

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & CREATIVE WRITING
Writing Plan for Creative Writing Majors
(Revised 2016)

- I. **Rationale:** Writing and reading are at the heart of the creative writing major's practice. Writing and literature can function as a unifying lens for undergraduate education. We see our lives and our identities in terms of narratives; we use language to express ourselves and to communicate complex intellectual and emotional truths to others. Moreover, we know ourselves through the narratives we tell ourselves; we know others by theirs. These narratives also help to determine what we can imagine ourselves doing in the world, both in the present, and in the future. The extent to which we can act and effect change is determined by our imagination, by our ability to tell ourselves new and different narratives. The curriculum of the creative writing program is designed to guide students into a self-conscious understanding of the construction of their own narratives and the narratives of others. To achieve this we focus student attention on the published (or produced) work of both historical and contemporary writers. We focus student attention closely on their own work-in-progress. We focus student attention on the work-in-progress of their peers. We ask for multiple revisions of work-in-progress, emphasizing the complicated, sometimes radical changes in meaning that occur with experimentation between drafts of poems, stories, essays, plays and screenplays. In addition to these "writerly" concerns, the program aspires for our graduating writers to embody a confidence and professionalism in their ability to communicate with others; to be curious in their dealings with others; to translate this curiosity into meaningful cultural artifacts; to hone a willingness to think and think again, on the page and in the world; for the rest of their lives, to "...[p]ay attention./Be astonished./Tell about it." (Mary Oliver)
- II. **Goals:** Each genre in creative writing has unique expectations of the student writer. However, there are shared expectations in each creative writing course and the creative writing faculty have formulated the following three learning outcomes relevant to all of our writing-intensive courses. A graduate of the Creative Writing Program will be able to:
- **Draft and present imaginative work** in the form of fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, screenwriting and/or playwriting that indicates a student's experimentation with the specific elements that serve as the foundation of each genre.
 - **Assess imaginative works-in-progress** by applying contemporary publishing standards. The resulting student responses will be evaluated according to how well the student supplies constructive and insightful criticism.

- **Participate in a capstone course** in one of the genres, and **engage** in the professional habits of creative writers: revision, oral critique, and public presentation.

III. Course Writing Practices: All creative writing courses require a significant amount of reading within the genre being practiced. Faculty lecture on elements of genre and craft. In all of their workshop courses from introductory to advanced, students are expected to produce multiple writing assignments that task the student in different elements of genre craft. They are further expected to produce **at least** one writing project of significant length in each course (multiple poems in a poetry course, a work of **at least** 8 pages in the other genres, though page requirements are usually higher). Finally, students are expected to revise fully this writing project by the end of the relevant course. As the student progresses from introductory courses to advanced, more significant writing projects are expected of them.

During the course of each workshop offered in the program, students are tasked with editing the draft writing of their peers. Students are also tasked with writing thorough critiques of their fellow students' written drafts. Student written critiques are expected to address multiple issues in the drafts, from constructive general observations about the writing to suggested changes for improvement. Each workshop offers the individual student writers the opportunity for instructor-led discussion of their draft materials for revision.

IV. Resources: Creative writing majors should have access to specific contexts and resources. For example: Exposure to the kinds of writing they will be expected to do—texts in the relevant genres by past students, as well as by historical and contemporary published writers; style books, reference books, and online resources relevant to the formatting of different genres; frequent and required individual conferences with faculty in all courses.

V. Courses:

- a. CRW 201/5/6/7/8: Introduction to Screenwriting, Poetry, Fiction, Playwriting, Creative Nonfiction (enrollment capped at 19/section). Creative writing majors are required to take at least two of these introductory seminars. Each course requires extensive writing by students in the genre as well as a study of models by professional writers in that genre. Drafts are workshopped by the class and student/teacher conferences are required. Term grades are based primarily on written work, specifically a major writing project due at end of term.
- b. CRW 301/5/6/7/8: Intermediate Screenwriting, Poetry, Fiction, Playwriting, Creative Nonfiction (enrollment capped at 19/section). Creative writing majors are required to take at least two of these seminars. Each course requires extensive writing by students in the genre. Two significant writing projects are

required, at minimum, though more are often tasked. Drafts are workshopped by the class and student/teacher conferences are required. Term grades are based primarily on written work.

- c. CRW 401/5/6/7/8: Advanced Screenwriting, Poetry, Fiction, Playwriting, Creative Nonfiction. Creative writing majors are required to take at least one of these seminars. Each course requires extensive writing by students in the genre, and a culminating writing project is due by end of term. Students are expected to give a public performance (this can take the form of a reading, a public presentation, an active online blog, etc.). Grades are primarily based on written work.