

Mentorship Program of the International Society for the Study of Narrative A Few Recommendations for Mentees

The mentorship program seeks to connect graduate students, early career researchers and scholars who hold short-term appointments with senior researchers in order to encourage forms of community, support, and professional opportunity and to promote the sharing and building of knowledge and skills, both for the mentee and the mentor. The idea for this was developed by members of the Graduate Student and Contingent Faculty Caucus, with the advice and support of the committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

General Information

Mentors and mentees will be asked to meet one-on-one digitally or, if possible, in person, at least two times in 2024 (we recommend not exceeding 50 minutes per meeting). These are the minimum requirements of the program. Beyond these requirements each pair will, of course, be free to decide how they want to proceed and whether you both have time for more frequent meetings and written exchanges.

While the ISSN conference may offer a great opportunity for a first meeting if both mentor and mentee attend, mentors and mentees are not required to participate in the annual conference of the Society to take part in the program. However, being a member of the International Society for the Study of Narrative is a prerequisite for taking part in the mentorship program. If you are not a member yet, you can find all the information on how to join the society here: <https://www.thenarrativesociety.org/become-a-member>

Our survey has shown that in the few cases where the mentor-mentee relationships did not go entirely smoothly, this was mainly because of issues with responsiveness. We ask that both mentors and mentees respond to each other's messages in a timely manner (no more than two weeks) and give each other a brief heads-up if they feel they need to draw back from the exchange (we all know that sometimes commitments can stack up in unforeseen ways). The mentoring program cannot replace a formal supervisory relationship, so please do not expect your mentor to take on responsibilities normally associated with the role of a primary academic advisor.

A Few Ideas on How to Get Your Mentorship Started

First contact

Your mentor has also been informed about the pairings and will contact you by email. In your response, give a short description of your research interests and your reasons for taking part in the program. If the mentor has not done it already in their first email, suggest a few dates and times for the first meeting. We also recommend you do a little bit of research about your mentor's career and research interests.

Before the meeting, prepare a few questions and a few ideas on what you are mainly looking for in this mentorship program. The program should last until December – don't forget to take this time frame into account. In the survey, you have already indicated what kinds of support you are looking for – it may be worth thinking of this a bit more in-depth so that you can clearly articulate your preferences to your mentor:

- Instrumental: advice on building disciplinary competency in narrative, navigating job or grant applications, publishing an article or monograph, etc.
- Psychosocial: encouragement and support, including advice on work-life balance and/or connection of social identity to the discipline and community
- Networking: advice on developing professional contacts, connections to potential collaborators, future referees, etc.

As you consider your expectations for your interactions, please be mindful of the limited time and energy your mentor may have available to invest in this program. Also be mindful of the dynamic inherent in mentor/mentee relationships and work to establish mutual respect and trust by maintaining professional boundaries.

First meeting

Since the meeting will most likely take place online, it may be wise to limit it to a 50-minute call to avoid “zoom fatigue”. The aims of the first meeting are to get to know your mentor and to define together what areas you want to focus during the mentorship period, and what concrete activities this might entail.

During the meeting, try to get better acquainted with your mentor. For example, you can ask them questions about their career, their research interest, etc. Sort out schedules and clarify expectations: ask when you will meet again and if it is okay for you to contact your mentor by email in-between meetings. Discuss what you and your mentor should do next.

We suggest that after the meeting, you send an email to your mentor summing up the way of proceeding that you have agreed upon, just to make sure that you are both on the same page.

We hope that these are helpful suggestions. We wish you a very rewarding experience and are looking forward to hearing about it once during the summer for a midpoint check-in (we will contact you to make sure that everything is going well) and in December. In the meantime, if you have any comments or questions, please don't hesitate to contact us!

The Mentorship Program committee,
Dorothee Birke, Emma K. McNamara, Ella Mingazova, Daniel Newman, and Victoria Pöhls