Creative Writing

University College 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 poetry, 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 any one of 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 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.

Sample Courses

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Courses

U11 EComp 304 Exposition
This advanced composition course considers style in relationship to audience and purpose, asking the writer to engage more consciously with writing conventions and to explore strategies appropriate to various writing situations, from the more experimental and performative to the more formal and scholarly. The course will involve frequent practice in analyzing and critiquing, with special attention to techniques of organization, argument, and emphasis. Prerequisite: U11 203 (Critical and Researched Writing).
Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

U11 EComp 304M Exposition
Online version of the course U11 304, and fulfills the same program requirements. This advanced composition course considers style in relationship to audience and purpose, asking the writer to engage more consciously with writing conventions and to explore strategies appropriate to various writing situations, from the more experimental and performative to the more formal and scholarly. The course will involve frequent practice in analyzing and critiquing, with special attention to techniques of organization, argument, and emphasis. Prerequisite: U11 203 or U11 203M (Critical and Researched Writing).
Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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 3102 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: L13 100 and junior standing.

Note for students and advisors: When registering, refer to WebStac for updated information about section times and available seats.

Credit 3 units.
Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H UColl: OLI

**U11 EComp 313 Nonfiction Seminar**
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. This course will count toward major in English for day students.

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 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

**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

**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 will draw two stories up from the well of imagination, and we will 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.

Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

**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: 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.
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

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. Topic varies by semester.
Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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
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. This course will count toward major in English for day students.
Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

U11 EComp 324 Writing for Public Speaking
This is a course in organizational communications drawing upon the "means of persuasion," from classical rhetoric to PowerPoint. It involves practice in writing, speaking, and listening in the various formats: paper, oral presentations, and internet. We will perform a comparative analysis of what works best with varying topics, situations, audiences, and purposes. Prerequisite: U11 203 or U11 203M.
Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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.

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

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.

U11 EComp 332 Introduction to Screenwriting
In this screenwriting course, 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.
Same as U18 Film 332
Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI
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.

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 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 workshopping skills crucial to the development and revision process in creative writing.
Credit 3 units. UColl: OLI

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 providing 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 workshopped in class throughout the semester.
Credit 3 units.
Same as U89 AMCS 494
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF, ACH, ACS, HUM