

English and Creative Writing, BA

The BA in English and creative writing enables students to experience the historical, traditional, and innovative aspects of literature in English and the relationship between critical reading and creative writing. The major provides the transferable skills important for a liberal arts major, including the ability to think deeply and creatively, read complex texts with comprehension, and master writing and speaking skills at an advanced level.

The English and creative writing major introduces students to the wealth of resources associated with the University of Iowa and the Iowa City writing communities. For over 75 years, the Department of English and the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop have been leaders in the area of writing. The MFA offered by the Nonfiction Writing Program and administered by the Department of English has been voted the top MFA program in creative nonfiction in the United States. Likewise, the MFA program in the Iowa Writers' Workshop is annually noted as the top graduate program in the country.

The international reputation of writing at Iowa is boosted by synergy across colleges, with the International Writing Program hosting published writers each fall from countries around the world and each spring traveling to other countries, taking Iowa writing on the road. This synergy helps the university and Iowa City draw writers of all ages and nationalities to its writing community. The community is bolstered by the strong readings series offered by the Nonfiction Writing Program, the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and Prairie Lights Books, with hundreds of readings archived by the Iowa Digital Library, creating a resource for future writers and scholars.

The status of Iowa City as a UNESCO City of Literature has also enriched the writing community, with people from across the Midwest visiting the city during the annual Book Festival. The Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) offered by the Department of English, "Every Atom: Walt Whitman's Song of Myself" and "Walt Whitman and the Civil War," as well as the International Writing Program's online series called "How Writers Write," have enrolled thousands of students and adult learners from around the world, enhancing the reputation of the University of Iowa as the "Writing University." The Iowa Summer Writing Festival, Iowa Young Writers' Studio, the Certificate in Writing, the Center for the Book, the Iowa Playwrights Workshop, and the Iowa Youth Writing Project all help to turn Iowa City into a destination for writers, who are drawn to the city for its heritage and for its current community of writers.

Learning Outcomes

The goal is for students who graduate from the Department of English to demonstrate the skills of reflective reading, critical thinking, effective speaking, compelling writing, and engaged citizenship.

Reflective Readers

- Analyze literary and cultural texts through close reading.
- Gain broad knowledge of several fields of literature.
- Grasp formal elements of key literary genres.
- Learn to read comparatively to illuminate the aesthetic, social, and cultural contributions of texts.

Critical Thinkers

- Approach texts with a spirit of critical inquiry and flexibility.
- Formulate productive questions.
- Use textual evidence to support individual interpretations.
- Draw upon several different critical approaches to literature in English.

Effective Speakers

- Express opinions about the texts they read through discussion and written assignments.
- Listen respectfully to others' opinions.
- Work in class—whether through active listening or discussion—to learn by synthesizing a range of texts, insights, and opinions.

Compelling Writers

- Express their ideas in clear, fluent, and lively prose.
- Organize their ideas effectively.
- Use textual evidence to illustrate and support their insights and arguments.
- Demonstrate the ability to write in different modes that are appropriate to particular contexts.
- Engage properly with relevant scholarship and creative work.
- Use research skills that include an understanding of methods, technology, and conventions.

Engaged World Citizens

- Communicate respect and understanding for the literatures and cultures of diverse historical periods, geographical regions, and cultures.
- Explore ethical issues raised by literature.
- Reflect on the ways that literature addresses issues of social justice.
- Use reading, speaking, and writing skills to engage with the ethical concerns raised by literature in their daily and professional lives.