

MA/MFA PROGRAM

# Creative Writing

Choose from specializations in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction.



# Find your voice. Develop your craft.

## MASTER OF ARTS/MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN CREATIVE WRITING

The part-time graduate program in creative writing provides students the opportunity to grow as artists within the specializations of fiction, poetry and creative nonfiction.

Develop your craft in workshops taught by a faculty of esteemed writers. The creative writing program offers flexible scheduling and pacing that allows students to balance work, personal life, and artistic practice.

In both degree tracks — the Master of Arts in Creative Writing (MA) and the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (MFA) — the curriculum challenges students to read like writers, and includes courses in literature, publishing, and various aesthetic approaches to the craft of writing. In small group workshops, award-winning faculty members lead discussions that help students examine and address strengths and weaknesses in their writing, as well as open up possibilities for revision. During the thesis quarters, students work one-on-one with faculty to explore deeper aspects of their work and create polished manuscripts.

The program includes numerous opportunities for study beyond the classroom. Students may gain experience in publishing by serving as staff of TriQuarterly, the program's international online literary journal, or by interning at publishing houses. Teaching seminars and related internships also prepare students for teaching careers. While earning their degrees, students connect with other writers at readings and related events that are part of Chicago's vibrant literary scene. Courses are available during weekday evenings on both Northwestern's Chicago and Evanston campuses, with some additional courses offered during weekends.

# Curriculum

## MASTER OF ARTS

The ten-course MA includes six core courses, three electives, and a thesis course to complete the MA.

### MA Core Courses (6 courses)

- 3 workshops in one genre: MCW 411 Poetry Workshop, MCW 413 Fiction Workshop, or MCW 461 Creative Nonfiction Workshop
- 1 cross-genre course: MCW 479 Poetry for Prose Writers or MCW 480 Prose Genres for Poets
- 2 graduate-level literature courses

### MA Electives (3 courses)

3 courses drawn from MCW special topics courses, internships in teaching, and publishing.

- MA in Literature or Liberal Studies courses
- Maximum of 2 optional independent study courses

### MA Thesis (1 course)

- MCW 590 Thesis

## MASTER OF FINE ARTS

The 18-course curriculum includes seven workshops in a concentration, six electives and two thesis courses to complete the MFA program experience.

### MFA Core Courses (10 courses)

- 7 workshops in one genre
- 1 cross-genre course: MCW 479 or MCW 480
- 1 seminar on teaching creative writing
- 1 practicum in teaching or publishing

### MFA Electives (6 courses)

6 courses drawn from the MALit program, special topics courses and internships in publishing

- Must include 3 literature courses (Literature or English)
- Maximum of 2 optional independent study courses

### MFA Thesis (2 courses)

- 2 thesis writing courses (The last 4 of the 18 courses are tuition-free for students in good standing.)

### INDEPENDENT STUDY

Besides drawing from the pool of faculty teaching the on-campus workshops, students may complete an independent study in person or via email with an instructor from the faculty mentor list. This list provides students with a wider variety of instructors with diverse writing styles and teaching methods from which to choose.

### PUBLISHING

Chicago has a long history as a home of distinguished literary and cultural journals and book publishers that seek out up-and-coming writers. MCW students can learn first-hand about this world and how it works by interning at a literary journal or publishing house for credit. Students develop projects based on their experience under the guidance of faculty members. Many students choose to staff *TriQuarterly*, Northwestern's online international literary magazine ([www.triquarterly.org](http://www.triquarterly.org)). They discuss and select the fiction, poetry, nonfiction, drama and art that are published in the magazine; conduct interviews; write book reviews and craft essays. The managing editor and assistant managing editor are stipend positions. Selected TQ Editors receive honoraria.

### TEACHING PRACTICUM

The MA degree generally qualifies graduates for entry-level teaching in college-level writing programs, while the MFA generally qualifies graduates to teach upper-level courses. Hiring often depends on a writer's publication and teaching experience.

### ELECTIVES

Electives are chosen from the graduate course offerings in the Master of Arts in Literature program, creative writing special topics courses (MCW 490) and the seminars and internships (practica) in teaching and publishing. Since good writers also need to be good readers, students must take electives in literary studies. Recent electives include courses on reading poetry; the narrator in fiction, nonfiction and poetry; and young adult fiction and nonfiction. Independent studies round out the program and provide an opportunity to strengthen writing portfolios.

### THESIS

The final project of both the MA and MFA programs is a creative thesis, an original work of high literary merit (judged on the basis of art as well as craft). The creative thesis is structured and revised under the supervision of a faculty member (or faculty mentor) and a second reader. The project may be one long piece or a series of shorter pieces. It may include or be an expansion of work written during the student's course of study as long as it represents a culminating effort to shape stories, prose pieces, a long piece, or a group of poems into a coherent, self-sufficient work. This large-scale project supplements the smaller-scale study of craft with the invaluable experience of creating a larger work. For students who plan to pursue book-length publication after graduation, the master's creative thesis may be the first version of a work in progress.

### CORE FACULTY

- |                |                    |                 |                   |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| • Eula Biss    | • Stuart Dybek     | • Simone Muench | • Peggy Shinner   |
| • Steve Bogira | • Goldie Goldbloom | • Naeem Murr    | • Christine Sneed |
| • Paula Carter | • Rebecca Makkai   | • Ed Roberson   |                   |
| • Eugene Cross | • Juan Martinez    | • Shauna Seliy  |                   |

# Admission \

Candidates for admission to the MA and MFA programs must hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution or its foreign equivalent and possess a strong academic record, preferably in English, writing, or related fields. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is not required, although strong scores bolster an application. In evaluating MFA applicants, the admissions committee will look for evidence of the ability to create a more sustained final project, for interest in a multi-genre program, and for interest in learning how to teach. For more information visit [sps.northwestern.edu/cw](https://sps.northwestern.edu/cw).

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- Online application — [sps.northwestern.edu/apply](https://sps.northwestern.edu/apply)
- \$75 nonrefundable application fee
- Sealed copies of official transcripts from ALL attended colleges and universities.
  - Official transcripts must arrive in our office in the original sealed envelope issued by the institution. Northwestern University School of Professional Studies accepts electronic transcripts from U.S. institutions via secure electronic transcript providers. Consult with your institution to see if they are part of a secure e-delivery network. All electronic transcripts should be sent to [spsadmissions@northwestern.edu](mailto:spsadmissions@northwestern.edu). Please note transcripts are not accepted by fax or personal email.
  - Applicants with international transcripts must request an official course-by-course evaluation of transcripts from a NACES member such as WES or ECE. A course-by-course evaluation will translate courses, degrees and grades to U.S. equivalency.
- Two letters of recommendation focusing on writing as well as academic and intellectual ability.
- Statement of purpose (see following).
- A 20-page writing portfolio in the selected genre of study (see following).
- A brief (5–10 pages) critical or craft essay on a major author or work of fiction, creative nonfiction or poetry (see following).
- Current resume or curriculum vitae.
- (optional) A separate written description of any additional study or experience in creative writing.

Transcript mailing address:

MCW Graduate Admissions  
Northwestern University School of Professional Studies  
Wieboldt Hall, Sixth floor  
339 E. Chicago Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60611-3008

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Applicants must submit a 300-word statement of purpose explaining how the degree program will help them meet their artistic and academic goals. Applicants who did not major in English or a closely related field should explain how other experiences, academic and nonacademic, have prepared them to undertake graduate study in creative writing. The statement of purpose should reflect what you are currently reading, what authors inspire you and why; it should also include where the creative writing degree falls within your future career or personal goals.

## WRITING PORTFOLIO & CRITICAL ESSAY

Applicants must submit a sample of writing in the genre of study (creative nonfiction, fiction or poetry) selected on the application for admission. The portfolio should consist of one or more works totaling approximately 20 typed, double-spaced pages of prose, 15 to 20 pages of poetry or the equivalent in published work. The quality of the writing portfolio is the primary (though not exclusive) basis on which admissions decisions are based.

Applicants also must submit a brief (5–10 pages) analytical paper demonstrating the ability to critically evaluate and analyze literature.

## APPLICATION DEADLINES

Applications are accepted every quarter.

- **Fall:** July 15
- **Spring:** January 15
- **Winter:** October 15
- **Summer:** April 15

For detailed admission information  
visit [sps.northwestern.edu/cw](https://sps.northwestern.edu/cw). For application  
assistance call 312-503-2579 or email [mcw@northwestern.edu](mailto:mcw@northwestern.edu)



“ I was a writer before the program, but I definitely feel like more of a professional writer now. I now know when something is good enough to be published, I have less doubt about the quality of my work.”

Tara Stringfellow, Poet, Attorney at Law, and Educator



“ Northwestern’s incomparable and acclaimed creative writing faculty sets the MFA program apart. There’s also the program’s community that matters, and it mattered to me a great deal.

Ignatius Valentine Aloysius, Graduate Lecturer in Creative Writing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Northwestern | SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Wieboldt Hall, Sixth Floor  
339 East Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60611

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Develop your craft.**

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IN CREATIVE WRITING