Creative Writing

University College offers a 16-unit Certificate in Creative Writing for those who want to explore in-depth and achieve significant mastery in the art of writing poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction.

Instructors are experienced professional writers, most of whom are associated with the Washington University Graduate Writing Program and the Department of English. All of the craft courses are taught on the workshop model with open discussion and detailed, constructive criticism of each student’s writing.

Phone: 314-935-5190
Email: english@wustl.edu
Website: https://ucollege.wustl.edu/programs/certificates/creative-writing

Requirements

Certificate in Creative Writing

Students may specialize in any one of the three genres: poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction. Each student will take five 3-credit, advanced-level (300 or higher) courses, including three courses devoted to mastering the craft of writing in the chosen specialty genre, one course primarily in reading and analysis of the literature in that genre, and one course in a second genre.

The student’s final course in the program will be taken for 4 credits, rather than the usual 3, and will include a 1-credit meta-commentary assignment. This assignment requires students to step back from the particular course and describe (in 1500 words) what they have learned about the differences between and similarities among the genres investigated and how these have affected their choice of genre. Students should look at the strategies they have chosen in their writing and explain why they chose them for a particular purpose. The purpose of this assignment is for students to show the skills that they have learned in the course of the certificate as they think about the genres they have examined, and how these skills govern their approach to creative writing.

Students with little previous experience in creative writing are encouraged to begin with a 200-level writing course or workshop as a foundation for the more advanced courses that will count toward the certificate.

Sample Courses

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<td>EComp 316</td>
<td>Poetry Writing</td>
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<td>EComp 317</td>
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Courses


U11 EComp 200 Composition Tutorial
A tutorial for students whose work in beginning composition indicates a need for continued practice in writing. If staffing permits, the tutorial may be taken as an elective by students who desire practice in writing. Prerequisite: EComp 101-102 or the equivalent and permission of the department. Must be taken Credit/No Credit. Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

U11 EComp 203 Critical and Researched Writing
This course teaches students to engage critically with scholarship, construct convincing arguments, and write persuasive research papers. We will study how other writers achieve these goals, then use a proven model of researched writing to write an argument and paper about a text of student’s own choosing that includes accurate use of primary and secondary sources. Concentrating on a single research project throughout the semester, attention will be given to revision and organization, library research strategies, academic citation conventions, and electronic search engines and sources. Prerequisite: U11-101 or its equivalent. Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 2031 Critical and Research Writing
This course teaches students to engage critically with scholarship, construct convincing arguments, and write persuasive research papers. We will study how other writers achieve these goals, then use a proven model of researched writing to write an argument and paper about a text of student’s own choosing that includes accurate use of primary and secondary sources. Concentrating on a single research project throughout the semester, attention will be given to revision and organization, library research strategies, academic citation conventions, and electronic search engines and sources. Prerequisite: U11-101 or its equivalent. Restricted to BJC employees only. Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 217 Fiction Workshop
This is a course on methods and techniques of writing fiction. No previous experience is required, but students should be seriously interested in developing their writing, and offering and receiving constructive criticism of original works. Students are urged to bring manuscripts to first meeting. Credit 1 unit.
U11 EComp 218 Nonfiction Writing Workshop
Analysis of and practice in writing creative nonfiction: essays, autobiography, travel, and nature writing. Categories vary each semester.
Credit 1 unit.

U11 EComp 225 Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry, Fiction, and Creative Nonfiction
An introduction to creative writing, with a focus on the genres of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Students will discuss examples of published work, practice writing in all three genres, and learn how to give and take constructive criticism.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 310 Genre Writing
This course is a creative writing workshop dedicated to genre fiction. With a primary focus on the contemporary genre story, the course will cover new and classic science fiction, fantasy, crime writing, and much more. Through a series of readings and writing workshops, we will discuss the craft of genre writing from the traditional to the contemporary, including: long-standing genre conventions, recent cross-genre trends, and the current role of genre fiction in the literary landscape. This course can count toward the major in English for day students.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 3120 Argumentation
This advanced writing course examines the strategies of argumentation, exploring such elements of argument as the enthymeme, the three appeals, claim types, and fallacies. Prerequisites: Writing 1 (L13 100) and junior standing. A note for students and advisers: When registering, refer to WebSTAC for updated information on section times and available seats.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 313 Nonfiction Seminar
This is an advanced seminar for writers of narrative fiction, including essays, memoirs, eyewitness or “guided” accounts (such as travelogues) and narrative reportage (such as profiles, biography, or true-crime). Students will present drafts of their nonfiction in a workshop setting. Craft exercises, determined by the group or individual needs, may include practice with observation, description, fact-finding, and storytelling. Discussions and readings will address issues such as form, "tangents," self-characterization, social and historical context, and the line between fact and fiction. The class will read contemporary nonfiction along with the authors descriptions of their information-gathering and writing processes. Prerequisite: at least one course in nonfiction writing, or one course in print journalism.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 314 Persuasive Writing
Methods of argumentation, ranging from those presented in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to those found in the editorial pages of today's newspapers. Emphasis on persuasion as a writing skill useful in fields such as law, journalism, business, and government.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 314A Topics in Composition: Writing and the Law
An advanced writing course focusing on selected topics related to writing. Topics to be chosen by department/instructor. See section description for details about specific class emphases. (Note: In some cases, this course may be cross-listed with other programs/departments and may satisfy the writing-intensive requirement.) Prerequisites: Writing 1 (L13 100) and junior standing.
Credit 3 units. Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

U11 EComp 315 Nonfiction: Reading and Writing the Memoir
This is a workshop for students interested in writing a memoir. We examine the narrative techniques that memoir writers use to craft stories based on life experience. Students gain practice in the form by completing a series of assigned short exercises and by writing two longer pieces that are read and discussed by the class. We also read several published memoirs chosen to illuminate various aspects of style and craft.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 3151 Nonfiction Writing: The Varieties of Nonfiction
In a workshop format, students will write and selectively revise, featuring critiques of student work and discussion of various forms of nonfiction literature. Readings include memoir, autobiography, personal essay, literary journalism, nature writing, and travel writing. Students will complete several short nonfiction pieces and a longer individualized final project that stresses personal viewpoint and voice.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 3153 Nonfiction Writing: The Varieties of Nonfiction
This advanced writing course examines the strategies of argumentation, exploring such elements of argument as the enthymeme, the three appeals, claim types, and fallacies. Prerequisites: Writing 1 (L13 100) and junior standing. A note for students and advisers: When registering, refer to WebSTAC for updated information on section times and available seats.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 316 Poetry Writing
This course is for students seriously committed to writing poetry. We will consider imagery, diction, rhythm, and form, chiefly with reference to works by class members.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 3161 Poetry Tutorial
Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

U11 EComp 317 Fiction Writing
This workshop is designed for students who want to explore and practice the art of fiction. We examine the work of major writers for structure and artistry. We draw two stories up from the well of imagination, and learn how to apply methods that make them rhetorically and logically sound as well as creative. Constructive criticism of student work and class discussion are emphasized. Prerequisite: freshman composition.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 3171 Long-Form Fiction Writing: The Short Novel and the Long Short Story
This course will explore the process of writing longer-form narratives, building on the knowledge of the craft and structure of the short story gained in Fiction Writing. We will introduce and practice strategies for plotting, researching, and developing story ideas into feasible long-term projects, rather than producing a finished full-length manuscript. We will read and analyze short novels and long short stories across multiple genres and styles. The diverse range of texts include novels by Michael Ondaatje,
Jenny Offill, James Baldwin, Anne Carson, and Danielle Dutton, as well as short stories by Kelly Link, Leo Tolstoy, Alice Munro, and Franz Kafka. Prerequisite: U11 317 Fiction Writing.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 317K Fiction Writing
This workshop is designed for students who want to explore and practice the art of fiction. We examine the work of major writers for structure and artistry. We draw two stories up from the well of imagination, and learn how to apply methods that make them rhythmically and logically sound as well as creative. Constructive criticism of student work and class discussion are emphasized. Prerequisite: freshman composition.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 318 Fiction Seminar
This is an advanced writing seminar for students familiar with the process of writing fiction. We will address individual writing problems, and use specific exercises for sharpening skills in the separate elements of fiction, including dialogue, plot, and character development. We will also study prominent authors for voice, style, and craft. Prerequisite: at least one class in creative writing or a published work.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 321 Advanced Writing
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 322 Writing Historical Fiction
This course is for writers working on short stories or novels of all genres. We will focus on preparing fiction for publication, presentation to an agent, or as part of an application portfolio for an MFA program or grant. Through assigned readings, craft discussions, and workshopping, we will hone the writer's craft. Additionally, we learn about the current literary marketplace, including magazines, small presses, self-publication and literary agencies. Each student will receive evaluation from the instructor as well as critique from fellow students.
Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

U11 EComp 323 The Art of the Personal Essay
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 324 Professional Writing, Speaking, and Presentation
A course in organizational communications drawing upon the “means of persuasion” from classical rhetoric to PowerPoint. Practice in writing, speaking, and listening in the various formats: paper, oral presentations, and internet. Comparative analysis of what works best with varying topics, situations, audiences, and purposes.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 327 Writing The Short-Short Story and Ten-Minute Play
In this class we will concentrate on the short forms of microfiction and ten-minute plays, exploring what kinds of stories we can tell in a short space. We will examine a variety of creative writing techniques, including character development, conflict, voice, story arc, setting, images, and especially dialogue. The heart of this class is workshop, but we will read aloud and study models and examples in each genre.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 330 Travel and Outdoor Writing
In this creative writing class we will read and practice the techniques essential to crafting engaging travel and outdoor writing of the type found in magazines, newspapers, literary journals, blogs, and books. Readings come from authors such as Bryson, Krakauer, Powell, Theroux, Twain, Salak, and Steinbeck, and publications such as Orion, Outside, National Geographic, Travel + Leisure, and Wend. Topics balance creative nonfiction and journalistic approaches, including story concepts, angles & themes, voice & tone, detail & description, narrative arc & inverted pyramid structure, titles & subtitles, chronology & pacing. Students will complete a travel writing portfolio of pieces of varying lengths and concepts, including one experiential field-based assignment of the student’s design.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 331 Technical Writing
For those whose professions require them to present complex information precisely, logically, and efficiently. Examination of the audiences for technical writing and effective methods of organizing information to meet their needs. Variety of formats: letters, memos, trip reports, progress reports, proposals, and informal reports.
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 332 Introduction to Screenwriting
In this screenwriting class, students will learn the various components necessary for writing a motion picture screenplay. Students will conceive and write the first act of a full-length screenplay (30 pages), complete a full-length story synopsis, and complete a number of in-class and take-home exercises. Students will read and critique each other's work. We also will view and evaluate films, and analyze excerpts from successful movie screenplays, looking closely at the elements of plot and structure, character, dialogue, theme, genre, style and format. Previous screenwriting experience is not required. Registration limited to University College students.
Same as U18 Film 332
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 3321 Advanced Screenwriting
This course is intended for students who have already taken FMS 332 Introduction to Screenwriting at University College (or a comparable introductory course elsewhere). Building on past experiences, students will continue their work in the craft of screenwriting by expanding their knowledge about screenwriting techniques. Students will complete Act II (approx. 45-50 pages) & Act III (approx. 20 pages) of the feature-length script they began in the introductory course. Topics and reading will include advanced plot structure, genre conventions, story archetypes, sequencing, POVs, adaptations, short & independent film, query letters, and script pitches. In particular, script rewriting will be explored. This course will not count toward requirements in the FMS major or minor.
Same as U18 Film 3321
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 337 The Long Form
This course is a seminar and workshop for students interested in writing novels, memoirs, reportage, or collections (short stories, essays, or poems). We will study published works for techniques
used to create a narrative, thematic, and/or technical arc. We will workshop our own writings, with the goal of understanding their places within a larger work, from proposing and outlining a full-length manuscript to sculpting an anchor piece for the larger work. Prerequisite: a 300-level writing course or instructor’s permission. Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 338 Writing Adventure and Creating Action
This course will study and practice the techniques necessary to write active and adventurous prose, both fiction and nonfiction. Topics include writing mechanics and style with the goal of mastering the diction and syntax of action while avoiding cliché or melodrama. We also examine broader craft elements such as pacing, scenes, setting, character development, adventure archetypes, suspense, and voice. Readings include adventure writers such as Elizabeth Gilbert, Ernest Hemingway, Pam Houston, Jon Krakauer, Herman Melville, Kira Salak, Gary Shteyngart, Cheryl Strayed, Mark Twain, and Jules Verne. Students will complete exercises and three stories of varying lengths, with at least one in each mode, to be shared in a workshop setting. Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 340 The Magazine Feature: Idea to Finished Product
This course will explore the process of conceiving, reporting, drafting, revising, and placing a magazine feature story. We will read exemplary long-form magazine journalism — sometimes called literary journalism or narrative nonfiction — with an eye to process and craft. How do we find stories? What is the relationship between reporting and the published piece? How do we shed new light on common themes and approach storytelling in innovative ways? During the term, each student will develop a feature profile: securing a subject, devising a reporting strategy, incorporating research, and ultimately, exploring voice, theme, and structure through multiple drafts. The course will include literary analysis and discussion, writing exercises, workshop-style discussion of student work, and will prepare interested students to pitch their stories for publication. Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 341 Writing the Documentary Lyric
This course explores American culture through poetic accounts that focus on the personal experience of social issues ranging from ecological crisis, consumer culture, race, labor, war, and autobiography as coextensive with local history. Students will blend research with creative writing, reading exemplary texts (such as Birdlovers, Backyard, Giscombe Road, Citizen: Port of Los Angeles; Shut Up, Shut Down; and 100 Notes on Violence) while producing their own creative work. The readings and writings will be focused on documentary writing which incorporates quotations from daily life, the news, films, diaries, public documents, and maps. The readings studied are “lyric” instead of journalistic, following a poetic approach that connects inner experience and outer event, intimate and distant occurrences, people and places, private and public life. Students will engage in weekly creative-writing exercises while developing a final research-based creative-writing project. The course will include conversations with some of our books’ authors, who will offer insights into their processes of cultural research grounded in personal experience and language-conscious cultural critique. This course will count toward the major in American culture studies for day students. This course fulfills the Art distribution requirement for the AMCS MA program. Same as U89 AMCS 413 Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF

U11 EComp 354 The Lyric I: Truth and Lie
One of the biggest misconceptions that readers of poetry may have is that the poet is the same individual as the speaker of the poem. In this course, The Lyric I: Truth and Lie, we will investigate examples of modern and contemporary American poetry which utilize the first-person speaker, to more thoroughly understand how and why these poems blur the boundaries between autobiography, history, and imagination. The collections of poetry we will read this semester are as follows: Kaddish, Allen Ginsberg’s semi-autobiographical elegy for his mother, Naomi; the restored edition of Ariel, Sylvia Plath’s confessional poems which incorporate historical references to World War II; the first 77 ‘Dream Songs’, John Berryman’s alter-ego persona poems; Don’t Let Me Be Lonely, Claudia Rankine’s extended lyric essay which addresses social issues in post-9/11 America; Wind in a Box, Terrance Hayes’ exploration of African-American culture since the mid-20th century; The Master Letters, Lucie Brock-Broido’s continuation of the voice of Emily Dickinson's Master Letters; and Autobiography of Red, Anne Carson’s contemporary queer adaptation of the Greek myth of Geryon and Herakles. These poems encompass the contradictions of the human mind, and lay them out, irresolvable and inseparable — genuine — on the page. Students will be responsible for a comparative essay of 10-15 pages in length, in which they discuss and contrast two poets’ approaches to the first-person speaker. In addition, students will be responsible for 8-10 pages of original creative work which uses the first person speaker, drawing inspiration from poetics we discuss in class; as well as a 2-3 page response paper to challenges encountered during this creative writing process, and how those challenges were overcome. Students’ creative work will be workshoped in class throughout the semester. Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 357 Writing for Online Publication: Blogs and Columns
Increasingly, blogs and columns are the primary outlet for writers to reach interested readers. Students will write and share, via workshop, their own blog and column entries. Readings will span published blogs and celebrated columnists, from Gawker to Herb Caen. Course activities will include planning new blogs, proposing to publishers, online vs. print columns, self-publishing blogs, hyper-linking, interactivity, search-engine optimization, single vs. multi-author blogs, photo/video-blogs, and micro-blogging. This is a fully online course. Only University College students receive credit for online courses. Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 358 Multimedia Storytelling for Creative Writers
Storytelling in the 21st century is increasingly a digitized endeavor, with creators adapting their work to engage readers who seek material via electronic devices. These complementary formats may include embedded images, graphics, maps, audio or music recordings, videos, animations, twitter feeds, blog posts, and social media profiles. With an emphasis on writing fiction or nonfiction prose that can be accompanied by such media, this hybrid online course will explore and practice the many forms and techniques of transmedia storytelling. Students will propose, design, draft, and present a single transmedia
narrative spanning a variety of formats. No advanced computer skills, equipment, or software are required. Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 370 Life Staged: From Oral History to the Stage
This class will teach students how to transform oral histories and family history into a stage performance. Examination of family history in context of historical events, gives both the author and the audience the opportunity to put a human context to our history. In this class students will learn: oral interview skills; how to structure history, oral interviews and family stories to be stage worthy; the art of compression, economy and intensity of the story; and how to find the poetry inside our lives. The purpose of the class will be to encourage literacy in history, awareness of the student's family role in history, and to give the students the necessary tools to apply what they have learned in a performance. The students will also read several classic American plays and see the plays shown at Washington University. The end of the semester they will have created a one-act performance piece about their family's history. Same as U21 Drama 370
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 371 Narrative Structure and Story Development
Credit 3 units.

U11 EComp 400 Independent Study
Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

U11 EComp 4012 Workshop in Composition: Adapting Writing Center Pedagogy to Elementary School
A collaborative workshop for elementary school teachers, facilitated by the Director of Washington University's Writing Center. Members will learn the art of one-to-one writing instruction and explore ways of adapting this pedagogical model to their elementary school setting. Biweekly journal, literary memoir and theory-into-practice project required. By permission only.
Credit 1 unit.

U11 EComp 494 Voices in Action
What sparks and sustains people's movements for social justice? This history and creative-writing course explores the contexts and expressions of 20th century and contemporary protest movements, ranging from labor, civil rights, the Vietnam War, ethnic people and women's movements, to contemporary social and environmental justice movements. We will explore speeches, manifestos, visual and oral texts, songs, and poetry to consider how dissent is voiced in response to specific social contexts and historic events. We will consider the role of personal expression in enacting democracy, focusing on poetry that helps articulate what is at stake in the protest movements of the 20th and 21st centuries. We will examine how language moves people, raising awareness of the facts and felt experiences of injustice, helping to fuel social movements and "call forth a public" to make change. Assignments include a mix of historical analysis, ethnographic and participatory work, creative writing, and reflection. Same as U89 AMCS 494
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF, ACH, ACS, HUM