

Virginia Tech, Department Of English

GRADUATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING

Degree Requirements | Graduate Certificates | Plan of Study Form | Academic Credit Hour Loads | Grade Requirements | Advising | Annual Reviews | Creative Thesis | Financial Assistance | Departmental Awards | Administrative Procedures and Communication

GOALS

The goal of MFA in Creative Writing is to immerse graduate students in a culture of productive creativity by doing the following: providing them with an opportunity to work in apprenticeship fashion with writing faculty; helping them to acquire a keen sense of the evolving landscape and the challenges in the field of creative writing; empowering them to create a dynamic learning community of writers in the heart of Southwest Virginia; and enabling them to develop the requisite skills they need in order to publish full-length collections of poetry and fiction. The program will prepare students for teaching college-level.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Overview

The MFA in Creative Writing is designed to be completed in three years. Students may specialize in either fiction or poetry. A minimum of 48 hours is required for this terminal degree. A series of creative writing workshops, courses in form and theory, new media writing, composition pedagogy, and literature and theory electives are designed for students wishing to pursue careers as writers or writer/scholars at the college level. Students also have the opportunities for editorial work on *The Minnesota Review*, and on *The New River: a Journal of Digital Writing and Art*. A creative thesis and a final exam are required.

The 48 hours required for the degree must be distributed as follows:

- Creative writing workshops: 15 hours; at least 9 hours must be in the designated specialty; students are encouraged to explore other genres in 6 hours of workshops
 - 5764 Creative Writing Workshop: New Media
 - 6704 Creative Writing Workshop: Fiction
 - 6714 Creative Writing Workshop: Poetry
 - 6724 Creative Writing Workshop: Playwriting
 - 6734 Creative Writing Workshop: Creative Nonfiction

- Form and theory courses: 3 hours must be in the specialty
 - 5734 Form and Theory of Fiction
 - 5744 Form and Theory of Poetry
- Editing a Literary Journal (5774): 3 hours
- Composition: 11 hours:
 - 5034 Practicum (3 hours for credit; continued enrollment)
 - 5984 Special Studies: Theory and Practice in University Writing Instruction (6 hours)
 - GRAD 5004 GTA Training Workshop (1 hour)
 - GRAD 5124 Library Research Skills -English (1 hour)
- Research & Thesis (5994): 6 hours; a book-length creative thesis (a collection of poetry; a collection of short stories or a a novel)
- Graduate English courses: 9 hours; 3 hours may include an independent studies in Editing a Digital Journal.

Practicum

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) receive academic credit for the ongoing training associated with teaching responsibilities by registering for the Practicum in Teaching College Composition (ENGL 5034) each semester. Successful completion of this course in the first semester results in a total of 3 hours of P/F credit counting toward the Plan of Study. GTAs will enroll in the Practicum each semester in which they hold a GTA position in order to maintain full-time student status of 12 hours of enrollment and to continue their development as teachers. Practicum hours beyond the first three do not count toward graduation requirements.

Transfer Courses

With the permission of the Director of Creative Writing and the Director of Graduate Studies in English, students may transfer from other departments or other universities a maximum of 6 graduate credit hours. Students must complete the request form available from the graduate secretary or from the English Department graduate program website (forms). To count toward degree requirements, transferred courses must match those requirements.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATES: Future Professoriate, Women's and Gender Studies

In conjunction with earning the MFA, students may earn a 9-hour graduate certificate in the Future Professoriate or in Women's and Gender Studies by taking appropriate courses required by those programs. Two courses from either

certificate program may be used for up to 6 hours of the transfer courses permitted for the MFA. Certificate courses cannot substitute for the degree requirements listed on page one. To earn a certificate, students will have to complete credit hours in addition to the 48 hours required for the degree. For more information on the Future Professoriate certificate, see the Graduate School website (http://www.grads.vt.edu/academics/class_schedules/grad_courses/pfp_cert.html) . For more information on the Women's Studies certificate, see the Women's Studies website (<http://www.wgs.clahs.vt.edu/grad.html>). Information on other certificates, including Africana Studies, is available at http://www.grads.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/certificates.jsp.

PLAN OF STUDY FORM

The Graduate School requires all students to complete a Plan of Study before the end of the first year of study. The Plan of Study must be approved by the student's faculty advisor, by the Director of Creative Writing, and by the Director of Graduate Studies in sequence. Forms are available from the graduate secretary or at the MFA Program website. This form must reach the Director of Graduate Studies by the end of March of the student's first year of study.

Once the Plan of Study has been submitted to the Graduate School, any change in it must be approved by the student's advisor, the Director of Creative Writing, and the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate School. A form for requesting such changes is available from the graduate secretary or at the English graduate program website.

ACADEMIC CREDIT HOUR LOADS

According to university policy, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) with Instructional Fee Scholarships must be enrolled for a minimum of twelve hours each semester.

Full-time students who do not hold an assistantship and who are not employed normally carry nine to twelve hours each semester. Part-time students may carry as few as three hours. As is the case with GTAs, students having Instructional Fee Scholarships must register for twelve hours per semester.

GRADE REQUIREMENTS

Minimum GPA

All GTAs must obtain a minimum 3.00 GPA in all course work in order to maintain their eligibility for financial assistance. A GPA of less than 3.0 in two consecutive semesters will result in academic suspension.

Students who do not hold an assistantship must obtain at least a 3.00 overall GPA in order to graduate. They must also obtain a 3.00 GPA in all courses used to fulfill the minimum requirements of the degree. All further courses that are listed on the

approved Plan of Study must be completed with a grade of C or better. A GPA of less than 3.0 in two consecutive semesters will result in academic suspension.

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades may be given in the case of a medical or family emergency or some other exceptional circumstance that occurs when a substantial part of the course work has already been completed. The faculty member will then inform the Director of Graduate Studies, stating the reason for the incomplete grade. The Graduate School requires any incomplete grade to be removed by the end of the next semester in which the student is enrolled. As a courtesy to faculty, graduate students should arrange to complete the remaining course work at a time that is mutually convenient to themselves and the faculty member. Grades of incomplete may jeopardize GTA reappointment.

ADVISING

The Director of Creative Writing, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies in English, will assign an academic advisor to each graduate student in the first year of enrollment. This advisor will work with the student on course selection and plan of study. At the end of the first year and each year thereafter until graduation, the advisor also submits an annual review to the Director of Creative Writing and the Director of Graduate Studies, forwarded to the Graduate School.

The academic advisor must approve all requests for independent studies as well as the Plan of Study. Students should meet with their faculty advisor at least once a semester.

The faculty advisor may also discuss ways to enhance course performance, career options, participation in professional activities, or other such topics that will help a student accomplish his or her goals for the Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing.

When the student has selected a director for the thesis, that director also assumes the responsibilities of the faculty advisor.

ANNUAL REVIEWS

The Department of English and Graduate School require an annual review of each graduate student. The review consists of two parts: a self-assessment by the student and an assessment of the student progress by the faculty advisor.

Review criteria include the following:

- Timely completion of degree requirements
- Timely completion of paperwork
- Course choices consistent with the goals of master's-level study
- Grades

In addition, students are encouraged to participate in the department and university community by attending and giving readings and other events or by accepting leadership roles; to develop their professional identities by joining appropriate academic organizations; and to develop technical knowledge related to learning, writing, teaching, and publishing. Students are encouraged to participate in regional and national creative writing conferences.

CREATIVE THESIS

The creative thesis is a book-length project: a novel, collection of short stories, or a collection of poetry. Students may anticipate their projects early in the degree program and begin working on them, but the thesis represents the culmination of study for the MFA and the student's most mature creative work. Thus, it is completed in the semester of graduation (or, in the case of summer graduations, in the spring preceding graduation).

The thesis committee includes a director and two additional faculty readers. Students must present their plan for the thesis to the committee before registering for thesis hours.

Students must follow department and university requirements and schedules for submitting paperwork and the thesis.

Students are required to submit the thesis to the Graduate School electronically. Directions are available at etd.vt.edu, and the Graduate School offers ETD workshops during the year (see www.grads.vt.edu). Theses are due no later than two weeks after the defense. For the student who wishes to graduate at the end of spring semester, the thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School ten calendar days before commencement.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Teaching Fellowships (Graduate Teaching Assistantships)

Teaching fellowships are available on a competitive basis. Students who are appointed as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) fulfill their teaching responsibilities in first-year composition or in the Writing Center. They receive Instructional Fee Scholarships that pay tuition as well as stipends for teaching. Reappointment depends on satisfactory progress in meeting degree requirements as well as on evaluations by teaching mentors. First-year GTAs do not teach during their first semester of enrollment, but they do participate in a practicum and work with a mentor in preparation for teaching.

Students who are applying for admission may apply for a teaching fellowship by noting their interest in this kind of support on their admission paperwork. Admitted and enrolled students should inform the Director of Graduate Studies by February that they are interested in appointments for the following year.

DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Richard Hoffman GTA Award: For superior teaching by a GTA. Selected in April each year by the Graduate Committee in consultation with the GTA advisors and Director of Composition. \$100.

English Department Travel Grant: To support professional activities, such as presentations or readings at national and regional conferences, research, or professional development. Students submit a one-page proposal with details of the activity and its relationship to their academic or teaching goals to the Director of Graduate Studies for review by the Graduate Committee, which recommends appropriate projects to the department chair. Students must complete the university travel forms. Amount varies depending on funds available and the project budget; typically \$150-300.

Students may also be eligible for university research and teaching awards. The Graduate Student Association (GSA) awards some travel funding, which can be used in conjunction with the department grant.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND COMMUNICATION

Graduate Committee and Student Representation

The Graduate Committee determines all policies governing the graduate program (subject to the approval of the department chair). Graduate students' interests and concerns are represented by the graduate student members of the Committee. These two representatives are elected by the graduate students. Students are advised to voice their questions, concerns, or complaints about the graduate program to their representatives on this committee.

Changes in policies affecting graduate students and graduate study are announced in the minutes of the Graduate Committee. These minutes are distributed through the email list, grad-announce.

Forms

Approvals for the Plan of Study, changes to the Plan of Study, requests for independent study courses, and application for graduation are all recorded on department or university forms. Students are responsible for initiating this paperwork and for keeping the plans up to date. All of the forms have due dates. They are available at the English Department website.

Grad-Announce

All graduate students admitted to degree programs in English should sign up for grad-announce, the listserv for announcements for graduate students.

