CREATIVE WRITING (M.F.A.)

Master of Fine Arts. Major in Creative Writing.

The M.F.A. is the terminal degree for those wishing to teach creative writing at the college or university level; it is also among the credentials expected of those seeking employment in arts administration, editing, and related fields. The curriculum provides theoretical and practical training in fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and editing and publishing.

The program’s principle aim is to teach aspiring writers their craft and at the highest possible level. We gladly speak to students about publishing their work, or about teaching or editing, but our first concern is teaching and learning the craft of writing. While we encourage applicants to apply only in one genre, once they are admitted, we encourage them to “cross-pollinate”: we like to see poets working at narrative pacing in a fiction or nonfiction class, and we like to see the prose writers attentive to individual syllables in poetry. We encourage students to experiment and to push themselves in new directions. We also insist that they know where they fit in the continuum of writers, and that they understand and can speak with conviction of where they might place themselves in any of several literary traditions.

Of the minimum 54 credits required for the degree, at least 15 are to be taken in graduate-level literature (which may include ENGL 506); 15 in graduate-level creative writing courses; 2 in workshops taught by Distinguished Visiting Writers; 1 credit in Internship: FUGUE, (ENGL 598); 3 in a Techniques course (ENGL 581, ENGL 582, or ENGL 583); 9 elective credits; and 9 in thesis. A minimum of four semesters in residence is required.

The thesis will take the form of a collection of poetry, short stories, creative nonfiction, or novel, and will be prefaced by an introduction. Upon completion of the thesis in acceptable form, each student will take an oral examination designed to test the student’s ability to discuss articulately his or her creative process, intellectual and creative influences, chosen genre, aesthetic perspective, design, and intent.

Students who enter the program with advanced work in creative writing at the undergraduate level will ordinarily take only 500-level courses in English. Those who have not completed an advanced undergraduate course in one of the three major genres (fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction) will in addition to the above ordinarily take advanced undergraduate courses, as advised by the director of creative writing.

1. Students will analyze their own creative work and situate it within the literary traditions and conventions of their genre, and discuss how their work exemplifies, expands, or bridges those boundaries.
2. Students will present their creative work effectively during a public reading (the thesis defense) and in other optional reading environments.