THE PORCH YEAR

2027 FICTION COHORT

Mission

The Porch inspires, educates and connects writers and readers of all ages and stages through classes and literary events.

Vision

We achieve this through:

- **Education**: The Porch fosters the artistic and professional development of writers through inspiring and educational opportunities for adults and youth. Led by experienced teachers, our classes allow participants to learn from one another in a supportive atmosphere.

- **Arts Access**: To improve literary access that reflects our city's diversity, we offer free workshops and public readings, bringing in historically underrepresented visiting writers, and providing financial support for those wishing to participate in our workshops.

- **Community Impact**: Equipped with a team of trained writing teachers and data-backed instruction, The Porch provides therapeutic writing workshops for at risk and vulnerable populations within the Nashville community.

- **Literary Ecosystem**: The Porch is a gathering place for writers all over the country to read together, write together, share resources, find help, and revel in the joy of the made thing. Screen Porch is the Porch's blog that features dispatches, connections, and happenings. The Porch provides an ecosystem for writers at any stage in their practice; publication is a natural progression. SWING is the Porch's print publication, which features work by emerging writers to the renowned, from the discovered to the too-long neglected.



Overview

This immersive, one-year program asks that you make a commitment to yourself, your fellow writers, and your teaching mentor so that you may start your project and complete a first draft over a twelve month period. The Porch Year program equips writers with the accountability, expert instruction, feedback, individualized attention, and community needed to ideate, write, revise, and complete a book-length manuscript by the end of the year. These cohorts are all offered online, with exclusive access to write-ins and productivity meet-ups at the Porch House and/or via Zoom classroom.

This program is for emerging writers, established writers, blocked writers, writers looking to jumpstart their practice, writers with an idea and desire to write. This cohort offers participants the space to give and receive feedback and make substantial progress on a longer work-in-progress.

Registration
Applications are open from October 7, 2026 through December 11, 2026. There is a $60 non-refundable deposit (members can waive this registration fee).

Registration Guidelines

- **October 19, 5-6:30PM CT via Zoom**: Information Session with PY Mentors and Director of Education. Register **here**.
- **October 7 - December 11, 2026:** Application period for the 2027 Fiction Cohort

There are two narrative questions to answer at registration:

- A piece of prose of no more than 2,000 words. This may be an excerpt.
- Statement of Interest/Project Description: Please share a brief statement of interest. What do you hope to work on during this cohort experience? Tell us more about your project, your goals, your ideas, and your past writing and workshop experiences—we'd love to hear it.

Instructor will review applications with Porch staff and contact admitted students about registration and finalize payment. The fiction cohort can accept up to 12 people in their cohort. Spots are first-come, first-served. Once approved for the cohort, you will receive a payment link to register and complete the process and get access to the program meeting information.

Cost of Tuition:

- Full Payment: $4,800 by check or credit card (including a non-refundable $60 deposit to secure your place in the cohort). Members can waive the deposit fee.

- Monthly Payment Plan: 12 flexible monthly payments of $395

Tuition Assistance: We are able to offer 1 Merit Award seat in each cohort, assuming a minimum enrollment threshold is met. If tuition is a barrier for you and you identify as someone from a low-income, rural, or marginalized background, we encourage you to apply. The optional and brief application is a separate application. Please be prepared to answer narrative questions about community, statement of need, project, and provide a writing sample. **Apply here.** Tuition assistance application closes on December 9.

Weekly Workshop Meetings

Participants will gather over Zoom for a focused three-hour class each week, where you'll have dedicated time to workshop excerpts from your manuscript, generate new work, and propel your project forward.

Tentative Visiting Guests

Throughout the year, The Porch will invite visiting writers and publishing professionals to meet with the fiction cohort as special guests. Tentative guests include (subject to change):

- Edward P. Jones, Pulitzer Prize Winner in Fiction
- Leigh Anne Couch, *SWING* editor and poet
- Kevin Wilson, Tennessee Book Award winner
- Jamie Jo Hoang, author
- Michael Knight, MFA Director and Professor at UT Knoxville
- Crystal Wilkinson, former Poet Laureate of Kentucky
- Bill Gaskins, photographer, writer, scholar
- Nina Graybill, Agent

Between Meetings (Asynchronous)

In between sessions, you'll stay connected through a shared Google Drive, where you can submit drafts and offer feedback to your peers. You'll also have the option to engage in additional check-ins, whether through written feedback or one-on-one meetings. This flexible structure ensures continuous progress on your manuscript, while still providing opportunities for personalized guidance and accountability.

Independent Study & Breaks

No meetings scheduled April 16 - May 27

Optional write-in and productivity clubs. Students are expected to do independent study, assigned multi-genre projects, and schedule one-on-one meetings with their instructor during this time. This time is dedicated to writing generously, revising meticulously, and reading voraciously.

Class Reading List

Participants will be assigned novels and essays to read and learn from throughout the year.

ON CRAFT AND WRITING LIFE (excerpts may be taken from some books):

- *Steering the Craft by Ursula K. Le Guin*
- *A Writer's Journey: What Every Writer Needs to Know About the Craft and the Business of Writing, Julia Alvarez*
- *The Art of Revision, Peter Ho Davies*

FICTION: (excerpts may be taken from some books)

- *Best American Short Stories of 2026*
- *The Sincerest Form, Writing Fiction by Imitation, Nicholas*

Student Testimonials

Ritika Bali, former student

- MFA graduate, Miami University, and flash fiction editor for *Indian Gothic Literary Magazine*

I still remember one of our first classes, when we were asked to take an old folktale passed down through generations, make it relevant to a contemporary audience, and identify the craft elements that made it work. That exercise was my introduction to thinking critically about storytelling and analyzing fiction through the lens of a serious reader. Hank also incorporated interactive activities and readings by a diverse range of authors, making each class both insightful and enjoyable.

Having my work workshopped and receiving Hank's feedback helped build my confidence and develop a stronger understanding of my craft. The experience was so meaningful in preparing me for my journey and getting into a wonderful MFA program. I would highly recommend his course to anyone looking to become a better writer with thoughtful guidance and mentorship.

Corie Rosen, former student, subsequent manuscript client

- Fiction in *New Letters, Consequence,* and *Arts & Letters;* Colorado Book Award Finalist and author of the books *Words for Things Left Unsaid* and *Wildfire*

Hank Lewis is one of the finest instructors I have ever learned from; he has an ability to communicate passion and information in equal parts, all while creating a community that fosters deep and lasting relationships among the writers in his class.

Hank Lewis is an extraordinary human being and a brilliant editor. His poetic attention to detail makes every manuscript he works on even better than it was before. I am so grateful to have had his thoughtful eyes on my work, which is vastly better because of his input.

Hank Lewis is an exceptional instructor. His ability to pay attention to both the plot and lyric movement of a piece of writing make him a unique and valuable editor. On top of that, he is a terrific human being. I always leave class feeling energized and inspired.

Meeting Dates and Times

Spring Term 2027

January - April

Mondays, 7:00-9:00 p.m. CT

January 25: Orientation with Instructor + Director of Education

Monday evening schedule:

- Feb 1
- Feb 8
- Feb 15
- Feb 22
- Mar 1
- Mar 8
- Mar 15
- Mar 22
- Mar 29
- April 5
- April 12
- April 19

April 20 - June 4: May Break

- **Independent Study:** Students are expected to work on independent projects during this time and meet one-on-one with the teaching mentor.
- **Mondays in May, 6-8 p.m. CT:** Optional Zoom write-ins and in-person meetups at The Porch House (located in Nashville, TN).

Summer Term 2027

June - September

Mondays, 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. CT

Saturdays: 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. CT

- Sat., June 5
- Mon., June 14
- Mon., June 28
- Sat., July 10
- Mon., July 19
- Mon., Aug 2
- Mon., Aug 16
- Sat., Aug 28

Meeting Dates and Times

Fall Term 2027

September - December
Mondays, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. CT

- Sept 13
- Sept 20
- Sept 27
- Oct 4
- Oct 11
- Oct 18
- Oct 25
- Nov 1
- Nov 8
- Nov 15
- Nov 29
- Dec 6

Final Manuscript Due: Dec 6

Final one-on-one consultations and manuscript feedback exchange should take place by February 28, 2028.

Final Reading & Celebration

Monday, Jan 10, 2028
7:00–8:30 p.m.

What You'll Gain

- Dedicated, individualized mentorship and personalized feedback on your work-in-progress. Whether focusing on a single excerpt or discussing your manuscript's larger structure, you'll receive tailored insights on your manuscript drafts.
- Supportive writing community and accountability with the guidance and mentorship of a published and accomplished writer-teacher.
- **32** weekly 2-hour, online cohort meetings with craft discussions, workshop, community, and feedback. We'll explore elements like narrative drive, character development, or revision strategies that elevate your writing.
- **Free access** to online Zoom classroom space and Porch House for write-ins, accountability sessions, and more.
- **4+** one-on-one meetings and manuscript consultations with mentor
- **4+** Visiting guest writers, publishing professionals, and editors
- **1** Final public reading and celebration
- Accountability and goal-setting. Together, we'll set personalized goals, hold each other accountable, and ensure you maintain steady progress.
- Community support. You'll join a small, dedicated group of fellow writers who share your passion for storytelling, providing feedback, camaraderie and motivation.
- Exclusive access to Porch Visiting Writer Series events
- Unlimited access to Webinars

By the end of the year, you'll not only have a completed draft of your manuscript, but also have a deeper understanding of your own writing process and the tools needed for future revisions.

Expectations

From the instructor:

- written feedback on up 250-300 pages of your manuscript by the end of the cohort year, along with suggested readings; optional lighter feedback on weekly drafts
- generative exercises for inspiration for each weekly meeting
- craft-based readings for deepening your knowledge on various craft issues, with conversations about these readings during our live Zooms
- 4+ one-on-one Zooms during the twelve months we work together
- Optional hosted “write-ins” and productivity clubs where we write together on Zoom (minimal conversation, focused on drafting)

From yourself:

- accountability: together, as a group, we will set goals at the start of the year for how often people will share work in our Google Drive.
- community: option to host a ‘write-in’ for fellow group members (on Zoom)
- encouragement: you’ll be responsible for giving feedback to your peers during our live Zoom workshops and asynchronously (we will make this responsibility manageable based on group size)

From your peers:

- caring, honest feedback on work-in-progress
- encouragement when you’re feeling stuck or down on your work
- a safe and supportive community and a sense of shared purpose



Key Dates & Information

- **October 19 at 4:00pm-5:30pm CT via Zoom**: Porch Year Informational Session with Instructor and Edu Director
- **October 7 - December 11, 2026:** Application period for the 2027 Fiction Cohort

Location
Online via Zoom & Google Classroom

Weekly Cohort Meetings
Mondays, Starting February 1, 2027 | 7:00-9:00 p.m. CT

Program Orientation
Monday, January 25, 2027 | 5:00-6:30 PM

Final Reading & Celebration
Fiction: Monday, January 10, 2028 | 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Class Syllabus
Provided at orientation.

Final Manuscripts Due
December 6, 2027

Final Consultation with Mentor
Must be scheduled by February 28, 2028

Fiction Cohort Mentor
William Henry Lewis

Mondays & select Saturdays on Zoom
Starting February 1, 2027
Mondays: 7-9 PM CT | Summer Saturdays: 11 AM - 2 PM CT

This class is an experience in surveying the territory of narrative craft as you traverse it. We will all explore the same territory, but each of you will lay tracks in different ways, toward different destinations: some will be further along toward finishing a book, while others will be starting to craft fiction in new ways. Along the way, we will gain community, challenge, feedback, guidance, and weekly accountability.

Our work will create a community of writers, readers, editors, and, yes, friends who travel that crafting journey together: reading as writers, exploring what our fiction is capable of, confirming what is essential, and accepting ways to re-vision our work, all with the goal of crafting fiction that meets the developing standards of the instructor, peers, and your own sense of what you want from your work.

This class will provide insights, guest speakers, and opportunities to better understand that world. While the instructor is committed to showing you how other writers have been successful, the main goal is to advance and refine how to live as a writer who writes like you.

Whether close to completing a manuscript or just starting out, we will cycle between telling stories, free-flow writing without barriers, building and refining prose, and articulating the layered agendas within fiction. Alongside our core mission of community and workshop, classes will include:

- Performing oral tales to affirm the teller-story-audience bond
- Working with music, theatre improv, and visual art as prompts
- Re-casting as your own a model story from an established writer
- Cross-genre projects exploring your work in another genre
- Smaller peer duos/trios going deeper into each other's work and presenting craft ideas through fiction samples
- Re-vision workshops experimenting with specific revision elements in a limited number of pages

Class Syllabus
Classwork Descriptions

START STRONG: 4-5k word story/chapters/section ready to work with submit by Orientation (January 25, 2027).

FICTION SUBMISSION: submit for workshop review, 3-5K word pieces, turned in roughly 6-8 times across three terms (all writers turn on same day of a new workshop cycle).

FICTION PREVIEW & REVISION WORKSHOPS: Before each workshop cycle, all writers will submit 3-page samples to preview what they are working on next, or 3-page revised section of work that has already been reviewed in workshop. All pieces wil be shared and discussed in a single class.

PEER REVIEW: Consistently give and receive meaningful peer review, in class discussion and in notes/comments (this involves reading 2-3 peer manuscripts for a week for a 4 week workshop cycle (6-8 cycles across the year).

READINGS: Read assigned fiction closely to both discuss and present on specfic elemnts of craft (we will average 1-2 readings per term week).

MODEL READINGS LIST: submit an annotated bibliography (1-2 sentences of notation) of three story/novel sections (5k word max) by an established writer that demonstrates craft elements you wish to explore/share, emulate, and/or recast in your own work. The class will read at least one of your selections, along with readings assigned by mentor.

CRAFT GROUPS: once or twice during the year, you will meet outside of class with 3-4 writers to share and read one of each other's model readings and then meet to agree on one model piece to assign to the class and present together to the class on some element of craft.

Class Syllabus
Classwork Continued

MULTIGENRE PROJECT: You will be assigned an multigenre project, in which you re-render a story/section of your work in genre other than fiction OR you can propose a self-initiated project of similar volume. This is done in conjunction with the primary project.

MODEL STORY PROJECT: 6-hour/month maximum project time and/or 3k word max to recast established writer's work to serve your project's craft interest/goals. Use this project to target a section of your manuscript generation or revision.

INDIVIDUAL WRITING LOAD: the goal is to complete a manuscript between 200-300 pages, but how each person gets there varies from writer to writer, based on how much you have generated before the year starts, and what your weekly capacity and production rate is.

BASELINE: if one generates at least new 300 words, 3 times per week, over just roughly 45 program weeks, one would produce 40,500 words, which translates to roughly 165 double-spaced rough draft pages, not to be confused with completed manuscript pages. 160 pages is not the goal, but you may be more successful if you are at or beyond this threshold by Summer Break. Enrolling in this course does not gaurantee publication, but it will help prepare you with a submission-ready manuscript by the end of the program.

Class Syllabus
Cohort Expectations

ACCOUNTABILITY: while there are no grades or supervisory tools to rate your performance, it is expected that all writers will attend and actively paricipate in all scheduled sessions, meet due dates for posting workshop pieces, peer work, group work readings, and mentor meetings, or when a writer can't meet a deadline, they provide enough advance notice so all can adjust.

MANUSCRIPT FORMAT: writers must follow industry-standard formatting of all manuscript pages and file names (format template will be provided).

PROBLEM RESOLUTION: if you have a problem, with the class, the instructor, or a paricipant, it is best to communicate with the mentor as soon as possible, rather than let things go. We should adopt this principle, which is true for reviewing peer work as well as cultivating a healty working community of creatives: when you present a problem, suggest a solution, so we grow beyond complaint to better harmony.

FOSTERING CLASS COMMUNITY: to cultivate an environment that is both supportive and demanding, all participants should focus written and spoken comments on what best helps their peers acheive their shared goals in constructive ways. Argumenation (not arguments) and critical disagreements on how we respond to a work is encouraged. Things that will not be tolerated: 1) on the page or in discussion, language or actions that are combative, or culturally or socially distracting without the benefit of helping the whole of the group or an individual, 2) grandstanding to show one's status/intelligence, 3) belittling others or their work, 4) over-praising work that avoids constructive, even demanding, critique, 5) minimal or no participation in discussion or in commentintg on peer work.



William Henry Lewis

William Henry Lewis has published fiction, poetry, and non-fiction in many publications, including The Washington Post, O Magazine, Higher Issues In Education, Colorado Review, New Letters, African-American Review, Blackbird, Callaloo, Kenyon Review, Ploughshares, Swing, and BOMB. His work has featured in conjunction with exhibitions at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn and the Baltimore Museum of Art, and his stories have been reprinted in several anthologies, domestic and abroad. His work has been honored by the Hurston/Wright Foundation, the American Library Association, Fellowship of Southern Writers, National Endowment for the Arts, Best American Short Stories, and as finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Prize.

He is the author of two books of stories, In the Arms of Our Elders (Carolina Wren Press; three printings), and I Got Somebody in Staunton (HarperCollins; two printings), which was listed among Kirkus Reviews Best Books of 2005, and selected as the city of Richmond's Go Read book for 2006.

His work has been praised by David Eggers, Nikki Giovanni, Peter Matthiessen, Marita Golden, Edward P. Jones, and has been acclaimed by The New York Times, Entertainment Weekly, TimeOut, and The Washington Post. The Los Angeles Times Book Review praised his fiction as "beautifully written and carefully crafted," while the Boston Globe noted his work as "moving, but unsentimental, these are stories of hard-won wisdom, potent intelligence, and compassion for the cadence of everyday life, establishing Lewis as a writer to be appreciated and admired."

Refund Schedule & Policies

If you need to cancel your spot in the cohort for any reason, the following refund schedule applies:

- More than three weeks before start date: A cancellation fee of 10% of the total program cost applies.
- Less than three weeks before start date: 15% cancellation fee applies.
- Less than one week before start date: 25% cancellation fee applies.
- 48 hours or less before class start: 50% refund is available.
- No refunds after the second session of your cohort meeting. There is no prorated tuition for anyone unable to attend any of the online sessions, related events, the final reading, any of the one-on-one sessions, or for missed class sessions.

PLEASE NOTE: It is best to register early to help our teaching artists prepare and ensure the class does not get cancelled. Classes that do not meet a minimum enrollment may be canceled a minimum of 2 business days prior to the first class meeting with full refunds for all registrants.

Refunds: We are unable to consider refunds or credits if the experience was not to your liking, although we always appreciate thoughtful critical feedback in an effort to improve our offerings. There are no refunds or prorated tuition available for missed sessions. Visiting guests subject to change depending on availaibility and schedule.

The Porch reserves the right to refuse or terminate registration or participation of anyone disruptive to the class environment or disrespectful of the teaching artist, fellow students, or undermines an equitable learning environment for all.

Apply for
Tuition Assistance

Porch Year Merit Award

We are able to offer 1 Merit Award seat in each cohort, pending that each cohort meets enrollment viability. If tuition is a barrier for you and you identify as someone from a low-income, rural, or marginalized background, we encourage you to apply. In the Porch Year Merit Award Application Form, answer the narrative questions about community, need, financial status, and project.

Application Period:

Due December 9

Finalists notified by December 31, 2026

Apply Here