

Sam Ford, S.M. B.A. English, Writing, 2005

By Madelyn Chambers

Director of Cultural Intelligence, Tiller Press

“Always be thinking about where you want to head, but don’t be too narrow in how you think about it.”



Sam Ford graduated from Western Kentucky University in 2005 with bachelor’s degrees in Writing, Journalism, Communications Studies, and Mass Communications, with a minor in Film Studies. He later graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2007 with a master’s degree in [Comparative Media Studies](#). Ford is currently the Director of Cultural Intelligence for [Tiller Press](#), a new imprint from [Simon & Schuster](#).

Ford knew he wanted to study Journalism, so he chose WKU for the acclaimed School of Journalism and Broadcasting. He took an honors English class his first semester, which showed him how valuable adding an English major could be. “For me, English would provide a chance to consider the craft of writing beyond general news style and the range of opportunities to make a living through writing.”

Ford appreciates the analytical and creative writing skills he gained through his WKU English professors. He especially values Dr. Ted Hovet’s film and English courses. “Dr. Hovet played a significant role in my decision to go to graduate school, in mentoring me through the honors thesis process, in taking my work to my first national conference to present, and in making the connection between what I learned in English and Film Studies and my larger interest in studying popular culture.” Ford also credits Dr. Karen Schneider’s encouragement to join the English program and Dr. Dale Rigby’s encouragement to apply creative thinking to all forms of writing.

At MIT, Ford created the Convergence Culture Consortium research group. After graduating, he worked in communications consulting for MIT and [Peppercomm](#) and launched his own consultancy in 2017, collaborating with companies like Orb Media in Washington DC, and Lowe’s Hardware. Ford joined Simon & Schuster as Director of Cultural Intelligence in 2018 because it was “too interesting to turn down.”

As Director of Cultural Intelligence for Tiller Press, Ford is responsible for “overseeing cultural trends analysis and research efforts for our new enterprise.” Launched in April 2019, Tiller Press focuses on non-fiction, and it has 19 titles scheduled for release in 2019. Ford is enthusiastic about Simon and Schuster’s new venture. “It’s really exciting to look at a slate of projects that you know wouldn’t exist, at least in the way they have come to life, if your team hadn’t partnered with the authors to bring them into the world.”

In his limited free time, Ford enjoys exploring New York City with his children and introducing them to classic films and television. He also enriches his work with popular culture and media studies by consuming great television shows, professional wrestling, popular music, and great online journalism.

Ford recommends that English majors stay open-minded about where their careers could take them. “Think about what you uniquely have to offer and where your path is headed next. But don’t be overly prescriptive about where that path has to lead, or you will miss out on all the productive opportunities that might exist if you’re being mindful and looking around as you take the journey. In other words, travel on life’s journey mindfully.”

