

CREATIVE WRITING

The Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Program in Creative Writing is designed to prepare students for careers in creative writing, by exploring and developing their skills as writers and providing them with a wide range of opportunities to connect with the arts and culture community. Critically acclaimed writers and literary professionals participate in the program as workshop instructors, mentors, and visitors. Through its master classes, workshops and plenary courses, the MFA Program aims to assist new writers in locating their work in both a global and a national context. Students will pursue the program on a full-time basis. The program has been designed to facilitate completion within two years.

Administrative Staff

Director, School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

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Graduate Program Coordinator

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Graduate Faculty

This list may include Regular Graduate Faculty, Associated Graduate Faculty and/or Graduate Faculty from other universities.

Dionne Brand

BA, MA OISE (Toronto) - University Professor Emeritus

Associated Graduate Faculty

Catherine Bush

BA Yale - Associate Professor

Graduate Faculty

Margaret Christakos

BFA York, MA Toronto - Poet

Associated Graduate Faculty

Kevin Connolly

BA York - Poet

Associated Graduate Faculty

Alicia Elliott

BA York -

Associated Graduate Faculty

Camilla Gibb

BA Toronto, D.Phil. Oxford - Professor, Humber School for Writers,

University of Toronto

Associated Graduate Faculty

Kathryn Kuitenbrouwer

BA Ottawa, PhD Toronto - Writer

Associated Graduate Faculty

Carrienne Leung

BA Carleton, M.Ed., PhD OISE Toronto - Assistant Professor

Graduate Faculty

Canisia Lubrin

BA York, MFA Guelph - Assistant Professor

Graduate Faculty

Kyo Maclear

BA Toronto, MA OISE (Toronto), PhD York - Writer

Associated Graduate Faculty

Shani Mootoo

BFA Western, MA Guelph - Writer

Associated Graduate Faculty

Hoa Nguyen

BA Maryland, MFA New College of California - Poet

Associated Graduate Faculty

Michael Redhill

BA Toronto - Writer

Associated Graduate Faculty

Shyam Selvadurai

BA York, MFA British Columbia - Novelist and Screenwriter

Associated Graduate Faculty

Souvankham Thammavongsa

BA Toronto - Writer

Associated Graduate Faculty

Judith Thompson

BA Queen's, Cert. National Theatre School - Professor

Graduate Faculty

Michael Winter

BA Memorial - Writer

Associated Graduate Faculty

MFA Program

Admission Requirements

The normal minimum requirement for admission to the MFA Program is a baccalaureate degree, in an honours program or the equivalent, from a recognized degree-granting institution. There are no requirements as to the discipline in which the degree was earned. Successful applicants will be expected to have achieved an average standing of at least a 'B-' in their last four semesters of study. A limited number of students, however, may be admitted to the MFA without having satisfied the degree requirement and/or academic standing requirements set out above if they are assessed as qualified to undertake graduate studies in creative writing on the basis of other experience and/or practice.

Admissions Portfolio

Students will be selected for admission to the MFA program primarily on the basis of a portfolio. The portfolio should be between 25 and 40 pages in length and may contain published and/or unpublished work and/or work-in-progress. It must include a minimum of two separate works (or excerpts from separate works). Applicants are encouraged to submit works in more than one genre, e.g., fiction and poetry. Considerations of balance over the program as a whole, with respect to genres in which applicants are particularly interested and particularly strong, will have some impact on admission decisions.

Program Requirements

Students will take one workshop and one plenary course in the first (Fall) semester of study; one workshop in the second (Winter) semester; the individual study course in the third (Summer) semester; and one

workshop and a second plenary course in the fourth (Fall) semester. The remaining two semesters of the two-year program will be devoted to the thesis. With permission, MFA students may choose to take one or two courses at the University of Guelph - e.g., MA courses in the School of English and Theatre Studies. All students will be required to complete at least six semesters of study.

Plenary Courses

There are two Plenary courses, CRWR*6000 Plenary Course: Writers on Writing and CRWR*6010 Plenary Course: Writers in the World, and both are required courses for MFA students. Plenary courses will be offered on an alternate-year basis in the Fall semester, allowing students to take one in the Fall semester of their first year, and one in the Fall semester of their second year. These courses are intended in part to provide a forum for visiting writers and other literary professionals. Each course will also have a substantial component addressing practical matters associated with the progress of a writer's career.

Workshops

Students are required to take three workshops over the course of the program; the genres in which workshops will be offered include fiction, decolonial fiction, the novel, poetry, writing for performance and screen, creative non-fiction and hybrid forms.. Students are also required to ensure through their selection of workshops that they work in a minimum of two separate genres and are strongly encouraged to take workshops that include work in at least three genres. The workshops will be strongly focused on writing, but each will also incorporate a substantial reading component.

Individual Study Course

The individual study course, required in the third (Summer) semester of the program, pairs each student with a mentor. It is intended to install within the curriculum a critical opportunity to address the variable learning needs of individual students. For the majority of students, it will be an intensive writing course, supplemented by a reading component that allows for additional work in the student's primary genre and offers the chance to build a body of work towards the thesis. For some students, it may be primarily a reading course, with practice in writing in relation to particular models, or provide an opportunity to develop a significant project in a secondary genre.

Procedures

Candidates should be aware of the deadlines schedule, a copy of which may be obtained in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Please note, the Creative Writing MFA program has also implemented internal expectations/deadlines that must be adhered to by the candidate; these internal expectations/deadlines are distributed by the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Following the Master's examination, the candidate, if successful, will submit the creative thesis to the Atrium; it will be retained permanently by the university.

Thesis

The thesis is the single most important component of the Creative Writing MFA Program. Students should register for UNIV*7500 Research/Writing in each semester that they are writing their thesis. The thesis may be a novel, a book-length manuscript of poems, a collection of short stories, a full-length play or screenplay, a work of creative non-fiction, or a work of hybrid form. The standard to be applied is that the thesis should not be a first draft but have undergone significant revision and be approaching publishable quality in the estimation of the examiners.

Master's Examination

The Creative Writing MFA Examination Committee normally consists of three members appointed by the Graduate Program Coordinator:

- a member of the regular graduate faculty of the school or retired faculty with Associated Graduate Faculty status who is not a member of the Advisory Committee, and who acts as chair of the Master's Examination Committee and to make arrangements therefor;
- a member of the candidate's Advisory Committee (normally, the Advisor);
- a member of the graduate faculty who may be a member of the Advisory Committee (normally, the second reader).

Note

- The Chair serves to administer and ensure the proper conduct of the examination. The Chair is expected to exercise full control over the proceedings and does not participate directly in questioning the candidate during the examination. In unforeseen circumstances where an examiner is unable to attend due to sudden illness, accident, etc., the Chair will attempt to receive questions to ask on behalf of the absent member, to be answered by the student to the satisfaction of the examiners. At the time of the defence, the Creative Writing MFA candidate will be expected successfully to complete a final oral examination devoted chiefly to the creative thesis: the candidate should display a sophisticated critical awareness of their own creative practice. The examination is open to the public; members of the audience may question the candidate only upon invitation of the Chair of the committee. The Graduate Program Coordinator is responsible for notifying the Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies) of the composition of the committee, and for reporting to the Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies) the outcome of the examination. The examination is passed and the creative thesis approved if there is no more than one negative vote. An abstention is regarded as a negative vote. The report to the Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies) will record the decision as unsatisfactory or satisfactory. If unsatisfactory, the candidate may be given the opportunity of a second attempt. A second unsatisfactory result constitutes a recommendation to the Board of Graduate Studies that the student be required to withdraw (see Unsatisfactory Progress and Appeals of Decisions).

Copies of the Creative Thesis

One electronic (.pdf) copy of the certified creative thesis must be submitted to the Atrium by the thesis submission deadline date shown in the Academic Schedule in the calendar. Also included in the electronic submission must be a brief abstract consisting of no more than 150 words. The Certificate of Approval signed by the Examination Committee, a copy of the circulation waiver, and the copying license must also be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Departments may have a requirement to submit a bound copy of the thesis.

School Regulations

The school may have specified regulations in addition to those described in this calendar. The student is responsible for consulting the school concerning any such regulation. University regulations, as specified herein, take precedence and may not be overruled by any school regulation.

Courses

For courses without a semester designation the student should consult the Graduate Program Coordinator or Program Administrator.

CRWR*6000 Plenary Course: Writers on Writing Fall Only [0.50]

This required plenary course addresses important historical and contemporary perspectives on creative writing as an art, a practice, and a profession. Readings, discussion and visits from writers and other literary professionals will help students to articulate effectively their own literary aesthetic and to develop professional skills.

Offering(s): Even-numbered years

Restriction(s): Restricted to MFA Creative Writing students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6010 Plenary Course: Writers in the World Fall Only [0.50]

This required plenary course addresses changing and conflicting ideas about the responsibilities of the writer in the world. Readings, discussion, and visits from writers and other literary professionals will help students to articulate effectively their own positions and to develop professional skills.

Offering(s): Odd-numbered years

Restriction(s): Restricted to MFA.CW students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6100 Poetry Workshop Fall and Winter Reg Required [0.50]

The Poetry Workshop engages students in an intensive program of reading and writing work. The workshops will be strongly focused on writing and on responding to the work of students in the course with productive, constructive criticism. Students will have the opportunity to work closely with a nationally recognized poet to develop their own skills as poets and editors. Students are expected to read widely and to develop their understanding of the technical aspects of their craft.

Offering(s): Annually.

Restriction(s): Restricted to Creative Writing MFA students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6120 Experimental Poetry Workshop Fall Only [0.50]

This is a course of study and creation focused on varied approaches to contemporary experimental poetry and poetics for MFA students interested in expanding an engaged writing practice. Most classes include experiential compositional engagements, inviting solo, small group and whole class activities. Through readings of published work, instructor talks, and group discussions, we ask questions about the conceptual, sociopolitical and critical underpinnings poets propose when approaching poetry with innovative intentions. We inquire into examples of how poets have experimented with alphabet, language, asemics, concrete poetics, procedural constraints (i.e. erasure/palimpsest), listening, sounding and orality, improvisation, polyvocality, digital media, and other text/image/material explorations, while cultivating individual new poetry from all class participants. Final projects might include a reading of new work, a class performance, as well as a constructed language object.

Offering(s): Offered in odd-numbered years.

Restriction(s): Restricted to MFA Creative Writing students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6200 Fiction Workshop Winter Only [0.50]

The Fiction Workshop engages students in an intensive program of reading and writing work. The workshops will be strongly focused on writing and on responding to the work of students in the course with productive, constructive criticism. Students will have the opportunity to work closely with a nationally recognized author to develop their skills as writers and editors. Students are expected to read widely and to develop their understanding of the technical aspects of their craft.

Restriction(s): Restricted to Creative Writing MFA students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6220 Writing the Decolonial-Fiction Fall Only [0.50]

This course teaches writers to approach writing as a conscious engagement with social and political worlds. Students will pay close critical attention to questions of decolonial thought and race as they are expressed in the structure, narrative arc, character, voice and geographies of writing.

Offering(s): Odd-numbered years

Restriction(s): Restricted to Creative Writing MFA students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6240 Hybrid Forms and Mixed-Mode

Narratives Unspecified [0.50]

This course focuses on narrative that experiments with generic boundaries and received forms. Students will examine the use of multiple narrative lines and blended modes (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, graphic narrative) to deepen meaning and amplify personal-social intersections, including with the natural world.

Offering(s): Even-numbered years

Restriction(s): Restricted to Creative Writing MFA students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6300 Drama Workshop Unspecified [0.50]

The Drama Workshop engages students in an intensive program of writing and reading work. Students will produce a substantial amount of dramatic writing and will also provide constructive criticism of the work of other workshop participants. Required reading will cover a wide range of dramatic literature and the study of dramatic forms and techniques.

Offering(s): Odd-numbered years

Restriction(s): Restricted to Creative Writing MFA students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6320 Screenwriting Workshop Fall Only [0.50]

This course takes Creative Writing MFA students through the process of writing a feature-length screenplay. Classes include workshops, short lectures on screenwriting tools such as Character synthesis, editing through theme, and popular story structures. Students participate in a simulated story development room with the aim to create a work for television. Through an examination of Hollywood screenplays, scenes from produced films, pitch packages and season arcs, questions of cinematic production and authorship are addressed. Workshops engage writers in reading from their own and others' works, while students are expected to provide supportive and meaningful feedback. Course materials focus on workshop loglines, synopses, thematic statements/pitches, and beat sheets, as well as some select scenes from student work-in-progress. Outlines and first draft feature-length scripts are to be made available for peer and instructor feedback. The course concludes with readings of the first act of each student screenplay.

Offering(s): Offered in even-numbered years.

Restriction(s): Restricted to MFA Creative Writing students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6400 Practicum in Creative Writing Unspecified [0.50]

In this course of guided study, the student will work on a creative project with a mentor who is a recognized member of the professional writing community.

Offering(s): Annually.

Restriction(s): Restricted to Creative Writing MFA students.

Department(s): School of English and Theatre Studies

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6500 Creative Non-Fiction Workshop Unspecified [0.50]

The Non-Fiction Workshop engages students in a reading and writing intensive program of creative non-fiction. The workshops will be strongly focused on writing and will involve the creation and revision of a substantial body of new work in the genre, as well as critiquing the work of other students in the course. The reading component will focus on texts from a varied social and cultural range (e.g. family memoir, travel narrative, cultural memoir, themed meditation).

Offering(s): Even-numbered years

Restriction(s): Restricted to MFA.CW students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus

CRWR*6600 Special Topics in Creative Writing Unspecified [0.50]

A variable-content course focusing on a particular issue or approach to writing within one genre of creative writing (fiction, poetry, drama, etc.) or a particular issue or approach to writing that is at work across multiple genres.

Restriction(s): Restricted to Creative Writing MFA students.

Department(s): School of Theatre, English, and Creative Writing

Location(s): Guelph-Humber Campus