Writing

The Writing program offers a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Writing in three genres — creative nonfiction, fiction and poetry. Applicants must apply to each genre separately and will be enrolled in only one. However, through themed craft courses, MFA students may take courses with faculty and students in other genres. The MFA in Writing is a two-year program.

The Writing program, ranked ninth in the country by Poets & Writers, is highly selective — we enroll 10 to 15 students each year. There is a low faculty to student ratio — writing courses are generally capped at 12. Students are generously funded, with all incoming students receiving full tuition scholarships plus University Fellowships. Our faculty includes Guggenheim Fellows, National Book Award finalists, and winners of the National Book Critics Circle Award. Graduates of our program have won the PEN/Hemingway Award and the Drue Heinz Literature Prize among other honors.

Each year our reading series brings a diverse group of poets, fiction writers, and nonfiction writers to the department. In addition, the Hurst Professor program brings in six distinguished visitors each year to present their newest work, lecture on the craft of writing, and work one-on-one with our MFA students. Edward P. Jones, Frank Bidart, Joy Williams, Jorie Graham, Aleksandar Hemon, Lucie Brock Broido, George Saunders, Louise Glöck, Kelly Link, C.D. Wright, Richard Powers, Claudia Rankine, Deborah Eisenberg, Paul Muldoon, Charles Baxter, Timothy Donnelly, and Lydia Davis are just some of our recent visiting Hurst Professors.

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Faculty

Professors
Mary Jo Bang (http://english.artsci.wustl.edu/mary_jo_bang)
MFA, Columbia University

Carl Phillips (http://english.artsci.wustl.edu/Carl_Phillips)
MA, Boston University

Associate Professors
Danielle Dutton (http://english.artsci.wustl.edu/danielle-dutton)
PhD, University of Denver

Edward McPherson (http://english.artsci.wustl.edu/Edward_Mcpherson)
MFA, University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Writers-in-Residence
Kathryn Davis (http://english.artsci.wustl.edu/kathryn_davis)
BA, Goddard University

Kathleen Finneran (http://english.artsci.wustl.edu/kathleen_finneran)
BA, Washington University

MFA, Bowling Green State University

Director of Creative Writing Program
David Schuman (http://english.artsci.wustl.edu/David_Schuman)
MFA, Washington University

Degree Requirements

Master of Fine Arts in Writing

The Writing program leads to the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Writing. It is a two-year program, requiring satisfactory completion of 42 semester hours, a thesis, and an oral examination dealing principally with the thesis.

Courses

Of the 42 credit units required, 24 consist of the graduate nonfiction, fiction, or poetry workshop taken every semester. The remainder are primarily literature and craft courses from the English department; however, in consultation with the director of the program, graduate-level courses from any department are acceptable as long as the student has the appropriate preparation and the permission of the instructor, and the course will enrich the student’s writing.

In the first year, students enroll for 24 units: the graduate workshop in their genre (6 units) plus two additional 3-unit courses each semester. In the second year, while teaching, students typically take a total of 18 units: the workshop each semester again (12 units), thesis hours (3 units), and an additional course.

Thesis

The required work for the MFA culminates in a thesis, which may take different forms but is usually a volume (or most of a volume) of poems, stories or essays, or a novel (or most of a novel), or a memoir or other long-form creative nonfiction (CNF) work (or most of one).

Oral Examination

Near the end of the second year, after the thesis has been submitted in final form, the department will schedule an oral examination, dealing principally with the thesis.