

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

Graduates 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, and major theoretical approaches;
- develop an understanding of the practical aspects of a writer's professional life and prepare for future career paths—including, but not limited to—an understanding of the basic operations of the publishing world and the necessary protocols leading to publication, developing an individual teaching philosophy and practical skills for teaching creative nonfiction writing, and learning helpful strategies for providing editorial feedback to the writing of others; and
- develop facility with a range of narrative strategies and stylistic approaches to creative nonfiction, including a range of research skills, which will culminate in crafting a long-form project in nonfiction, 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.

Graduate Education

Graduate education prepares students with advanced knowledge and skills in specialized fields. At the University of Iowa, the Graduate College advocates for student-centered graduate education and supports equitable application of rules and policies across graduate programs.

Academics

University of Iowa graduate credentials are regulated by policies and requirements found in the Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations. This includes minimum grade-point average (GPA) requirements for academic standing and degree conferral. The Graduate College sets the minimum requirement. Individual graduate programs may establish higher GPA requirements.

Admissions

Graduate student applicants must meet admission requirements for both the Graduate College and the program to which they have applied. University of Iowa graduate admission requirements are published by the Graduate College and on the Graduate Admissions website.

Financial Support

Graduate students might be eligible for financial support. Several contingencies apply, including degree program and award type, satisfactory progress toward degree, satisfactory

completion of all duties related to an appointment, and availability of funding. Graduate students should inquire directly with their program for more information about funding availability. The Graduate Student Employment Standards govern the employment relationship between the University of Iowa and all graduate teaching and research assistants in all matters except wages, which are covered by an existing collective bargaining agreement or the conditions of an applicable federal grant.

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

Nonfiction Writing Program Alumni 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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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. ^a		
Hours		0
First Year		
Fall		
CNW:5375	Teaching in a Writing Center ^{b, c}	3
CNW:6610	Essay Writing Workshop ^d	3
CNW:6651	A History of the Essay ^b	4
Hours		10
Spring		
CNW:6610	Essay Writing Workshop ^d	3
Seminar elective course ^b		3
Seminar elective course ^b		3
Hours		9
Second Year		
Fall		
CNW:6610	Essay Writing Workshop ^d	3
Seminar elective course ^b		3
Seminar elective course ^b		3
Hours		9

Spring		
CNW:6610	Essay Writing Workshop ^d	3
CNW:6666	Performance and Profession ^b	3
Hours		6
Third Year		
Fall		
CNW:6630	Graduate Thesis Workshop ^d	4
CNW:7950	Thesis in Nonfiction Writing ^e	3
Hours		7
Spring		
CNW:6400	Nonfiction Writing Program Salon	4
CNW:7950	Thesis in Nonfiction Writing ^e	3
Exam: Master's Final Exam ^f		
Hours		7
Total Hours		48

a 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.

b Complete a total of 15 s.h. of seminar elective courses. See the General Catalog for list of approved courses.

c Note: CNW:5375 is optional but required for future appointments in Writing Center; counts towards seminar requirement.

d Take four times for 3 s.h. each.

e Take two times for 3 s.h. each.

f Successful defense of thesis.