



## Friday Schedule

Welcome  
Ballroom  
8:30 AM

Breakout #1  
9:00 – 9:50

**Charlie Holmberg**  
**The Autopsy of Publishing**

**Red Mountain 1**

---

There's a lot about the ever-changing world of publishing that's oddly hush-hush, but it's time to rip it open for all our eyes to see. Want a healthy dose of the truth behind fiction publishing? This class covers the whole shebang, from writing a story, to querying, to finding an agent, to conquering edits, to debuting, and beyond. It also covers social media conduct and the reality of publishing as a full-time career.

**Frank Cole**  
**Kickin' the Trash out of Your First Chapter**

**Red Mountain 2**

---

If your goal is to hook an agent or an editor with your manuscript, then a polished first chapter is the most critical! Kick out the trash, man! This class will break down the basics needed to do just that - through dialogue, pacing, and voice. You've got one shot, do not miss your chance to blow!

**Agent & Editor Panel**  
**Questions and Answers with Editors and Agents**

**Red Mountain 3**

---

How much do I personalize a query letter? When should I give up on a book? What's the best way to make a good impression on an industry professional? Whatever your question is, get it answered by our

visiting agents and editors.

**Julianne Donaldson**  
**Show and Tell (Three hours)**

**Palo Verde**

---

You've probably heard the writing advice, "Show, don't tell." But good writers use both showing and telling to bring their stories to life. In this class you'll learn the art of showing by writing sensory-rich details and incorporating imagery in your scenes. You'll also learn which parts of your story should be told and which should be shown. Come ready for hands-on learning! You're sure to have your creative muscles stretched as we work together on writing exercises and learn from group sharing.

\*Preregistration required\*

**Breakout #2**  
**10:00 – 10:50**

**Michelle Pennington**  
**How To Dominate on Kindle Vella**

**Red Mountain 1**

---

Kindle Vella is a new frontier on the publishing landscape, giving authors the opportunity to write for a growing, hungry audience. Learn how to write compelling episodic fiction that keeps readers spending their tokens, how to gain Likes, Follows, and Faves to increased visibility, and how to build it into your publishing schedule to leverage the power of another revenue stream.

**Kristy S. Gilbert**  
**Writing Distinct Dialogue for Each Character**

**Red Mountain 2**

---

Characters with distinct voices make for a rich and varied cast, but how do you get everyone to sound different when their voices are all variations of YOUR voice? This class picks apart the dialogue of the TV show *The Good Place* to show you how to use vocabulary, diction, dialect, attitude, character perspective, and more. You'll leave with a wealth of tools to craft unique dialogue for each important character.

**Darci Cole**  
**A Study of Series**

**Red Mountain 3**

---

Do you want to write a series? This class will examine and discuss the modern speculative fiction series and how it has evolved over time. (Also making note of how other genres use series.) Using popular examples from literature and film, we'll look at the spectrum of ways these series are organized and structured. What worked for them, what didn't, what is necessary to keep in our own work, and what boundaries we can push to make things our own. If there's time, we'll brainstorm a series outline of our own.

**Julianne Donaldson**  
**Show and Tell (Three hours)**

**Palo Verde**

---

Continued.

**Breakout #3**  
**11:00 – 11:50 AM**

**Ashley Gebert**  
**Edit Like You Mean It**

**Red Mountain 1**

---

Every publisher, agent, and editor wants each manuscript you submit to be your best work, and a huge part of "best" is having a clean manuscript with as few errors as possible. In this class, we'll cover which errors could affect acceptance, how to clean up those errors, and how to self-edit in the most efficient

way.

**Jessica Guernsey**

**Red Mountain 2**

**The Short Sale: Making Money with Short Stories**

---

You've written a short story! But now what? Don't let that story just sit on your computer rent-free! Publishers are looking for good short stories and will pay for them. (No query letters or agents required.) However, there are tricks to learn, cover letters to perfect, resources to discover, guidelines to follow, and red flags to avoid. Learn the ins and outs of the professional short story world to get those stories on their way to being published and making you money.

**Camille Fairbanks**

**Red Mountain 3**

**The Right to Write: Give Yourself Permission to Write . . . for Real!**

---

If you haven't struggled to justify your writing time have you ever really been a writer? Imposter syndrome and overpacked schedules are just some of the myriad hurdles that keep us from creating, but it doesn't have to be this way.

Take a deep dive into five paradigm-shifting tips from The Right to Write, Julia Cameron's masterclass on the creative life, and come away with renewed inspiration to sit at the desk—and write! Carefully designed by an imposter for other imposters (or anyone who's just plain scared), this class will teach you how to take the leap of faith that all writers must eventually face, and give yourself permission to write once and for all.

**Julianne Donaldson**

**Palo Verde**

**Show and Tell (Three hours)**

---

Continued.

**Lunch  
Ballroom  
12:00 PM – 12:50**

**Breakout #4  
1:00 PM – 1:50**

**Kelly Oram**

**Red Mountain 1**

**Elements of a great story**

---

In this class we will learn and explore the 7 basic elements of a story—characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, point of view, and theme. What are they and why do we need them?

**Anika Arrington**

**Red Mountain 2**

**The Writer's Workout: Using Writing Exercises to Build Your Creative Muscles**

---

Writing exercises have been used by creatives and academics alike to jump start the brain and get the creative juices flowing. They can even have a place in the professional's process. Come find out how daily journaling, flash fiction, and other small scale calisthenics can enhance your skills and hone your craft.

**Annette Lyon**

**Red Mountain 3**

**Instagram Tools and Hacks: How to Make the Most of the Site, for FREE**

---

More and more readers are gathering on Instagram and following both authors and book reviewers in droves. Learn how to use the app to gain followers, market your books, and even how to create memes inside it without any other software or apps. Best of all, you'll learn how to do all of it without it sucking up your writing time.

**Victorine Lieske**  
**Marketing as an Indie Author (Two hours)**

**Palo Verde**

---

In this intensive class, we will dive deep into what marketing looks like for an indie author. We will discuss how marketing differs depending on what you're writing, how to know where to spend your ad dollars, and how to know when spending money isn't getting you anywhere. We'll take a look at audiences, branding, and platforms. We'll talk about Amazon Ads, Facebook Ads, and BookBub ads. I'll also talk about what to do if book sales have stalled. And if you're overwhelmed by marketing, don't worry, this class will take you step by step through what to do to get your marketing mojo going.

\*Preregistration Required\*

**Breakout #5**  
**2:00 PM – 2:50**

**Clarissa Kae**  
**Slay the Synopsis Workshop**

**Red Mountain 1**

---

Tackle the dreaded synopsis in this step-by-step workshop. Drawing on her years as the Synopsis Queen for Writer's Digest, Clarissa will walk attendees through the ideal synopsis before breaking the class into small groups for more in depth instruction.

**Ellie Whitney**  
**Simple Ways to Improve Prose**

**Red Mountain 2**

---

After ten years of teaching English and an additional five as a writing tutor and freelance editor, I've found commonalities of effective prose as well as commonalities of ineffective prose. Learn simple ways to improve your skills: how to avoid boring and/or incorrect sentence structures, find and rework misplaced modifiers, recognize and get those characters' independently behaving body parts under control, turn nebulous words specific, enhance figurative language, and match diction with character, mood, and scene. If some of these grammatical terms belong to ghosts of English classes past, this class may help you eliminate these bad boys of ineffective prose, so they don't inadvertently haunt your writing.

**Shauntel Simper**  
**Mr. Darcy is Autistic: Neurodivergence and Mental Illness in Media**

**Red Mountain 3**

---

Mr Darcy is coded as autistic, but he's far from the only example of neurodivergence in popular media. Anakin Skywalker is the poster child for untreated BPD and c-PTSD, but when is it problematic to make your villains mentally ill? What is the difference between mental illness and neurodivergence anyway? What are some bad tropes to avoid? And how do you, as the storyteller, write an authentically neurodivergent or mentally ill character? The call for diversity in publishing has never been louder, so come learn how to answer the call with grace.

**Victorine Lieske**  
**Marketing as an Indie Author (Two hours)**

**Palo Verde**

---

Continued.

**Snack Break**  
**3:00 PM**

**Breakout #6**  
**3:30 PM – 4:20**

**Rebecca Connolly**  
**Chemistry and Desire and Steam, Oh My!**

**Red Mountain 1**

---

They say a watched pot never boils, but what about a couple? They're bound to at least simmer! From holding hands to midnight makeouts, longing looks to killer kisses, we'll tackle it all. How much heat is too much heat? What is clean and sweet, and what is not? Can there be ANY steam with the sweet? Let's discuss that intangible, magical, blush inducing stuff we don't really talk about and make our romances sizzle!

**Janette Rallison**

**Red Mountain 2**

**Scene Structure—what it takes to make your writing work all novel long.**

---

A successful book needs more than just a good plot. Your story needs to work on a micro-level too. Come learn how to avoid common pitfalls such as sagging middles, unclear reactions, and low conflict. Janette will be drawing on Jack Bickham's acclaimed book Scene and Sequel to teach these vital writing principles.

**Dennis Gaunt**

**Red Mountain 3**

**So You've Decided To Quit**

---

Let's face it: we've all thought about quitting writing before. We're frustrated, we're burnt out, and this stupid story just isn't cooperating. Or, maybe we've been at this writing thing for a while, and we feel like a failure because we're not published yet. Or, we've got a bad case of Impostor Syndrome. Or maybe it's all those things and more. You're not alone. We've all been there. Before you tear up your manuscript and set fire to your computer, come to this class, and let's have a little talk. Let's see if we can figure out what "success" really looks like for you individually. Let's change our perspective so that we can see where we've been, where we are now, and where we can go from here. Let's discover the power of quitting the right things together.

**Emily Huey**

**Palo Verde**

**The Paradox of the Query**

---

Querying can feel impossible. There's so many rules to follow that your query can end up sounding robotic, yet at the same time you're supposed to somehow also stand out in an agent's mountainous slush pile. In this class we'll navigate the Paradox of the Query. We'll go through a checklist of bite-sized, doable tasks that will make your query sing... while also showing the agent that you're capable of following all their instructions. We'll finish up with (gentle and friendly!) live edits of volunteers' sample queries.

**Breakout #7**  
**4:30 PM – 5:20**

XXX  
XXX  
XXX

**Red Mountain 1**

**Erin Olds**

**Red Mountain 2**

**The Lies Characters Believe**

---

Whether you're writing a character- or plot-driven novel, we all want the same thing: for our readers to love our characters. But how do we write lovable characters that are still flawed? How do we make sure that their character arc is resonant and that they actually grow? Enter the misbelief.

Based in psychology, we'll dig in to characters, what makes them tick, and how to identify a compelling misbelief in your main character. (Fair warning--you might realize some of your own misbeliefs, too.)

**Tracy Daley**

**Red Mountain 3**

**For the Love: The Writer's Rollercoaster Journey and What Fulfills our Passion and Purpose**

---

From the first time a writer dips their toe into the swells of a story to the hundredth battering wave of rejections, writers are plagued by the question, “Should I keep writing?” This class will explore the parts of us that make us writers, the moments that make us want to quit, and the passion that pushes us past the doubt. We’ll talk about building a life raft that allows us to ride the ups and downs of the writing reality with hands in the air and joy in our hearts.

**Michelle Wilson**  
**Making Canva Work for You**

**Palo Verde**

---

Are you creating your own graphics for newsletters, social media posts, etc.? Ever use Canva.com? Michelle Wilson loves it and will show you how to navigate Canva.com—the free and upgraded version—including the importance of creating a cohesive brand, a brand palette, logos, and graphics. Bring your laptops and be ready to create in this interactive workshop.

**Closing Remarks**  
**Beginning of Book Contest Results**  
**Ballroom**  
**5:30 PM**

## Saturday Schedule

Welcome  
Ballroom  
9:00

### Breakout #8 10:00 AM – 10:50

**Bridget Smith**

#### **How an Agent Reads a Query**

---

Agents read hundreds of queries every month. What do they look for? How can you make yours stand out – the right way? Agent Bridget Smith breaks down how to write an effective query that gets an agent's attention.

**Red Mountain 1**

**James Blasingame**

#### **Maybe I Don't Feel Like Growing Up!:**

#### **Writing for Young Adults with Stories and Characters That Resonate with Them**

---

How can you write a book that teen readers will really get into? How can you create narration that puts them in the shoes of the main character? Stephenie Meyer can do it, Laurie Halse Anderson can do it, John Green can do it, and so can you. Roll back the clock to your inner teenager and get in touch with your fifteen-year-old self again. Take a vacation from work, mortgages, and acting responsibly for one workshop session and start to construct a story with the problems teens care about most, and the characters that feel real to them. However, remember to appropriate an authentic adolescent voice! Not to worry, that voice is still with you, it's just been buried for a while. Feel free to return to adulthood after the session (or not).

**Red Mountain 2**

**Dennis Gaunt**

#### **Pixar's Rules of Storytelling**

---

From Toy Story to Finding Nemo to Luca, Pixar Studios has consistently made some of the best animated films of all time, and are pioneers in the field of computer animation. But as impressive and beautiful as Pixar films are to look at, what makes them resonate and stick with us for years afterwards are the stories. These are stories--filled with great characters, amazing world building, and tons of heart--don't happen by accident. In fact, Pixar has a list of 22 Rules of Storytelling that they adhere to. Using examples from Pixar films, this class will review many of these rules, and focus on some of the most important and applicable for writers of any genre, such as the "Story Spine" structure; how to strengthen your story through simplifying; overcoming obstacles; raising the stakes; and finding the heart of your story.

**Red Mountain 3**

**Liz Wiseman and Ellie Whitney**

**Palo Verde**

**Getting to the Truth: How to Seek (and handle) the Feedback Most Writers Avoid (Two hours)**

---

We know we need feedback on our writing and even say we want people's honest opinion, but the reality is, most of the time we don't actually want to hear the truth. We just want praise and encouragement. To accomplish this subconscious goal, we have sophisticated psychological mechanisms to prevent us from hearing the very feedback we need most. In this workshop, learn how to get to the truth, both in a way that others feel safe enough to share that truth with us and in a way that we can constructively receive. \*Preregistration Required\*

**Breakout #9**

**11:00 AM – 11:50**

**Wendy Jessen**

**Red Mountain 1**

**Writing Sensitive Topics for Fiction and Nonfiction: Trauma, Vulnerability, and Healing**

---

Writing about life is messy, especially when it involves trauma. It can be difficult to write about serious topics while being sensitive and vulnerable. Whether you're writing characters who have been impacted by trauma or you are the main character in your memoir, this class will look at what types of life events can cause trauma, how trauma affects the brain and our actions, and how we and our characters might find healing and hope. This class will help you be brave in your own vulnerability and empowered with knowledge on how to get the words to come out right.

**Annette Lyon**

**Red Mountain 2**

**Tropes: They're Bad Except When They're Great.**

---

Every genre has tropes for a reason—they hit a nerve that audiences want. The modern writer is caught between a rock and a hard place: avoid tropes and risk losing readers, or use tropes and make reader bored with a cliché. In this class, we'll look at WHY tropes became tropes. Then, armed with that information, we'll discuss ways to turn a number of tired tropes into literary gems. In the end, you'll be giving readers what they demand from your genre but in a fresh, unexpected way.

**Marlene Stringer**

**Red Mountain 3**

**Making Your Writing Work Harder for You: Exploiting Subrights**

---

If you have dipped your toes into the pool of self-publishing, don't leave money on the table that could be in your pocket.

Selling sub-rights is a great way to create additional income streams for indie authors.

This presentation is geared towards indie authors who have self-published their books and established themselves as a brand. We'll talk about selling sub-rights, and why and how to obtain a sub-rights agent.

**Liz Wiseman and Ellie Whitney**

**Palo Verde**

**Getting to the Truth: How to Seek (and handle) the Feedback Most Writers Avoid (Two hours)**

---

Continued.

**Lunch**

**Ballroom**

**12:00 PM – 12:50 PM**

**Breakout #10**

**1:00 PM – 1:50 PM**

**Holly West**

**Red Mountain 1**

**Stakes: Not Just for Slaying Vampires**

---

Keep readers invested in your story, by showing them why they should care.

**Kami Hancock**

**Red Mountain 2**

**Writing Realistic Weapons and Weapon Combat**

---

How do you ensure your combat scenes are realistic if you love action-packed stories but have limited or no experience with real weapons? In this class taught by an editor with a second-degree black belt, come learn about some of the common types of weapons, how they move, and what's realistic and what's not in combat scenes. By avoiding common errors such as spatial mistakes or incongruous action, you can take your scenes from gimmicky, flashy, and inaccurate to authentic, believable, and gripping.

**Ashley Gebert**

**Red Mountain 3**

**Keeping Promises**

---

In an author-reader relationship, one of the most important elements is honesty. More specifically, the author should give the reader everything they promised to give in the story, nothing less. When an author fails to keep promises, the reader can feel confused, bored, or even cheated. In this class, we'll discuss different promises you make (sometimes unwittingly) as an author and how to fulfill those promises in satisfying ways.

**J. Scott Savage**

**Palo Verde**

**Four Part Pacing (Three Hours)**

---

The three most common issues I see when I talk to writers who are struggling with a story are: Main message, through-line, and pacing. Interestingly, these three issues are almost always tied to one another. If you know what your character will learn and how they will change in the course of the story (the heart of your story), it's much easier to figure out what will make them struggle earlier on, and how they will accomplish their objective at the end (the through-line.) Once you know those, you can lay out the milestones to take them from start to finish, and especially how to keep the middle from sagging. In this class, we will focus on each of the four parts of your story and how four-part pacing can help you outline, draft, and edit your story to make it more powerful and keep the story tight. We will combine lessons with hands-on examples, so bring your toughest story questions to discuss. \*Preregistration Required\*

**Breakout #11**

**2:00 PM – 2:50 PM**

**Melinda Carroll**

**Red Mountain 1**

**The Dark Night of the Soul: Why Your Characters Need to Fail Miserably For Their Own Good**

---

All successful authors are a bit sadistic at heart. They know that conflict drives any good story, no matter what genre, and there's no better way to create conflict than making our characters suffer. This class will cover what that means for your characters, and how to push them to grow and change in ways that will resonate with readers. We will cover how to plot the micro conflicts that must happen in every scene, along with the larger plot points that lead your characters through their darkest nights to ultimately defeat the antagonist."

**Emily Huey**

**Red Mountain 2**

**Path to Chair**

---

There's a famous bit of writerly advice: "Butt in chair." It sounds so simple! Yet it can feel impossible to sit down, place our fingers on the keyboard, and simply force ourselves to write. "Butt" there's hope! In this class, we'll discuss author James Clear's small, simple, "atomic" techniques to make the journey to the chair doable and—better yet!—habitual.

**Stephanie Black**  
**You Wrote It! Well Done! Time to Fix It.**

**Red Mountain 3**

---

"Your first draft is absolutely perfect!"—said no agent or editor ever. To transform your manuscript from first draft to submission-ready novel, you need to put in the challenging yet satisfying work of revision. In this class we'll discuss ways to take your novel from coal-level to diamond-level as we address revision from a broad content perspective all the way down to word-by-word editing. Come learn how much fun it is to take something good (your story) and watch it get better and better until it's polished and sparkling.

---

**J. Scott Savage**  
**Four Part Pacing (Three Hours)**

**Palo Verde**

---

Continued.

**Breakout #12**  
**3:00 PM – 3:50 PM**

**Janette Rallison**  
**Traditional publishing-vs-Indie Publishing. Which route is right for you?**

**Red Mountain 1**

---

Authors have so many choices now when it comes to publishing. Is it better to try and go the traditional route or is it better to take things into your own hands and self published your novel? Janette will discuss the pros and cons of both options. She'll cover contracts pitfalls from traditional publishers and the big mistakes you don't want to make if you're going indie, and much more

**Lisa Mangum**  
**A Fistful of Commas: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Punctuation**

**Red Mountain 2**

---

You've written your book, and it's perfect! Except...are you SURE that comma goes there? Would a semicolon be better? And can you ever have "too many em dashes"? Do titles need quotation marks, or maybe italics? If you have ever felt pummeled by pilcrows, held captive by commas, or haunted by hyphens, this class will help you make sense of those pesky dots and dashes and teach you to put punctuation in its place—the RIGHT place.

**Shauntel Simper**  
**The Forbidden Secrets of Tiktok**

**Red Mountain 3**

---

It's a timeless tale: a book goes viral on Tiktok and all that author's dreams come true. Yet despite the potential for limitless (and free!) marketing, many authors shy away from it. What is the secret to Tiktok humor? What are some common mistakes authors are making? What genres do best on Booktok? Come learn the basics of Tiktok and get tips to help your book go viral on the biggest social media platform of them all. If you rolled your eyes at the title, this class may be for you.

---

**J. Scott Savage**  
**Four Part Pacing (Three Hours)**

**Palo Verde**

---

Continued.

**Snack & Book signing**  
**4:00 PM**

**Breakout #13**  
**4:30 PM – 5:20 PM**

**Julianne Donaldson and Michelle Wilson**  
**Healing Through Writing**

**Red Mountain 1**

---

So often we think of our writing as a way to share a message, entertainment, hope, love, and even

healing to others. And so often, getting that message out can be a painful process. Deadlines, expectations, fears, fraud syndrome all can take a toll on us. It's easy to lose the magic writing can have on US—the healing for us that can come through our writing. Join Michelle Wilson and Julianne Donaldson as they discuss how we can recognize and access writing as a gift for healing ourselves.

**Michelle Pennington**  
**Self-edit Like an Indie Pro**

**Red Mountain 2**

---

For an indie author, the pressure to have a well-crafted novel is all on your shoulders, and time is of the essence. Hiring professional editors is a must, but the quality of the product you send them determines how good the final product will be. In this class, you'll learn the editing process of a full-time indie author that was developed while writing and publishing forty novels and novellas, as well as unique tips and tricks you can add to your own editing process.

**Pitch Perfect**  
**Adam Berg and Clarissa Kae**

**Red Mountain 3**

---

Join our Pitch Perfect Game Show, hosted by Adam Berg & Clarissa Kae

**Jessica Guernsey**  
**Let's Get SPOOC-y: Testing Your Novel's Premise**

**Palo Verde**

---

Ever get a good chunk of the way into a novel only to realize that your plot is weak? Your antagonist is cardboard? Or that your climax lacks punch? Use Deborah Chester's SPOOC to test your premise before you get too far into the word count. Save yourself the heartache and struggle of a weak premise by combining the Setting, Protagonist, Objectives, Obstacles, and Climax into a two-sentence power punch to make your story strong before you start, and help you stay on track until The End. And, if you do this well enough, it can serve as your elevator pitch and query letter booster.

**Closing Remarks & Keynote by Charlie Holmberg**  
**Ballroom**  
**5:30 PM**