

# Creative Writing

The School of Continuing & Professional Studies offers a 16-unit **Certificate in Creative Writing** for those who want to explore in depth and achieve significant mastery of the art of writing fiction or creative nonfiction.

Instructors in this program 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 using the workshop model, with open discussion and detailed, constructive criticism of each student's writing.

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## Requirements

### Certificate in Creative Writing

Students may specialize in 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 the 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 it 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 goals of this assignment are for students to demonstrate the skills that they have learned during the course of their certificate studies as they think about the genres they have examined and to show 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

| Code      | Title   | Units |
|-----------|---|-------|
| EComp 316 | Poetry Writing  | 3     |
| EComp 317 | Fiction Writing: The Moral of the Story: Writing Fiction about Ethics, Philosophy, and Morality | 3     |
| EComp 318 | Fiction Seminar (Prerequisite: EComp 317 or one published work)                                 | 3     |

|            |   |   |
|------------|---|---|
| EComp 3151 | Nonfiction: Reading and Writing the Memoir                | 3 |
| EComp 3153 | Creative Nonfiction: Writing Ourselves, Writing the World | 3 |
| EComp 323  | The Art of the Personal Essay                             | 3 |

## Courses

Visit online course listings to view semester offerings for U11 EComp (<https://courses.wustl.edu/CourseInfo.aspx?sch=U&dept=U11&crslvl=2;4>).

#### 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. UColl: OLI

#### U11 EComp 313 Creative Nonfiction

This is a workshop for students interested in writing creative nonfiction and the personal essay. We examine the narrative techniques that writers use to shape their life experiences and observations. Students experiment with different approaches to writing process and have opportunities to complete work in various modes, such as memoir and the lyrical essay. We will also read published nonfiction essays that illuminate various aspects of style and craft.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

#### U11 EComp 3151 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 3153 Creative Nonfiction: Writing Ourselves, Writing the World

In this course, we will explore memoirs, essay collections, and individual articles in which the writers have merged their observations and research of the natural world with their own personal experiences or philosophical inquiries. We will consider biologist David George Haskell's *The Forest Unseen* alongside essay collections by nonfiction writer Amy Leach (*Things that Are*), fiction writer Michael Martone (*The Flatness and Other Landscapes*), and poet Mary Oliver (*Long Life*), as well as excerpts from books by Eula Biss, Bill Holm, Barbara Hurd, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and Lawrence Weschler. From these writers, we will learn how one might offer a view of the self through the lens of environment, place, biography, history, and reflection. Each student will also work on a manuscript of similar variety from idea to finished product.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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**U11 EComp 316 Poetry Writing**

This course is an open-level poetry workshop for writers interested in exploring the craft of poetry. We will discuss uses of imagery, language, and rhythm in the context of creating experience and meaning in poetic form. Students will share original work--often generated from class activities and exercises--for discussion with the class. This course can count toward the major in English for day students.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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**U11 EComp 317 Fiction Writing: The Moral of the Story: Writing Fiction about Ethics, Philosophy, and Morality**

Why do stories matter? How do stories help us grow? How do they challenge us? And how do they help us explore issues and ideas both new and old? This course is a fiction writing workshop with a focus on stories that deal in complex and meaningful ways with the world we live in. We read, write, and discuss stories that complicate the way we think and open new doors for considering what we believe, value, desire, and fear. In addition to reading a diverse group of authors with varying perspectives and styles, including queer writers, Latinx writers, and writers of color, our main goals are to write and share new original fiction writing and to discuss how elements of craft can help reveal the issues and ideas that our stories explore.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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**U11 EComp 317I 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.

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**U11 EComp 317K Fiction Writing: Young Adult Fiction**

This is a workshop in writing in the wildly popular genre of young adult (YA) fiction. Through readings in a variety of recent YA novels, we will discover how the pros negotiate the particular challenges and joys of writing for this age group. Through a series of coordinated writing exercises, we will practice crafting the building blocks of the solid YA story/novel (e.g., plot, character, setting). Through workshop discussions, students will draft and submit their own YA stories or novel sample chapters for constructive response and critique. Writers of all (or no!) levels of prior practice or accomplishment are invited.

Credit 3 units.

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**U11 EComp 317M Fiction Writing**

Online version of the course U11 317. In this course, students will write, learn how to read like a writer, and write some more. Our focus will be on short fiction, and our approach will be to explore the stages linking inspiration to the final (or nearly final) draft -- in other words, we will explore how to find a story idea and how to grow it. The course will be run as a virtual workshop, which means that students will be actively engaged in meaningful online discussions about their classmates' original works-in-progress, and they will make their own compositions available for such discussions. Students will also be prompted -- via regular weekly reading responses and writing exercises -- to examine common craft-of-fiction elements, from the basic building blocks of

stories such as details, characters, and dialogue to more slippery units of narrative design such as scene, summary, point of view, and theme. Along the way, we will also read a range of published short stories, from classics to works by contemporary masters.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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**U11 EComp 318 Fiction Seminar**

This course is designed to introduce students to the craft of horror writing. Horror is a very popular genre in both literature and film, dating back to Gothic literature in England. Readings and writing activities will focus on three units of horror as outlined in *The Dark Descent* and will span the last 100 years of the genre, consisting of several short stories and two novels, offering students a foundation in the many different stories published in the horror genre. Academic texts and writing exercises will discuss what makes a horror story work and will help to build students' "toolboxes" when writing horror, with a focus on plot, character development, emotional, and tension building.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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**U11 EComp 321 Advanced Writing**

Credit 3 units.

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**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 workshoping, 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

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**U11 EComp 323 The Art of the Personal Essay**

In this course we will study the structures, techniques and boundaries of the personal essay in which the writer is both observer and participant. Students will read and analyze classic and new examples in this genre. They will also draft and polish their own personal essays and share them with classmates in a discussion/workshop format. The emphasis is on developing a writer's critical faculties, capacity for self-scrutiny, and literary skills. Prerequisites: U11 101 and 203 and one course in literature, or instructor permission.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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**U11 EComp 324 Writing for Public Speaking**

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. Prerequisite: U11 203 or 203M. This course will count toward major in English for day students.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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**U11 EComp 327 Writing the Short-Short Story and 10-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. UColl: OLI

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### **U11 EComp 330 The Art of Nature and Travel Writing**

In this creative nonfiction course, students will discover the art of the essay in the realm of nature and travel writing and will write their own personally voiced narratives in which "place" plays a central role. Whether your journeys take you up the road, around the world, or more deeply into an environment you have experienced over time, attending to the sensory details, landscape, culture, and history of a place provides rich material for exploration. We will read and discuss essays by some of the many great writers who have worked in this genre, including traditionally underrepresented voices. Through an active learning approach, students will generate and share new work and provide each other feedback in a supportive, collaborative workshop setting. The writers we will focus on range from Rebecca Solnit, James Baldwin, Rahawa Haile, Barry Lopez, Annie Dillard, Terry Tempest Williams, and Pico Iyer, to Colson Whitehead, Leslie Jamison, John Jeremiah Sullivan, Patricia Hampl, and Ryan Knighton.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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### **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. Prerequisite: U11 203 or 203M.

Credit 3 units.

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### **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, complete a full-length story synopsis, and complete a few in-class and take-home exercises. During weekly table reads, 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.

Same as U18 Film 332

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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### **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, POV, 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.

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### **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.

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### **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.

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### **U11 EComp 339 Masters of Fantasy Writing**

As one of the most commonly read genres of literature, fantasy offers its readers an escape from the everyday mundane into worlds where anything is possible. For writers of fantasy, the genre is a space where no topic is off limits and where they can let their imaginations run wild. This course explores the craft of fantasy writing and the many worlds an author can create, with a focus on the short story and novella form. Weekly readings of novellas and short stories will span the masters of fantasy literature, including Stephen King, Terry Pratchett, Ursula K. LeGuin, Anne McCaffrey and many more. Academic texts and writing exercises will build on students' "writing toolboxes," with a focus on emotion, dialogue, and description. Our goals are to explore the modern trends in fantasy and what makes successful fantasy literature; to understand the different process and style of writing a short story versus a novella in fantasy; to be able to develop an idea into a polished draft of a fantasy short story or the beginnings of a novella; and to improve the workshoping skills crucial to the development and revision process in creative writing.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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### **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.

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### **U11 EComp 357 Writing Creatively for Magazine and Online Publication**

This course is a writing workshop focused on a wide variety of nonfiction for both print and online venues. We will read and discuss forms of writing such as magazine feature stories, short- and long-form narrative reporting, informative personal and opinion writing, and much more. Our goal will be to produce smart, entertaining writing that can gain a reader's interest and inform readers at the same time. Whether you are interested in publishing magazine features or more informal, personal writing online, we will study and practice how to use research, storytelling, and your own original voice to make topics both fascinating and easy to read. Students will design and write their own projects, write and share a variety of short exercises, and workshop

material from the class. We will also read a wide variety of published writing from different publishing venues and platforms. The course will provide a positive, engaging space for you to improve your writing skills and produce polished, high quality writing of your own.

Credit 3 units.

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**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.

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**U11 EComp 371 Narrative Structure and Story Development**

Credit 3 units.

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**U11 EComp 400 Independent Study**

Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

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**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.

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**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

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