

# *MFA PROGRAM IN WRITING*

## I. ADMISSIONS

- A. Individuals with at least a Bachelor's degree or its equivalent from an approved undergraduate institution may apply for admission to the English MFA program in Writing.
- B. Applicants need not have been undergraduate Writing or English majors but should be prepared to submit a sample of writing in the genre in which they wish to specialize.
- C. Applicants will be evaluated on their personal statement, writing sample, grades in prior degree programs, and recommendations.

## II. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

### A. *General Requirements*

1. The MFA in Writing will be awarded for the completion of a minimum of 36 credit hours with a minimum grade average of 3.0, plus the completion of an acceptable final manuscript (see "Final Manuscript" below).
2. MFA students must fulfill the coursework requirements of the genre to which they are admitted or to which their transfer has been approved. Transfer to another genre must be approved by the Director of the Writing Program in consultation with the departmental advisor and workshop faculty in the new genre and may involve additional coursework.
3. MFA students may not take more than 6 credits of their required 36 credit hours in undergraduate courses from the 1000 level. Any 1000-level course counted toward the MFA must be an English Department course must include a graduate component in the form of additional and advanced readings and writings to be determined by the instructor, and students must also consult with the Graduate Advisor and register for three credits of ENGLIT 2900 Manuscript Writing to receive credit toward the graduate degree. A statement from the instructor describing the graduate component should be placed in the student's file.
4. A maximum of six graduate credits earned at another institution may be transferred, with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, toward fulfillment of the MFA credit requirements for elective courses only. Any transfer of credit, however, depends on a course-by-course evaluation by the Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with Writing Program faculty, regarding the relevance and comparability of each course to our MFA program and its curriculum. Transfer of credit will not be approved for courses in which a grade lower than a B or its equivalent was received.
5. In the final year of coursework, MFA students are encouraged to register for 3 credits for manuscript preparation (ENGWRT 2900: Manuscript Writing for the MFA) under the supervision of their final manuscript committee Chair or another committee member. This course will

count, only once, as an elective towards the 36 credits required for the degree. ENGWRT 2900 is an option, not a requirement. It is designed to give MFA students greater flexibility in planning their final year of coursework and completing their final manuscript. It is available to all MFA students who have completed most of their coursework. Funded students may also enroll in 2900 in order to take enough credits to maintain full-time enrollment.

6. The MFA does not have a foreign language requirement, but study of a foreign language is encouraged. Students may count these courses for non-degree credits.

7. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS. Full-time students must complete all requirements for the MFA degree within four calendar years of the student's first registration for graduate study. Students who have been enrolled part-time may petition for an extension to their statute of limitations, if they are making good progress and have the support of their manuscript committee chair.

Below are the particular requirements for each genre in the Writing Program.

B. *Requirements for Fiction and Poetry*

1. Five graduate Writing courses (15 credits):
  - a. Three graduate Writing workshops (9 credits), at least two of which must be in the student's genre.
  - b. Two graduate-level readings courses (6 credits), at least one of which must be in the student's genre.
2. Three seminars (9 credits) in courses in literary and cultural forms:
  - a. ENGLIT 2608: Genres and Genre Theory (3 credits), a seminar that entering MFA students will ordinarily take in their first semester.
  - b. Two seminars (6 credits) in English Department courses in Composition, Film, or Literature as well as other departments' courses that focus on literature, theoretical approaches to literature and culture, or other cultural forms. These credits can include ENGLIT 2500: Seminar in Pedagogy.
  - c. With the approval of a department advisor or the student's manuscript committee chair, a maximum of 3 credits may be taken at the 1000 level to satisfy part of the 9-credit literary and cultural forms requirement. As described in II. A. 3., any 1000-level course counted toward the MFA must be an English Department course must include a graduate component in the form of additional and advanced readings and writings to be determined by the instructor, and students must also consult with the Graduate Advisor and register for three credits of ENGLIT 2900 Manuscript Writing to receive credit toward the graduate degree. A statement from the instructor describing the graduate component should be placed in the student's file.
  - d. MFA students may not use a Directed Study to replace one of the

courses in literary and cultural forms they are required to take. (See Handbook "Introduction," IV.C.5.)

3. 12 elective credits:

a. A maximum of 6 elective credits may be taken outside the Department of English if they are relevant to the student's program and approved by a departmental advisor, who will consult with the student's coursework advisor or manuscript committee chair as needed.

b. A 3-credit internship course may count toward elective credits. However, no more than one internship course from a particular internship site or project may be counted toward MFA degree requirements.

C. Requirements for *Nonfiction*

1. Six graduate Writing courses (18 credits):

a. ENGWR 2403: Structures and Techniques (3 credits)

b. Three graduate Writing workshops (9 credits), at least two of which must be in the student's genre.

c. Two graduate-level readings courses (6 credits), at least one of which must be in the student's genre.

2. Three seminars (9 credits) in courses in literary and cultural forms:

a. ENGLIT 2608: Genres and Genre Theory (3 credits), a seminar that entering MFA students will ordinarily take in their first semester.

b. Two seminars (6 credits) in English Department courses in Composition, Film, or Literature as well as other departments' courses that focus on literature, theoretical approaches to literature and culture, or other cultural forms. These credits can include ENGLIT 2500: Seminar in Pedagogy.

c. With the approval of a department advisor or the student's manuscript committee chair, a maximum of 3 credits may be taken at the 1000 level to satisfy part of the 9-credit literary and cultural forms requirement. As described in II. A. 3., any 1000-level course counted toward the MFA must be an English Department course must include a graduate component in the form of additional and advanced readings and writings to be determined by the instructor, and students must also consult with the Graduate Advisor and register for three credits of ENGLIT 2900 Manuscript Writing to receive credit toward the graduate degree. A statement from the instructor describing the graduate component should be placed in the student's file.

d. MFA students may not use a Directed Study to replace one of the courses in literary and cultural forms they are required to take. (See Handbook "Introduction," IV.C.5.)

3. 9 elective credits:

- a. A maximum of 6 elective credits at the 2000 level or above may be taken outside the Department of English if they are relevant to the student's program and approved by a departmental advisor, who will consult with the student's coursework advisor or manuscript committee chair as needed.
- b. A 3-credit internship course may count toward elective credits. However, no more than one internship course from a particular internship site or project may be counted toward MFA degree requirements.

### III. FINAL MANUSCRIPT

#### A. *Formation of Final Manuscript Committee*

1. Each student will form a final manuscript committee consisting of three English department faculty members: two graduate Writing faculty members in the student's area of major interest, and one member of the graduate faculty in Composition, Film, or Literature. A fourth committee member may be drawn from another department within the University if a faculty member in another area is deemed to have expertise that relates to a student's particular subject matter.
2. No later than the end of the student's second semester in the program, the student is required to identify a faculty member who consents to serve as the student's manuscript committee chair and inform the Graduate Administrator.
3. No later than the beginning of the student's third year in the program, the student is required to complete the MFA Manuscript Committee Form and return it to the Graduate Administrator, with the signatures of each of the committee members.

#### B. *General Manuscript Requirements*

1. The final manuscript consists of a book-length manuscript of the student's best work in their area of major interest.
2. A substantially complete draft of all manuscripts must be submitted for approval to all committee members no later than the end of the term preceding the term in which the degree is expected in order to allow time for revisions. The department emphasizes the importance of revision in all writing and thus the necessity of allowing ample time for this process.
3. Customarily, the final manuscript will require revisions determined by the final manuscript committee together with the student in meetings and in individual conferences. When a majority of the manuscript committee approves the state of the manuscript, the manuscript has been approved for submission.
4. The final manuscript committee must accept the student's manuscript as a work of professional quality. "Professional" does not necessarily mean

“commercial”; it does mean that the manuscript should be of sufficient excellence to deserve an intelligent and literate audience.

5. The student’s manuscript committee shall decide what constitutes a “book-length” manuscript, but the suggested minimum page count is 50 for poetry, and 150 (typed, double-spaced, standard format) for fiction and nonfiction.

a. For poems, short stories, and articles, a table of contents with page numbers should be included.

b. In the case of fiction and nonfiction manuscripts, a committee may allow the 150 pages to be part of a longer book. In such cases the manuscript must be accompanied by a comprehensive outline or synopsis for the entire book project.

c. Poetry manuscripts must be single-spaced; nonfiction and fiction manuscripts must be double-spaced.

d. All MFA manuscripts must have single-sided printing (printed on one side only), must have numbered pages, and must be hard-bound or spiral-bound.

e. The final manuscript, including a cover page signed by the members of the manuscript committee, is due to the Graduate Administrator by the last day of undergraduate classes in the semester in which the student has applied to graduate.

IV. STATEMENT ON PRIVACY. The Writing Program is a small community. In the interest of comity and good manners, we ask you to refrain from invading the privacy of any of your fellow students. We especially ask that you don’t write about others in such a way as to embarrass or demean them. And if you write about them at all, please do so with their permission.

v. ADMISSION OF UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH MFAS TO THE PHD PROGRAM IN CRITICAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES. The MFA in Writing is a terminal degree. MFA students should be aware that an MFA degree from our department does not in any way lead to guaranteed acceptance into the PhD program. An MFA student who matriculates in the department’s PhD program may transfer, with the approval of the director of Graduate Studies, up to 24 credits from graduate Literature, Film, and Composition courses taken during their study for the MFA degree in our department toward fulfillment of the PhD credit requirements. Transfer of credit will not be approved for courses in which a grade lower than a B or its equivalent was received. Students should be aware that any credit applied toward the PhD degree here may affect the number of years of support they can expect from the department and may also affect the pace at which they need to pass certain milestones towards the degree.

VI.