

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 earn a minimum UI cumulative grade-point average of 2.75. 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 coursework.

Required Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these:		
CNW:6400	Nonfiction Writing Program Salon	4
CNW:6630	Graduate Thesis Workshop	4
CNW:6651	A History of the Essay	4
CNW:6666	Performance and Profession	3

Essay Writing

Course #	Title	Hours
CNW:6610	Essay Writing Workshop (taken four times for 3 s.h. each)	12

Seminar Electives

Course #	Title	Hours
15 s.h. from these:		
CNW:5375	Teaching in a Writing Center	3
CNW:6600	Teaching Nonfiction	3
CNW:6650	Readings in Nonfiction	3
CNW:6654	Forms of the Essay	3
CNW:6656	Approaches to Nonfiction	3
CNW:6660	Twenty-first-Century Nonfiction	3
ENGL:6960	Colloquium: Teaching Literature	2
ENGL:6961	Teaching Literature II	1
RHET:5350	Colloquium: Teaching Rhetoric	3

Thesis

Course #	Title	Hours
CNW:7950	Thesis in Nonfiction Writing (taken two times for 3 s.h. each)	6

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 Admissions website.

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website.

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.

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This sample plan is currently being reviewed and will be added at a later date.