Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics
Low-Residency MFA Creative Writing FAQ

• **How long are the residencies? When do they occur?**
  - The three-day fall and spring residencies occur in mid-September and mid-February, respectively. The eight-day summer residencies occur the first week of the Summer Writing Program, typically mid-June, and can be extended an additional two weeks.

• **If I extend my summer residency, does it count toward my degree requirements?**
  - Yes. If you extend your summer residency, then you do not have to take the summer mentorship course.

• **If I extend my summer, how does that affect the cost?**
  - There is no effect on the cost of the program itself. However, if you are not local, you will have to consider the costs of extending your stay in Boulder.

• **What can I expect from my mentor each semester?**
  - The mentor begins the semester by providing you with a schedule of assignments and a reading list. During the first residency, you will meet with your mentor and cohort and develop an individualized plan based on your previous reading and writing. After you have submitted work, the mentor will respond with a four-page (12 pages over the course the semester) holistic critique, including suggestions for new and revised work, marginalia, writing experiments, and suggestions for further reading. Your mentor will also respond in detail to the final creative portfolio, which is submitted at the end of the semester.

• **How many credits is each course? How many courses do I take each semester?**
  - In the spring and fall, you take one six-credit mentorship course and attend one one-credit residency per semester. In the summer, you take one four-credit mentorship course and attend one two-credit residency. You may extend your summer residency to three weeks in lieu of the four-credit mentorship course (for a total of six credits).
• **What are the packets? How are the credits determined?**
  o Packets consist of 20–30 double-spaced pages of new creative work, a bibliography and critical analysis, a contemplative reflection, and a letter to the mentor. Six-credit courses require three packets and a final portfolio of creative work, while the four-credit summer courses require two packets and a final portfolio.

• **How long is a typical reading list/bibliography?**
  o You read 10–12 books each semester.

• **How many low-residency students are there?**
  o Typically, there are 12–15 low-res students in each cohort with an approximate 5:1 student-faculty ratio.

• **I’m interested in a writing community? How does your program foster that?**
  o While the program aims to teach you skills vital to the writer’s life, such as devising goals for your reading and writing and creating strategies for achieving your artistic vision, we know that these skills do not develop in a vacuum. Just as community offers a writer support and opportunities for networking, it is also vital to the writer’s sense of what is artistically possible. The MFA in Creative Writing fosters a writing community through the three yearly residencies, where students attend workshops, events, and meals with one another and their mentors. This camaraderie is extended into the mentorships where students go online to share their creative work, discuss their revision processes, and reflect on their artistic visions. Finally, besides your mentor, your Graduate Academic Advisor and Program Coordinator are available to connect you to the University and to offer you to practical support you need on this journey.

• **What is poetics? What are the differences between the MFA in Creative Writing (low-residency) and the MFA in Creative Writing and Poetics (residency)?**
  o Poetics refers to a contemplative and theoretical framework for writing in any genre, creating a discourse between aesthetic praxis and critical inquiry. The study of poetics prepares students to publish in scholarly journals and for a career in academia. While students do substantial critical writing, the low-residency MFA emphasizes the development of your creative work and prepares you to publish a full-length manuscript: your MFA creative thesis.

• **What does an MFA creative thesis entail? How long are they? What genres are available?**
  o The MFA in Creative Writing is an open-genre curriculum, and students are encouraged to write across genres, enabling them to investigate a personal, intensely original writing process and style. The creative thesis is a book-length manuscript: Poetry manuscripts are 60+ pages, prose manuscripts are 90+ pages, and cross-genre work is 85+ pages.
• **How long do I have to write my Creative Thesis?**
  o The final spring semester, four months, will be spent on the Creative Thesis, which comprises the best work written during enrollment in the program. While you may generate some new work, you’ll spend the majority of the time revising and arranging previously-written work into a publishable manuscript.

• **What happens with my manuscript once it’s finished?**
  o In the final summer residency, you and other graduating students will read or perform your work in an event open to your peers and the public.

• **Do you help me to publish my manuscript? What kind of professional development is provided?**
  o In the final summer mentorship course, you will further your professional development by preparing to submit your creative manuscript for publication, by generating an online professional dossier to represent yourself and your work, and by working with a mentor to identify short- and long-term professional and creative goals, such as submitting to literary journals, writing book reviews, publishing your critical essay, composing a professional cover letter, and applying to internships or residencies.

• **How many mentors are available? Who will I be working with during the program?**
  o Each semester, there will be two–three mentors available for students. Mentors are accomplished writers and skilled instructors as well as JKS core faculty.

• **Do I have the same mentor for the duration of the program?**
  o When possible, you are encouraged to work with a different mentor each semester, so this could mean that you work with up to 6 mentors.

• **Who are the guest writers? How are they selected? What do they do?**
  o The guest writers are award-winning innovative writers who give a lecture and a reading as well as teach a studio writing course during the fall and spring residencies. During the Summer Writing Program, in addition to attending panels and readings by the guest writers, you also take an intensive weeklong workshop with them.