



Master of Fine Arts in English

Rev. April 2025
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF
PITTSBURGH

I. ADMISSIONS

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. 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.

Applicants will be evaluated on their personal statement, writing sample, grades in prior degree programs, and letters of recommendation.

II. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The MFA in Writing will be awarded for completion of a minimum of 36 credit hours of coursework, with a minimum grade point average of 3.0, plus the completion of an acceptable final manuscript (see "Final Manuscript" below). MFA students must fulfill the coursework requirements of the genre to which they are admitted, or to which their transfer has been approved. Transfers to another genre must be approved by the Director of the Writing Program in consultation with the student's coursework advisor & faculty in the new genre. Transferring may involve completing additional coursework.

REQUIRED COURSEWORK

The following are the requirements for each genre in the MFA Program (Fiction, Poetry, and Non-Fiction):

FICTION, NON-FICTION & POETRY

MFA students in the Fiction, Non-Fiction & Poetry genres must take the following courses:

1. Intro to MFA and the Writing Life (ENGWRT 2502, 3 credits), which should be taken in an MFA's first semester in the program. If ENGWRT 2502 is not being offered, another graduate readings or seminar in Literature, Composition, or Film can be substituted with approval from the Writing Program Director. Students who wish to get an alternate seminar approved should send an email outlining their request to the Writing Program Director with the Graduate Administrator copied. If approved, the Graduate Administrator will keep a record of the approval in the student's file.
2. Three graduate writing workshops (9 credits), at least two of which must be in the student's genre.
3. Two graduate readings courses (6 credits), at least one of which must be in the student's genre.
4. Three seminars (9 credits) in English Department courses in Composition, Film, or Literature, or courses in other departments that focus on literature, theoretical approaches to literature and culture, or other cultural forms. ENGLIT 2500 (Seminar in Pedagogy) may count as one of these seminars.
5. Three seminars (9 credits) of electives
 - a. A maximum of 6 elective credits may be taken outside the English department if they are relevant to the student's program and approved by their coursework advisor and/or manuscript committee chair.
 - b. A 3-credit internship course may count towards elective credits. However, no more than one internship course from a particular internship site or project may be counted towards MFA degree requirements.

COURSEWORK POLICIES

1. MFA students may fulfill one (1) class of the Literary and Cultural Forms requirement with ENGLIT 2500 (Seminar in Pedagogy). The Department's other pedagogy coursework, ENGLIT 2996 (Writing Pedagogy I) and ENGLIT 2997 (Writing Pedagogy 2) can count as electives.
2. With the approval of a department advisor or the student's manuscript committee chair, a maximum of 3 credits of undergraduate coursework at the 1000-level may be taken to satisfy part of the 9-credit Literary and Cultural Forms requirement. Any 1000-level course counted toward the MFA must be an English Department course and must include a graduate component in the form of additional and advanced readings and writings to be determined by the instructor. Students must also consult with the Graduate Administrator, have the course approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, and register for three credits of ENGWRIT 2900 (Manuscript Writing for the MFA) to receive credit toward the graduate degree. A statement from the instructor describing the graduate component should be placed in the student's file.
3. MFA students may not use a Directed Study to replace one of the three required courses in Literary and Cultural Forms.
4. In the final year of coursework, MFA students are encouraged to register for 3 credits for manuscript preparation (ENGWRIT 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. ENGWRIT 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 ENGWRIT 2900 in order to take enough credits to maintain full-time enrollment.

III. THE FINAL MANUSCRIPT

The capstone project of the MFA program is the final manuscript, a book-length manuscript of the student's best work in their genre & area of major interest. Students may begin working on their final manuscript at any point during the program, but most dedicate their third and final year in the program to its composition and revision. The writing & revision of the Final Manuscript is directed by a student's Manuscript Committee.

FORMATION OF THE FINAL MANUSCRIPT COMMITTEE

1. Each student will form a final manuscript committee consisting of three English department faculty members: two graduate Writing faculty members and a third member either from the graduate Writing faculty or the graduate faculty in Composition, Film, or Literature. Committees may include a fourth member from within the department, from another department within the University of Pittsburgh, or from another university, if another faculty member is deemed to have expertise that relates to a student's particular subject matter. External faculty members must be approved by the Writing Program Director. The Manuscript Committee chair must be in the student's genre.
2. Students will fill out and submit the Manuscript Chair Preference Form to the Graduate Administrator at the end of their third semester in the program. The graduate faculty will confer and assign each student a manuscript committee chair at the beginning of their fourth semester in the program. Once a Committee chair is assigned, students are required to meet with their chair to create a committee that best serves their final manuscript project. Requests to change a pre-assigned chair must be approved by the Writing Program Director and the Graduate Administrator must be informed.

3. Students are required to complete the MFA Manuscript Committee Form outlining their committee members, and have it signed by those committee members no later than the beginning of their third year in the program. All manuscript committees will be approved by the Writing Program Director, and the completed form must be sent to the Graduate Administrator and kept in the student's file.

GENERAL MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

1. 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.
2. 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 non-fiction 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 may be single-spaced or use other preferred spacing; 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 and the Manuscript Approval form signed by the members of the student's 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

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, faculty, or staff. 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, you must do so with their permission.

ADMISSION TO THE PHD PROGRAM IN CRITICAL & 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 English department's PhD program. An MFA student who matriculates in the PhD program may transfer, with the approval of the director of Graduate Studies, up to 24 credits of 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.