English (nonfiction writing), MFA

The Master of Fine Arts in English with a nonfiction writing subprogram (emphasis in creative nonfiction) is offered through the Nonfiction Writing Program, one of the few programs in the nation that offers a full range of graduate courses in nonfiction.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- develop a common understanding and appreciation of the history and range of traditions of nonfiction writing including forms such as the essay, lyric essay, memoir, journalism, and experimental writing;
- explore and practice the range of narrative strategies, prose styles, and approaches to stylistic analysis through workshop courses;
- develop familiarity and experience with a range of research skills necessary to support the rigorous practice of nonfiction, including major theoretical approaches, and engage in reading-intensive discussions exploring new fields of nonfiction, including new writing technologies and media;
- develop an individual teaching philosophy and practical skills for teaching creative nonfiction writing, including designing courses for different audiences, crafting syllabi, producing exercises, maintaining vibrant classroom discussions, and learning helpful strategies for providing constructive feedback to the writing of others;
- engage in outreach programs making nonfiction expertise and instruction available to various audiences through master classes and other public formats;
- develop an understanding of the practical aspects of a writer's professional life, including an understanding of the basic operations of the publishing world and the necessary protocols leading to publication; and
- craft a long-form project in nonfiction; write a thesis of at least 75 pages of publishable-quality prose, the capstone of a graduate student's career in the Nonfiction Writing Program.

Requirements

The Master of Fine Arts program in English with a nonfiction writing subprogram requires a minimum of 48 s.h. of graduate credit taken at the University of Iowa. Students must produce a cumulative University of Iowa grade-point average of at least 3.00. The program is designed for accomplished students and writers of literary nonfiction; most complete it in three years.

In addition to coursework, students are required to complete a thesis. The thesis may be a single extended piece of nonfiction, a collection of shorter nonfiction pieces, or a collection of essays. Whatever the project, the thesis is expected to be of publishable quality. The program culminates in a thesis of at least 75 pages. Students have plentiful room in their schedules to take advantage of a variety of electives offered by the English department and all other University of Iowa departments.

Department of English graduate courses are repeatable with the written approval of the department's director of graduate studies.

The MFA in English with a nonfiction writing subprogram requires the following.

Course # | Title | Hours
--- | --- | ---
All of these:  
Workshops numbered CNW:6610 to CNW:6630 | 20  
Seminars numbered CNW:6650 to CNW:6660 | 15  
Two courses numbered 3000 or above from any department | 6  
CNW:6666 | Performance and Profession | 3  
CNW:7950 | Thesis in Nonfiction Writing | 4-8

For more information, consult the director of the Nonfiction Writing Program.

Admission

Applications and all supporting documents for graduate admission must be submitted electronically by Dec. 14. Applicants should submit their applications and supporting materials to the University of Iowa Office of Admissions website. Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website.

Financial Support

Graduate scholarships, fellowships, and teaching and research assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis. The department strives to provide three years of support for students who maintain good standing, which requires a University of Iowa grade-point average of at least 3.00, full-time enrollment, and satisfactory progress through the program.

Financial aid applications are considered only from students who have applied or been admitted to a degree program in the Graduate College. Applications and all necessary supporting material must be submitted by the end of January for the following academic year. Forms are available from the Department of English Graduate Studies Office.

Career Advancement

NWP Alum on the Department of English website provides information about Nonfiction Writing Program graduates.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

English (nonfiction writing), MFA

Course | Title | Hours
--- | --- | ---
Academic Career
Any Semester  
48 s.h. of graduate level coursework must be completed; graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website.  
Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00.

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<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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**First Year**

**Fall**
- **CNW:6620** Nonfiction Writing Workshop \(^e\) 4
- **CNW:6654** Forms of the Essay \(^d,e\) 3
- **CNW:5375** Teaching in a Writing Center \(^d,f\) 3

**Hours** 10

**Spring**
- **CNW:6610** Essay Writing Workshop \(^c\) 4
- **CNW:6620** Nonfiction Writing Workshop

**Seminar Elective** \(^d\) 3
- **Seminar Elective** \(^d\) 3

**Hours** 10

**Second Year**

**Fall**
- **CNW:6610** Essay Writing Workshop \(^c\) 4
- **CNW:6620** Nonfiction Writing Workshop

**Seminar Elective** \(^d\) 3
- **Seminar Elective** \(^d\) 3

**Hours** 10

**Spring**
- **CNW:6620** Nonfiction Writing Workshop \(^c\) 4
- **CNW:6666** Performance and Profession \(^d\) 3

**Seminar Elective** \(^d\) 3

**Hours** 10

**Third Year**

**Fall**
- **CNW:7950** Thesis in Nonfiction Writing \(^g\) 2
- **CNW:6630** Graduate Thesis Workshop \(^c\) 4

**Hours** 6

**Spring**
- **CNW:7950** Thesis in Nonfiction Writing \(^g\) 2

**Hours** 2

**Total Hours** 48

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a. Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate graduate coursework and sequence of workshops, seminars, and electives.
b. Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.
c. Total of five workshops (20 s.h.) from courses numbered CNW:6610 to CNW:6630 is required.
d. Total of eight seminar courses is required. At least six courses (18 s.h.) must be from courses numbered CNW:6650 to CNW:6666 (CNW:6666 required during second year spring semester); two courses numbered 3000 or above (maximum of 6 s.h.) may be from any department.
e. Required first year fall semester course; counts towards seminar requirement.
f. Note: CNW:5375 is optional but required for future appointments in Writing Center; counts towards seminar requirement.
g. Complete a total of 4-8 s.h. of thesis credit with a maximum of 2 s.h. each semester; select your director from list when registering for CNW:7950.