal*, introduced us to new professions, literary processes, and allowed us the opportunity to step into the professional literary world.

The mentorship culminated in attending the Associated Writers' and Writing Publisher's Conference, the largest conference of its kind in North America. At the conference, we were given the opportunity to speak with current published writers, publishers large and small, and even meet with graduate programs from all over the country.



AWP 2022 Bookfair



Association of Writers and
Writing Programs

Mentee Experiences: Ayden Harris

During mentorship sessions, Courtney guided myself and my co-mentee, Seneca, on the opportunities available in the literary field. These opportunities covered a wide range of occupations and interests, including: acquisitions, text editing and working with an editorial board on a national literary journal, pursuit of further training for work in academia or in the K-12 education system, English MFA graduate school crash course Q&As, and culminated in attendance to the Associated Writers and Writing Publisher's Conference, which is an annual conference celebrating and discussing current moves in the literary field which also serves as a hub for writers, publishers, faculty, and students to meet and discuss their work, challenges, and to find new employment opportunities.

In the mentorship meetings, Courtney explained and demonstrated how the national literary journal, *Permafrost*, functions. We covered acquisition, review, acceptance and rejections. We discussed what makes for a good, compelling piece of literature and the differences between an undergraduate literary journal and a nationally recognized one. Throughout the discussions, special attention was given to understanding how the pieces fit together in a publication, how to keep a coherent theme, and common publishing mistakes to avoid. I was particularly surprised to find myself thinking critically about layout in a journal, and how that serves to guide readers through a cohesive collection. With this as a basis, we discussed other national literary journals, their strengths and weaknesses. With Courtney's guidance I was introduced to multiple journals that cover a range of genres, and also learned how to find publishers that are inclined to take experimental creative pieces.

I also had the opportunity to ask questions about graduate schools, their requirements, and the experience. Courtney was very helpful in demystifying the graduate school process. Through our conversations I was able to craft my submissions confidently, and have been accepted into, as of this writing, two graduate programs. These sessions were so helpful and encouraging that we discussed creating a graduate student panel for English undergraduates, so that others can benefit from the same guidance Seneca and myself received.

During the mentorship, employment and further education were stressed. Courtney walked us through graduate school applications, explained the academic differences between Creative Writing, Creative NonFiction, Poetry and Literary Journalism. This introduction was eye-opening; the literary field contains editors and writers, but also publishers, educators, independent writers, small independent publishing companies, and even layout designers and artists. This was even more apparent at the AWP conference, where I had the opportunity to listen to published authors, podcasters, university professors, and publishers. The sessions I attended were focused on pedagogy, craft, experimental forms such as mixed media podcasts, serials, microfiction, linked short stories, and young and new adult literature.

AWP itself was an amazing experience that drove home the wide range of genres, publishers, readers, and writers that exist. I had the chance to speak with published authors about their upcoming books, their struggles and successes in publishing and writing, and even had the opportunity to connect with an independent publisher who expressed an interest in my work. Additionally, I met with a small publisher called Alternating Currents. This meeting and in-depth discussion with author and publisher Leah Angstman gave me a starting place for my own future dream; an independent Alaskan publisher specializing in underrepresented and experimental literature. URSA's support allowed me to take my first deep steps into the literary world.

